

Action Project

Institution: Crowder College

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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 09-30-2008

Target completion date: 09-01-2011

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Improve student retention resulting in increased persistence rates (semester/annually).

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

This project will facilitate improved retention resulting in increased persistence rates through a two pronged focus. First, innovative and flexible models of curriculum design and delivery will address students' motivation and persistence. Systematic, student-centered tutoring and advising will begin upon entrance to the institution and continue through graduation to provide students, especially "at risk" students with personal and academic support. Both of these foci will be conducted within the framework of establishing a process for continuing quality improvement.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Measuring Effectiveness

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

This action project will directly affect students we define as "at risk." These populations are defined by Crowder as: Low Income, Students of Color, First Generation, Learning Disabled, Academically Unprepared, Nontraditional Students, General Education majors (without plan for transfer), and students who work Full Time or Part Time jobs while attending college. Data will be collected from Crowder's College Orientation course (COLL 101), and all LOC and Developmental Education courses. Definitions of these populations are: Low income: This category of students represents ones who qualify for the Pell Grant at Crowder College. Students of color: This category includes those who are African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian American racial classification. First generation: This at-risk group includes students whose parents do not have a baccalaureate (or equivalent) degree. Learning disabled: Consistent with ADA classification, these students are defined as individuals whose disabilities create difficulties for the undergraduate as self identified and documented by the student. Academically unprepared: As defined by the college, these students represent the first-year degree seeking students who have tested (placed) into one or more developmental courses. Nontraditional students: The college defines nontraditional students as part-time enrolled, independent for financial aid purposes, has a GED or other alternative high school credential, or age 24 and older. General Education Majors - without plan for transfer: Students who identify as "General Education" with no clear plan after Crowder College. These students choose "Gen Ed" as a major because they do not know what else to choose as a major. Data will be gathered by self-report in COL101: College Orientation. Employed Students: Students who have Full Time or Part Time jobs outside of being enrolled in college. These students typically have difficulty with time management, organizational, and financial difficulties that distract their college success. Data will be gathered by self-report in COL101: College Orientation. Over 60% of Crowder's students receive the Pell Grant, and a majority of Crowder students place into at least one or more developmental courses. For the populations listed, better processes are needed to identify, track, and monitor for data collection and dissemination. This action project will impact the vast majority of our students.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

The areas of highest involvement include: Student Services division (including Records, Financial Aid, Admissions, Academic Resource Center, Career Services), and Instructional Departments (including Developmental Education, College Orientation, Learning Opportunities, and Crowder College Career Institute (CCCI).

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

The current processes for retrieving data are cumbersome. Creating new and more efficient ways to identify, track, and monitor our most "at risk" students, will help the college support these students while they are here, which in turn increases student retention

and helps to improve overall matriculation rates. Students benefit from graduating from college, or obtaining a career certificate, by being able to increase their knowledge, their employment outlook/opportunities, and/or transfer options.

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

The time frame is based around completion of the performance targets as outlined: Phase 1: Review Current System: Conduct a broad system evaluation to identify gaps in data collection, tracking, and monitoring "at risk" students. Implementation of a systematic process for tracking of students that fall into "at risk" categories which allow the college to monitor the progress of those students. Identify a good college success (supplemental) survey instrument. Phase 2: Development of Improved System: Modify current practices and systems to address identified gaps, above, as well as identify opportunities to enhance processes and practices. Assess tracking activities and reports created within current software structure. Assess current programs and activities implemented to enhance student success (i.e. COLL 101, all LOC courses, Mastery Learning Math, CCCI, and >100 level developmental courses. Pilot college success survey instrument for students, assess data collected. Phase 3: Action and Measurement of New Continuous Quality Improvement System: Implement new systems and begin data collection. Review processes for continuous quality improvement. Disseminate information to stakeholders, as well as obtain feedback. Stakeholders include: College Council, Board of Trustees, Division Chairs, and departments/divisions working with these populations of students. i.e. Student Services division (including Records, Financial Aid, Admissions, Academic Resource Center, Career Services), and Instructional Departments (including Developmental Education, College Orientation, Learning Opportunities, and CCCI). Implement college success survey instrument, and begin new benchmark year.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

* Production and review of committee meeting minutes * Production and the following of a detailed action plan and calendar * Review by the Student Success Team and AQIP Steering Committee of outcome measures defined below * Establishment and use of electronic means to communicate with committee members for discussions, data collection, and research (i.e. email, Blackboard) * Completion of documents demonstrating met outcomes (as detailed below)

