

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Baker College

Project Details			
Title	Revise reporting processes of Career Services key performance indicators	Status	COMPLETED
Category	7-Measuring Effectiveness	Updated	09-10-2010
Timeline		Reviewed	10-04-2010
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-05-2010	Created	02-25-2010
	Actual Completion 03-22-2012	Version	1

1: Project Goal

A: Procedures that determine processes will be well written, vetted and implemented. Data reports will be available. Procedures and timelines for review of processes will be documented.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Internal audit conducted in summer 2009 revealed a need for review and revision of both processes and policies that support them. A more comprehensive and consistent method of data collection and reporting is necessary.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Career Services

There will be some impact on Academics as employment data, particularly related employment data can be tied back to the system. Further, data and performance collaboration between Work Experience and Clinical Rotations will yield tangible data points to measure effectiveness.

There will also be impacts on marketing, which ultimately affects Admissions.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: A complete review and ultimate re-write of the Career Services Policy and Procedure Manual will be necessary as procedures will lead to new processes for employer and student documentation. Improved efficiency in marketing and reporting will lead to 100% compliance with all Federal regulations pertaining to Career Services.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Because of a changeover from CARINA to NACElink and with our new reporting year ending March 31, 2010, outlines of the changes in procedure have to begin to be put in place by that date. Once these are put in place, procedures can be written prior to the start of the 2010-2011 academic year, and the first quarter can be used for implementation.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Policy and Procedure Manual re-write commences in January 2010. In conjunction with this, all relevant Career Services definitions will be reviewed and revised and presented no later than March 31, 2010. The Career Services AQIP Committee will compile and prioritize all employment procedures. This will be completed by April 30, 2010. The Employment section of the Career Services Policy and Procedure Manual will be completed no later than June 30, 2010. Work Experience procedures will be compiled and prioritized in the same manner as the Employment procedures and prioritization will be completed by August 31, 2010. The Work Experience section of the Career Services Policy and Procedure Manual will be completed by October 31, 2010.

The Director of Career Services will operate as key contact on the project and will provide quarterly updates to the AQIP Council per

policy.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The project will end once the new policy and procedure manual and accompanying reports are in place, when personnel have been trained, and when all offices have implemented the new procedures. The project will be followed up on at the close of the reporting year when an audit of procedure can be completed to collect data on implementation. This data can then be used to make needed adjustments as part of the ongoing continuous improvement in this area.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This project was started in January of 2010. Over the 7 ensuing months, the steering committee has met almost monthly to write definitions, develop policies, and create procedures necessary to standardize key aspects of our career services department across all 11 campuses. The process has resulted in 7 key documents that define key elements of career services operations. The resulting changes should ensure standardized metrics that allow better understanding of accomplishments of the division and workload issues as well as providing more accurate information about graduates and their employment status.

The process of policy and procedure development has occurred concurrently with, and therefore impacted and been impacted by, the implementation of a new software package that houses student and employer data. The new system provides a single interface for students to interact with career services, seek employment, post resumes, etc. The software also provides a single point of access for employers who want to post position openings, complete surveys about graduates, inquire about interns or otherwise access career services.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The project is overseen by a small steering committee consisting of representatives from various campuses across the Baker College system. The committee includes members of various job titles and responsibilities and is overseen by the System Director of Career Services. The committee has been supported by the System Associate V.P. for Institutional Effectiveness who attends meetings as a guest.

All AQIP projects are overseen by the AQIP Council which requests an update from the project director at least every 90 days. This process ensures that the project director remains accountable for progress, and ensures that the System President and other key personnel are aware of and support the project.

Information flows from the project to several key groups. As decisions are considered, the project director presents to the Presidents/Executive Council to receive feedback and ensure all campus presidents are knowledgeable and supportive of the changes occurring. The project director also presents to the Career Services System Director meetings to receive feedback and serve as a conduit between the project steering committee and the System Directors.

3: Next Steps

A: The project steering committee began in August the process of writing procedures to be used to implement changes in policies. Because the procedures have to be implemented across multiple campuses of varying sizes and with varying resources, the development of procedures that are applicable for everyone is difficult. However, a commitment has been made to creating standardized procedures because of the recognition that if the procedures are not standardized, then the resulting metrics used to assess progress will not be reliable from campus to campus. Over the course of the fall 2010 quarter, procedures will be finalized. This will result in all campuses reporting in a more consistent manner in the spring of 2011.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Increasingly, outside stakeholders (including the federal Department of Education) are watching the work of Career Services

departments in post-secondary institutions. There are concerns that reported employment statistics are not accurate, and that not all institutions are providing value-added services resulting in employment. This has implications for not only Career Services, but Financial Aid, Admission, and Academics. We believe that explicit and well constructed definitions will provide a basis for accuracy of data. The development of standardized procedures will ensure the validity of the data through a system of checks that are traceable through an audit process. We believe that transparency in this area is a best practice that should be followed by all institutions.

