

Action Project

Institution: Baker College
Submitted: 2007-02-28 **Contact:** Mike Tyler
Email: michael.tyler@baker.edu **Telephone:** 810.766.4329

Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 03-01-2007

Target completion date: 02-28-2010

Actual completion date: --

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

Improving General Education through Increased Collaboration

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

Baker College employs approximately 2,000 part-time faculty, the majority in general education and developmental education. Most (75%) of our faculty have been with the college five years or less. To support collaboration with our faculty, this project will utilize a combination of communication strategies, mentoring programs, and professional development to engage faculty. A particular goal is to promote the Baker College mission and culture and increase awareness of our right to try philosophy as well as dispel myths about Baker College. Another dimension of this effort will be to assess if we have sufficient full-time faculty in each area and on each campus. We anticipate beginning our efforts with general education and developmental education faculty, as they represent the largest single group of faculty as well as a group that impacts all students.

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

Primary Category: Leading and Communicating

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:

Baker College has grown rapidly in the last decade in locations, students, and faculty. Our traditional processes for communication can not support the complex organization that we have become. We rely heavily on adjunct faculty, which adds to the challenges of communication. Not surprisingly, communication was a frequently mentioned concern during our self-study and strategic planning process. We see communication has a two-way process where the faculty can not only be more informed about Baker College, but we as a college can learn from our faculty. Without such a process in place, our ability to implement continuous quality improvement in other areas will be severely limited.

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

Faculty and academic administrators primarily in general education and developmental education.

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

This project will address how we create and build relationships within your institution with

respect to faculty and How we assure integration and communication across these relationships.

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

We anticipate using the first year to develop an understanding of our current communication and collaboration processes, the second year to develop and pilot improvements with the third year for full-implementation.

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 outcome measure will be faculty satisfaction and engagement. A second set of measures will be the development and results from measures of student learning related to institutional student learning outcomes.

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

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

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: James Cummins, President

Email: jim.cummins@baker.edu

Phone: (810) 766-4280 Ext.

Annual Update: 2008-09-11

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

After much deliberation regarding the division name of "General Education," the College has decided at this time not to change the title (see previous progress report). The decision not to change was made subsequent to receiving input from faculty at all campuses. Deans and faculty could not arrive at a title that was agreeable to all. It was also determined that a name change may be premature and seen as a superficial change rather than the more significant quality improvement that we are working towards. The Action Project Leadership Team consisting of the System President, Owosso and Clinton Township Campus Presidents, System Director of General Education and Developmental Education, the Port Huron Academic Vice President and the General Education Dean for Muskegon, met on October 18, 2007 and analyzed the number of students taking the College's primary General Education courses annually, sections taught at each campus and the number of faculty delivering those classes. The largest numbers of students were in Composition I (Approximately 8,200 students) and Composition II (Approximately 5,400 students). The leadership group selected the Comp I and Comp II classes and instructors as the project focus as it afforded the potential for a major impact. Also, based upon the analysis, the System chose to add a specified number of either full time or core part time faculty on each campus. In all, 21 full or core part time positions were added across the System to teach and participate in revising the College's two main writing courses. The selected faculty would also

form the core of the team to be involved in the project. Faculty members were given reduced loads to facilitate participation. A Blackboard site was created for this AQIP Project to facilitate discussion and maintain records and documents. All team leaders, general education deans, and faculty involved in the project are members of this site. The Project Leadership Team held an AQIP project orientation on December 19, 2007 for the newly appointed faculty and a retreat on Friday 28th and 29th, 2008 for faculty and the General Education Deans. Additional planning meetings were held. The February retreat focused on Comp I and Comp II. All attendees participated in groups discussing each topic. Detailed notes were taken for all group meetings and subsequently distributed to all participants. The retreat was extremely well received and was very good for morale. Shortly thereafter, the Leadership Team formed three action teams consisting of the retreat participants. Participants chose the action team of their preference. The committees formed were as follows: professional development, departmental structure, curriculum and assessment. Among the project's accomplishments: • A Professional Development model designed by Faculty and Gen Ed Deans • Redesigned General Education departmental structure including the addition of a writing center director position at each campus. • Decisions to develop a competency exit exam for Comp I following a period of increased training and professional development. • Decision to drop MLA style documentation instruction from several writing classes. Previously, MLA and APA were both taught. • Committees were formed to review the curriculum and assessment for Comp I and Comp II plus WRI 115. An additional writing course is also being considered • Intensified the involvement and awareness of many people in the AQIP process. • A committee was formed to study the placement in COMP I to see if the addition of a writing sample to the current COMPASS test would result in significant placement differences. • The college created the new position of Director of Writing to oversee, promote and facilitate writing instruction. • Faculty leaders were identified who participated in the Fall Baker College Leadership retreat and will serve as leaders in system curriculum meetings as a method of improving collaboration and communication. The project leadership team believes that an effective model for collaboration and communication has been established with the deans and faculty involved in this project. As a result of the progress in this project and the specific focus that has developed across time, the College has changed the project title from "Improve Collaboration with Faculty" to "Improving General Education through Increased Collaboration."