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

* Cohort data (as available) prior to implementing "Success" courses/programming at Crowder College (i.e. COLL 101, LOC courses, Mastery Learning Math, CCCI) by Subgroup as listed previously: (Low Income, Students of Color, First Generation, Learning Disabled, Academically Unprepared, Nontraditional Students, General Education majors (without plan for transfer), and students who work Full Time or Part Time jobs while attending college.) i. Retention rate ii. Matriculation rate * Cohort data after implementing "Success" courses at Crowder College by Subgroup AND activity: (for students who had COLL 101, all LOC courses, Mastery Learning Math, CCCI, and >100 level developmental courses) i. Retention rate ii. Matriculation rate * Qualitative and Quantitative survey data from students, faculty and staff * Review available college success assessment instruments, select and implement an instrument. Disseminate the findings to appropriate stakeholders. * Create a systematic model of "intrusive" advising and tutoring for students identified as "at risk." * Assess students' motivation and persistence after implementing a systemic model of "intrusive" advising and tutoring for students identified as "at risk." * Establishments of better systems to facilitate all of the above

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

The Action Projects were presented to employees prior to, and during the Fall 2008 All Staff Day. An AQIP Student Success Team has been formed, and subgroups and individuals will be identified to address specific tasks. The Team and the AQIP Steering Committee will continually review this Action Project's progress. The College's Board of Trustees will receive regular updates.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2009-08-26

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

The AQIP Student Success Committee met four times during the academic year. Minutes were kept. Significant goal attainment occurred during the 2008-2009 academic year. The Action Project Declaration page was developed by the committee and used to guide project activities. * The success team established a series of measureable benchmarks to be collected from across eight "at risk"

groups of students. The designations for each of the "at risk" categories were agreed upon by the committee: Low Income, Students of Color, First Generation, Learning Disabled, Academically Unprepared, Nontraditional Students, General Education Majors without plan for transfer, and Employed Students. A pilot activity for data collection was implemented in COLL 101 to address these categories. Further survey of all academic areas mentioned in the declarations paper will be implemented starting fall 2009. * A matrix was developed outlining action project goals and persons responsible for reporting progress in the various areas. * The content of success courses and the demographic characteristics of persons enrolling in the courses were reviewed. The committee is ready to submit a proposal to the Curriculum Committee that all students placing in the lowest levels of the developmental courses be required to also take LOC 100: College Success which will provide the students with additional support tools and a learning community. As an intermediate step, a placement message has been added to the COMPASS report for students placing in a developmental class recommending they enroll in LOC 100: College Success. Historically, one section of LOC 100 has been offered each semester. Four sections of LOC 100 have made for the fall 2009 semester. * Students, faculty, and staff were surveyed regarding the structure and effectiveness of College Orientation. All stakeholders felt the class was beneficial for student success. Specific findings will be reported to the faculty and staff in the fall as the data is fully analyzed. * The lowest level developmental math classes were moved to Credit / No Credit to better facilitate the mastery approach to instruction and to reduce the impact of the courses on students' grade point averages. * Katie Strohl and Jolene Howerton attended student success conferences during the academic year. * Jolene Howerton contacted as many students as possible who dropped out of school. The pool tends to be first time freshmen. * College success assessment instruments were reviewed by a sub-team of the committee members. The recommendation of the subgroup was to utilize the On Course assessments and the instruments currently being used by the institution for broader reporting purposes. The national instruments were found to be too costly for the data provided. * Deployment of Jenzabar, the institutional database, was delayed from November to March. A variety of Jenzabar generated reports to track student success are still needed. * Initial discussion regarding students' computer literacy and the current keyboarding exam was held. Committee members are polling affected academic areas to determine the desire of the faculty as to what method/procedure would best glean what is needed as a prerequisite.

