
Action Project

Institution: Baker College
Submitted: 2007-02-27 **Contact:** Chris Davis
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 03-01-2007

Target completion date: 12-30-2009

Actual completion date: --

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

Design of a Process for Student Advising

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

This project would result in the design of a new model for advising for students. As part of this project, a needs analysis of what different segments of students need from advising will be explored along with a review of current practices across all of our campuses and best practices at other institutions to identify what works. The project will also provide an opportunity for collaboration between admissions, student services, career services, and academics on how to most effectively provide advising. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that students start in the right program, receive the support needed to persist to graduation, and begin rewarding and successful careers.

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

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

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:

In the Noel-Levitz Survey in 2005, advising was an issue where we were not meeting student expectation. A significant number of Conversation Day provocative propositions also called for strengthening our student advising processes. Retention data and data from the Constellation Survey provide support for this project as well.

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

Academics (counseling and academic advising in particular), Admissions, and Career Services

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

Student advising begins with admissions before a student enrolls with Baker College. Beginning with new student orientation, admissions hands the student off to academics. As the student nears the end of their program, Career Services assists the student with work experience and identifying employment opportunities. Advising includes assisting a student select a program and deciding what classes to take and assisting with other decisions.

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

We anticipate spending approximately a year in the planning phase before initiating pilot projects. The pilot phase should also last a year. The results of the pilots will be used in the third year to finalize a system-wide design for advising.

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

The action team will meet monthly to review progress. The leaders of the four action teams will also meet periodically to review progress of the four projects.

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:

One measure will be student satisfaction with advising as indicated on the Noel-Levitz survey. The action team will develop additional measures related to student retention and other outcomes.

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

An action team led by the System Vice President of Academics has been formed to oversee this project.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: Barbara Honhart, Vice President of Academics

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Annual Update: 2007-09-13

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

The AQIP Advising Action Project Team began its work in February 2007. To date, the team has met six times and a subcommittee of the team has met an additional two times. The subcommittee was formed to develop a plan for an advising software system which will enable the College to more effectively track students and their potential obstacles. The College's problem/goal statement is as follows: A student's path from admissions to employment at Baker College needs to be clearly defined and include an advising process, which has seamless transitions, consistency, and accuracy resulting in measurable improvement in student retention and success. The results of Noel-Levitz survey and Constellation survey and discussions at AQIP Conversation Days indicate that the desired results as described in the problem/goal statement are not currently being realized. Meeting time has been devoted to identifying the root causes of the problems in the current advising practices, as well as possible strategies to address root causes. The team has discussed customers' needs, operational needs, and the key process requirements of a good advising system. The team has also decided upon measurable outcomes; these measurable outcomes (e.g., retention, graduation rate, employment rate) are currently included in the campus "report card." A timeline has been determined. Team members have collected information on why students visit various offices. Some departments/campuses collect data on visits. In other instances the information collected is anecdotal. Early in the deliberations a decision was made that student advising was the responsibility of not only the Academic Department, but also of student services departments and Career Services. It seems obvious that collaboration among departments should result in students receiving correct, timely, and useful information and advice. The team also decided that a new advising software system should be developed in house to support student advising. This software system will assist in assigning student advisors and tracking advising visits. It will include a messaging system, a means for making appointments online, and will allow for sharing of information relevant to all students, a group of students, or individual students. The plan for advising will be developed with the ultimate goal of implementing it for all students. Yet, the initial implementation will be with a targeted group of students, most likely those who are identified as

most "at-risk," however defined. Best practices in advising have been researched, shared, and discussed. There does not seem to be a silver bullet! Although the team has not yet decided upon a specific approach/philosophy of advising (e.g., developmental, intrusive, appreciative, strength-based), the group has decided that all students should be assigned an advisor, the advising process should be mandatory and proactive rather than reactive, career advising should be included, and advisors should be held accountable for the success of their advisees. Transition and mentoring programs may be added. Also, the group is adamant that whatever plan we develop must be doable, efficient, and viewed as a positive change by staff.