5: Project Challenges

A: An ongoing challenge with this action project is trying to balance the competing needs and interests of varying constituencies. How employment is verified, or how to classify a graduate who fails to respond to repeated contact attempts has different meaning to different campus groups. Seeking balance among those groups while ensuring the needs of graduates are met is challenging.

As a multi-campus institution, challenges also exist in determining how and where student needs are best met. In some cases, students attend classes on a campus that is not the one nearest their home, perhaps because the home campus does not have a particular program. A challenge is then presented upon graduation when the student seeks career services from their home campus, which may struggle to find employment opportunities because they do not have local contacts in a field where the campus does not have a program.

Past practice has allowed campuses much more independence in addressing certain needs and local response. Standardization is at times met with concern or resistance. The steering committee continues to struggle with these concerns as they move more fully to implementation.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The steering committee has developed (and/or streamlined) a collection of measurements for career services departments across eleven campuses. The measurements are organized around key elements identified by the committee. Standardized metrics also align with a software system that has recently been implemented. Presumably, the system has some kind of internal dashboard or data collection system, though this is not stated in the project summary. Your project title suggests that you are interested in reporting and assessment rather than just a system that allows students and prospective employers to connect, so it is not clear how the implementation of a software system will achieve this goal. At some point, you will need to demonstrate which parts of the system align with your institutional mission and goals as well as the goals of the career services department. In other words, what is it about this product that meets your particular goals? It will be essential to have a record of these conversations so you can have a rationale later for switching products (should this one move in a direction that is counter to your goals) or purchasing upgrades (should this product's enhancements continue to align with your goals).

2: Institution Involvement

A: This seems like a good accountability system. It is good to have broad representation - not just from multiple campuses, but from multiple levels of administration and faculty. The project director's presentations to President/Executive Council are good opportunities to solicit input from and gain the support of others who are not represented on the steering committee.

3: Next Steps

A: It is good, then, that you are involving your institutional effectiveness Vice President. Your institutional research person can assist with reliability measures, too. In some cases standardization might not be possible, and there are ways to indicate this when you present the data. It seems better in this case to make the assessment instrument conform to the "on the ground" policies (rather than the other way around) so the results will be useful and meaningful.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Yes. And remember that it is in your best interest not just to *present* the data to these stakeholders, but to *interpret* the data for them

as well. In other words, part of your work here is to define the "added value" within the context of your institutional (and departmental) mission.

5: Project Challenges

- A: It is difficult to give advice without seeing the specifics of the "competing needs and interests," but perhaps the Higher Learning Commission's model of "patterns of evidence" would be useful here. Rather than say "employment verification" *must* mean XYZ, you say that we will consider someone's employment to be verified if one (or two or three) of the following pieces of evidence applies. Again, if you impose *too* much conformity, your results will not be meaningful or useful in the day-to-day lives of the people delivering these services.
- In any case, it is good that you're having these conversations. Perhaps this "pilot" implementation will result in the conclusion that standardization is useful in most of the measured areas, but not others. Maybe after the pilot, you will allow different offices to "opt out of" (or modify) one of the more contentious measures while leaving the others in place so you can have some standardized institutional data.

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

- A: This project is being closed because it met the objectives that were set forth, and the processes addressed have been institutionalized to an extent that ongoing improvement can be expected. The project was intended to standardize and strengthen reporting procedures in our career services division, and to create structures that will lead to ongoing monitoring and improvement. This was achieved. Additionally, the project was intended to help promote the culture of continuous improvement and to help develop knowledge and skills in implementing a sustainable CQI approach to operations. This was achieved.

2: Success Factors

- A: The primary objective related to the development of standardized procedures was successful. All offices are aligned with the new reporting processes. An internal audit was completed to determine the level of compliance, and to test the accuracy of the data reported. The audit demonstrated that following implementation of the procedures developed as a result of the project, there is a greater level of accuracy in the data reported, and all offices are meeting expectations at a higher rate than prior to the project. This means that we now have more reliable and valid data available to make decisions to ensure students are receiving the highest level of services.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

- A: The project took longer to complete than originally anticipated. This was due in part to a transition in the director of career services during the project. Additionally, the project was originally slated to close with the implementation of new reporting procedures. However, it was determined that assessment of the project could not be completed until well after implementation so that a complete reporting cycle could be observed, and an internal audit conducted.