Review (09-17-09):

Congratulations on organizing a fairly broad project and breaking it down into manageable components! It appears you have developed a plan to begin implementing the project. You recognize in the description of this project it could potentially include most of the students at Crowder. By developing measurable benchmarks for each group you may eventually find not all of the identified groups will be "at risk", or alternatively, only subsets of each group are at risk and those can be identified by other characteristics. Unfortunately, the delay in the Jenzabar implementation may set the timetable back. In spite of the delay in a data-gathering tool, you seem to have recognized a subset of the larger group -- those students placing into a developmental course. Since the goal of this project is to increase persistence, you may have a pilot program that could yield good data without sophisticated data-gathering software. If you can identify those students who placed into a developmental course, but didn't take LOC 100, then compare those with the cohort who did take LOC 100 by identifying fall to spring persistence, you might find an area that deserves the focus of your resources. At the very least, the data you gather might support your efforts to convince the Curriculum Committee to make LOC 100 mandatory for those students who place into developmental courses.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

* Committee membership includes a wide range of faculty and staff, including representation from the satellite campuses. Each committee member was assigned responsibility for assisting in one or more aspects of the action project. Progress reports for the various activities were given at the committee meetings. * Faculty and staff from across the institution provided input for the College Orientation survey data. * Faculty and staff from across the institution participated in Jenzabar training. * Several committee members attended regional and national conferences on various aspects of student success. * The Board of Trustees members were given a report on the Student Success action project by Amy Frieling and Sherry Wilson. * The Curriculum Committee will receive a proposal regarding LOC 100: College Success.

Review (09-17-09):

The Committee seems to include a broad representation of the college, and the members seem to play active roles. To achieve the broader goal of persistence may require involvement by all faculty and staff. One of the goals of the project is to establish an "intrusive" model for intervention of "at risk" students and get them advising and tutoring help. Is Jenzabar the tool that will identify these students? And if so, are all faculty and relevant staff being trained in its use? Hopefully the Board of Trustees is convinced of the value of this project and is willing to allocate the financial resources.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

* The Student Success committee will continue to meet during the upcoming academic year. * The proposal for the LOC 100: College Success class will be taken to the Curriculum Committee. * A decision will be made regarding the Keyboarding/Computer literacy placement requirement. * Continued training in Jenzabar will occur with the goal of creating report templates for student success measures whenever possible. * Manual student success reports will be generated for the benchmarks by "at risk" categories if

automatic reports are unavailable. * Findings from the various committee members regarding the identified student success measures will be communicated across the institution to a broad base of stakeholders. * An On Course assessment of student motivation will be given to at least a pilot group of students.

Review (09-17-09):

You obviously recognize the need for software training, and developing reporting templates for Jenzabar. The data you gather will help you define where to focus your efforts. Have you considered the impact of an approval to make LOC 100 mandatory for students who place into developmental classes? The number of additional sections? Instructors (and minimum qualifications) to teach the classes? Which academic department will be responsible for curriculum decisions and instructor evaluation? Student resistance if the class doesn't fit into an academic program or transfer?

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

* One best practice that has occurred is the increase in awareness of the need for success practices with "at risk" students. The increase in the number of students voluntarily enrolled in LOC 100: College Success shows faculty and staff are much more aware of the unique challenges involved in encouraging student success. * Additional surveys of students, faculty, and staff have provided valuable information regarding the effectiveness of the college orientation program. * Updated procedures for tracking "at risk" students are being developed. For example, admission staff members called all students who were going to be withdrawn for nonpayment. Payment arrangements were made for 99% of the students. Students who have dropped out of the institution were contacted by the career office to assist in determining the major reasons students dropped out. * Retention is an institutional priority for 2009-2010. A new software tracking program, SARS, will assist faculty in recommending/referring students for follow up. Additional retention staff was hired in Aug 2009? SARS will not only track absences, but will also track poor grades/academic progress in the classroom as well as document the need for tutoring referred directly from faculty members to the ARC.

Review (09-17-09):

Great strategy of contacting students who drop! Sometimes a student just needs that personal connection to someone at the college to put them on a successful track.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

Learning how to maximize the usefulness of Jenzabar is an ongoing challenge. It is the desire of the committee members to create automatic reporting whenever possible so "at risk" students are identified, tracked, and assisted in a timely manner. Jenzabar is a very complex program so obtaining training and simply working within the program will be definite challenges for the upcoming academic year.

Review (09-17-09):

Complex tools often require extensive training to get the most "bang for the buck". Hopefully the institution will allocate the resources for the necessary training. The Committee may find it needs to persuade groups on the potential benefits of the project, both to the groups who control the resources and the groups who need training. Will faculty have to manually "flag" those students, or if there is an automatic report generated, have faculty and staff been able to add input to the criteria? For example, there may be different benchmarks among different disciplines, all of which may be different depending on the point in time of the term.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Review (09-17-09):