Review (09-19-07):

The institution has chosen a challenging action project and has made admirable progress through their meetings as shown in their development of a problem/goal statement. The realization that no "silver bullet" exists and the development of a plan that is "doable, efficient, and viewed as a positive change" will require commitment to AQIP Category 8, Planning Continuous Quality Improvement.

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

There are 12 members of the AQIP Advising Action Project Team, including system staff and staff from seven out of ten campuses. Campus representatives include a President, a VP for Academics, a VP for Admissions, a Director of Career Services, a Dean, a Department Chair/Faculty, two Directors of Academic Services and a Director of Counseling and Assessment. System staff includes the VP for Academics, the Director of Scholarships and Grants, and a Computer Programmer/Analyst. Having wide representation from both campuses and departments has helped maintain general awareness of the AQIP Advising Project. Members have also solicited input from and shared ideas with their departments and campuses. Updates on the project have been presented to various groups, including joint meetings of the Presidents Council and System Executive Committee. Team involvement and motivation have been maintained in part by subcommittee work and having assignments to pursue between meetings.

Review (09-19-07):

The inclusion of the academic departments, student services, and career services and the sharing of ideas across the campuses shows a commitment to Collaboration, one of the principles of high performance organizations and AQIP Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.

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

Next steps include reviewing, refining, and ultimately developing the proposed advising software system. The subcommittee developing the plan for the software system is very familiar with the proposed system, but other members of the project team need to carefully review the plan. The computer programmer on the team plans to begin writing the software in November. The team needs to agree upon the approach/philosophy of advising that will be used. Before the team's next meeting (October), members are to review materials shared at the last meeting and visit suggested web sites of other institutions. The team has decided to first implement the new advising program with a group of students rather than all students. The team needs to decide upon a group. If decided to implement the program with at-risk students, then the team needs to define at-risk as well as identify those students who fit the definition.

Review (09-19-07):

The institution seems to have done a thorough investigation of advising software systems and has chosen target dates to help move the planning process along. Selecting a small group of students as

a pilot for the new system will allow the institution to continue to improve their process and the program. Not only does this speak to Agility, one of the principles of High Performance Organizations, it also speaks to another principle, Information.

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

The team's plan to expand advising from academic advising to student advising including student interactions with admissions, student services, and career services may result in a more "effective practice" that could be adopted or adapted by other institutions. Developing a student advising software system which allows various departments and campuses to track visits and share appropriate information should result in more effective student advising. This may be an "effective practice" that could be adopted or adapted by multi-campus institutions whose students commonly attend more than one campus.

Review (09-19-07):

The institution seems to recognize the importance of sharing their Action Project with other institutions faced with a similar issue. Recognition of the importance of sharing effective practices speaks to Collaboration, especially important across all AQIP institutions. Careful documentation of the planning process and the student advising process established through this Action Project will help to support the Collaboration Principle of High Performance Organizations.

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

Choosing an approach/philosophy of advising may be a challenge. Team members may have different perspectives on what approach will work best for our students. Deciding how to limit initial implementation is a challenge, i.e., deciding which group of students should be targeted. Employee resistance to change could be a problem. Overcoming this challenge by developing a system that will be simple to use and viewed as efficient and gratifying rather than cumbersome and unrewarding is the key. The system developed may create a need for more staffing. This may present a challenge for campus budgets. Addressing this challenge by initially limiting the scope of implementation is therefore critical. The need for ongoing training in how to use the advising software system could be a challenge. The team is planning to address this challenge by establishing a train-the-trainer program.

Review (09-19-07):

The institution has effectively identified the challenges it may face in the future while implementing this Action Project. The team has identified two possible solutions for two challenges; budget and training. By continuing to keep the Focus on the goal statement and through continued Collaboration, the team will no doubt resolve the remaining challenges over the course of the Action Project and show their commitment to the Principles of High Performance Organizations.

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?

The project team is not seeking assistance at this time.

Review (09-19-07):