Review (09-25-08):

From the description of the past year's accomplishments, it is clear that Baker College has made significant progress on this action project. The number of folks participating in this project is significant, and it looks like decisions - such as the changing of a division's name - are being made collectively and collaboratively. To effectively hire 21 full time / core adjunct positions in one year is a tremendous stride for any institution. In addition, it sounds like the team is working on assessing teaching and learning as indicated by such decisions as to eliminate MLA and focus on APA. The leadership retreat is an excellent way to continue progress in the collaboration area. And, although it might seem to some individuals to be a small change, the linguistic difference from the old title to the new title indicates that the college desires to continue the collaboration and expand it beyond one group of employees (faculty). It represents a very thoughtful and carefully worded change.

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

1) The College brought 21 faculty and ten General Education Deans into the project via a one

day seminar and a two day retreat. 2) The College utilized the same group of people to form action teams to improve curriculum and assessment, professional development and the departmental structure for general education. Action teams met regularly over the winter and spring quarters. 3) The faculty and deans have formed stronger working relationships with the upper level administration of the College through these collaborative efforts which has also increased trust.

Review (09-25-08):

The involvement of colleagues within this project sounds comprehensive. With 21 faculty members and 10 deans, the breadth of diversity among colleagues would logically lead to solid discussion. In addition, the number of individuals directly involved in this project provides a strong foundation for the possibility of success. It sounds as if there are many colleagues on board with the project and their continued collaborative participation is a key to its success.

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

The College has already begun to implement changes recommended by faculty and general education deans. The College will continue to implement changes recommended by the action teams on Professional Development, Assessment and Curriculum, and department structure. Timelines have been set by action teams. Additional changes to departmental structure and curriculum will need to be supported by research and data. The president of the College is working on a survey which is to be completed by each campus which describes the resources and support provided to full time, core part time and adjunct faculty. The College will establish basic standards for resources and support and monitor implementation. A measurement tool will be developed to help assess the impact of changes made and solicit additional input to consider for future changes.

Review (09-25-08):

The information provided concerning the next steps shows solid movement on the implementation process. It would be interesting and probably a little more beneficial to have the assessment tool / measurement tool already developed and in place. It sounds like the college is going to do summative evaluation / assessment, and it would be great to also complete some formative evaluation / assessment. Was there a reason why the changes were implemented prior to the development of the assessment process?

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

The process and activities adopted for this project have been very well documented. There are approximately nine other general education courses that are offered by the College with significant student enrollment numbers. The faculty who teach these courses and the deans with departmental oversight of the courses will be able to benefit from the collaboration processes developed during this project. The intent of the College is to administer a similar process with the faculty and deans who are involved in these courses. This process will involve the continued use of retreat formats, collaborative working groups, and a CQI planning model.

Review (09-25-08):

It sounds like this effective practice has the ability to be replicated throughout the entire campus. With an additional nine general education courses, it would be great to use a consistent process for all of them. The benefit from the retreat format, the collaborative working group and the CQI planning model can probably be used in multiple activities outside of academics (perhaps in student services, business services, etc.) Again, it would be nice to see the measurement /

assessment piece in place prior to its replication. Closing the loop on this activity is an important step and needs to be considered.

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

The major challenge facing this project will be implementing changes in professional development and curriculum and assessment that stand up well to the collection of data and demonstrate improvement in student learning outcomes. Even though the project is a leadership and communication project, the end results should provide benefit to students.

Review (09-25-08):

It sounds like there is even more importance to be placed on the evaluation / assessment piece. Data and demonstrated improvement in student learning outcomes can be collected via the assessment process. Has the team reflected on other data-driven initiatives throughout the campus? Has the team considered assessment activities (similar to the assessment conference offered by HLC) that could help in this area? The team may want to consider addressing this activity prior to full implementation.

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 (09-25-08):

The institution is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture