

Action Project

Institution: Baker College
Submitted: 2007-02-28 **Contact:** Mike Tyler
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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:

Improving Learning of Under-prepared Students

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

This project will establish minimum-competency levels in reading, writing, and math, which will take the form of various types of exit tools, before students can advance from developmental courses to college-level programs and general education courses. Two new courses, one in math and one in English, will be developed to allow an additional ten weeks of instruction for those students who do not meet the competency requirements, but have some measure of success in the first course. Students will be required to complete developmental education courses first in their programs to ensure that they have the basic skills necessary to succeed. The ultimate goal is to improve success rates not only in the developmental courses but also in the college-level courses, as well as to improve overall retention and success toward graduation for this significant portion of our population.

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:

Over 80% of all entering first-time students test into one of more developmental education courses, and 11% of these students test into all three developmental education areas. DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Program) has been building toward this project since Jan. 2004. A Developmental Education Initiative has been approved by the entire Baker College System, from the President's Council to the campus level. The Conversation Days provocative propositions and the Constellation Survey both identified a system wide need to improve the learning of under-prepared students.

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

Academics (deans, faculty, programs), Counseling and Advising, Admissions, and the institution as a whole

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

--Student placement and advising, which is near the beginning of the student's experience with our college and its course offerings --Academics, which includes developmental and general

education, and all programs, allowing students to be more fully prepared for the challenges and rigors of their studies --Employers, who will benefit from better prepared graduates who demonstrate competency not only in their program content areas, but in soft skill areas as well

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

While some of the foundation has been laid for these changes prior to the start of this project, the exit tools for the developmental courses will not all be in place until Fall 2007. In addition, in order to measure whether we are truly successful in better preparing these students, we will need to track them through their subsequent college level courses. The results will be much more apparent in two years, with graduated measurements occurring along the way.

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

The action team will meet quarterly to review progress, with subcommittees meeting at various times within the quarters. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for the results of the competency-based exit tools. Students will also be tracked into their subsequent college-level course to determine if they are more successful as a result of these minimum competencies. 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:

The true measure of success will be an increase both in the successful completion rates of the developmental courses and in the successful completion rates of the subsequent college-level courses in English and math. Improved retention rates of these students to graduation will also be an indicator of success.

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

Deans of Developmental Education have been in place on each campus since Jan. 2004. DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Program) action team: --10 campus deans --2 faculty representatives (one-English, one- math) --System Curriculum and Assessment directors --System Teacher Preparation Director --System Director of Institutional Research --Counseling and Learning Support Center representatives --Instructional Designer --System Director of Effective Teaching and Learning --System Vice-President of Academics --System Director of General Education and Developmental Education Establishment of a developmental education faculty group that will meet quarterly System wide training of over 300 administration, faculty, and staff in CQI, including 20 developmental education faculty Full support of the President of Baker College system

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2008-09-11

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

This action project has acquired the title DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Program) at our institution. The action project team overseeing the DEQIP initiative consists of Campus Developmental Education Deans, Student Support Representatives, Faculty Representatives, and System Academic Staff. The team meets quarterly. Additional subcommittees addressing components of the DEQIP project have been formed that include select members of the committee as well as faculty. These subcommittees meet as needed to work on specific issues/tasks related to curriculum, assessment, delivery, professional development, projects, etc. The developmental education faculty meet at a system level three times per academic year. In addition, there are campus departmental meetings for developmental education. The Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness met with every Campus Operations Committee this spring to discuss the AQIP Projects. The System Director of General Education and Developmental Education formally reports to the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) and Presidents once or twice a year. One set of curricular changes has been the implementation of extended courses in specific areas. This includes ENG 092 (Extended English Review) and MTH 092 (Extended Essential Math). These extended courses provide students with additional time to master the outcomes of the courses before continuing on to their regular college curriculum. Another curricular change involves College Reading (ENG 098B) and Prealgebra (MTH 099E, a second level developmental math course). These courses implemented comprehensive exit exams in the Fall of 2007, which will allow us to collect better tracking data to improve courses and meet student needs. Data has been collected focusing on success and retention in our four main developmental education courses. Because the assessment measures are new in most courses, there is not longitudinal data available to consider the full impact of curricular changes. The implementation of better assessment measures allows us to move forward with better data and the ability to make future changes based on reliable data. A preliminary sampling is underway to allow the college to track students who completed a developmental course as they enter subsequent college level math and English courses. Students are not forced to enter into their next math or English course in the quarter immediately following successful completion of a developmental course. Therefore, tracking is difficult and data is not easily retrieved and compiled. Our Initial findings show that the gap in achievement between developmental education students and non-developmental education students in subsequent English courses has decreased. Results in MTH 101 indicate that on average, students who have completed a developmental math course are outperforming those who did not take the developmental course. Results in MTH 111 show that developmental students are performing at the same level as non-developmental students. All of our data collection has revealed that we need to be more consistent with what we are measuring and how we are measuring it. That will be a focus moving forward. Different people are preparing different reports, so we need to meet to agree on various items. Another curricular change is the implementation of student learning contracts. Students who do not successfully complete a developmental education course will sign a learning contract with the faculty member teaching the next developmental section in which they enroll. This alerts the faculty member that they have a returning student who may require additional assistance. A separate contract has been developed and instituted for students who are not successful the second time through a course. This contract is signed in conjunction with a Dean when the student enrolls for their third and final attempt. In addition to curricular changes, the project also identified a need for personnel changes. This included hiring two full time positions to support the system and campus work: 1.)

A system math coordinator who is involved with training, observing, and supporting math staff and deans on the campuses and is also compiling and analyzing data in math classes. Additionally, this position assists in curriculum and assessment development and revision. The person in this position has both teaching and administrative experience. 2.) An assistant to the system director of developmental education, who is supporting the facilitation of meetings, record-keeping, research and data collection, and documentation of all aspects of curriculum, assessment, and communication. The person in this position has both teaching and administrative experience. Finally, the project has had positive but unintended consequences that we continue to seek out and monitor. The support of our AQIP projects across the institution has fostered an accelerated implementation of policies and procedures. The use of various committees and subcommittees allows for quick turn-around time. We are learning how to do things better as we do them. The work of this project is also “spilling over” to other areas. For example, the General Education group in English is beginning work on standardized curriculum and is considering an exit assessment (portfolio) to move from ENG 101 (Composition I) to ENG 102 (Composition II). Another example is that several members of the math faculty from each of the campuses who teach college level math are clamoring to use MyMathLab for delivery. A final example is that the work on this project has led to the possibility of proposing a First Year Experience as a future project.

Review (09-24-08):

By instituting an action project team, Baker College demonstrates a commitment to the successful completion of the project. The college has continued to build on the strong foundation it laid at the outset of the project. The action project team is made up of a diverse range of stakeholders including faculty, staff, and students. Although there have been challenges in the data collection process, the college continues to successfully incorporate assessment data in tracking outcomes. In their efforts to continuously improve the process, new hires have been made. These should greatly facilitate the college's efforts in meeting the goals and objectives of the DEQIP project. In the report, positive unintended consequences are outlined. Typically, one would also expect some negative consequences, if present, these should also be stated, monitored, and resolved. Tracking, retrieval, and compilation of data has been mentioned challenging, it is not clear how extensively Baker College has implemented an electronic assessment management system. If they already have one in place, then it may be just a matter of time getting the system fully intergrated and accepted by users.

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

This AQIP Project continues to maintain a strong presence on Baker College's radar. Updates are given about changes and results in the form of various campus level and system level meetings as well as email and Blackboard communication. Minutes from all DEQIP meetings are distributed to Presidents and CAOs (Chief Academic Officers) on each campus. System Program Directors and their campus counterparts and faculty were involved in reviewing the DEQIP Initiative and creating rotation schedules for each program to place the developmental education courses first in a student's program. To accommodate the campus loads on computer labs and properly trained teaching staff, as well as to fit course offering schedules and student needs, programs were able to decide whether the English or math courses were more pertinent to the student learning up front and allow some flexibility, as long as all developmental course were completed within the first academic year. All stakeholders (Presidents, CAOs, System Directors, Admissions, Deans, Program Directors, Advisors, and Faculty) were informed in early spring

about the clarifications to the DEQIP Initiative/AQIP Project via meetings, Blackboard postings, and emails. Three times in the academic year, system level meetings were held for faculty who teach developmental courses. The system director and the deans at each of the campuses maintain active involvement in the everyday workings of the project and report to various campus and system groups. This project, as well as the other AQIP projects, is contributing to a shift in culture to involve all levels in decision making that was previously done (or at least perceived as being done) following a traditional hierarchical model.

Review (09-24-08):

The project continues to receive support from the top administration of the college. Administrators are kept abreast of progress through DEQIP minutes. To facilitate communication, Baker college continues to take advantage of the communication tools available on their campus providing updates and obtaining feedback from all their stakeholders. AQIP Categories including (5) Leading and Communicating, (6) Supporting Institutional Operations and (9) Building Collaborative Relationships are well executed. Principles of High Performing Organizations including leadership and collaboration on the project are also clearly evident.

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

To continue progress on this project, the college will continue to collect and analyze data on the successful completion of developmental education courses and analyze those results to see if our changes are working. We also recognize the need to collect and analyze data for the subsequent college level courses in English and math. Our main focus for the 2008-2009 academic year will be to refine our data collection and analysis working toward the completion of this project. We will also continue the process of creating faculty-developed, discipline-specific, faculty-delivered professional development programs based on input from faculty meetings. These will be delivered on a regular basis. No later than Fall 2009, a comprehensive exit exam will be implemented on all campuses to replace the six module tests in MTH 091 Essential Math, if supported by the results from the five campuses currently involved in the pilot study of this exam (Fall '08). This exit exam will be a better demonstration of mastery than the compartmentalized individual tests that have questionable validity. Research will also continue on the effectiveness of the two extended courses (ENG 092 and MTH 092) to determine whether they are operating successfully for students and to better understand the impact of these courses on student success in subsequent courses. Finally, we will continue to assess the effects of taking the developmental courses first in a student's college career and the relationship this has to retention and successful completion of subsequent college level course work.

Review (09-24-08):

The college plans to continue with the collection and analysis of assessment data. It is not clear to what extent the Institutional Research department or equivalent department is involved in the data collection and analysis. They may be a useful resource if they are not currently being employed on the project.

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

One of the practices that has been used throughout our AQIP work is the implementation of "retreat" or day-long working meetings. As a multi-site institution, we have campuses that are over 200 miles apart. This makes it difficult to involve individuals from all campuses at times. Further, if people are going to commute long distances, we need to make the most of the effort expended. Therefore, our AQIP groups typically meet in sessions that often last a full work day,

and at times, two consecutive days. While it is difficult to remove people from their offices for an extended period, these long meetings allow a great deal of work to be accomplished and have allowed meetings to occur less frequently in some cases. An additional benefit is that once everyone has commuted to the chosen site, it is easier for participants to disengage from the myriad distractions that often interrupt work occurring at the normal place of business. To involve adjuncts in the process, we have provided supplemental payment and travel expenses beyond that received for teaching courses. In this way, the adjuncts feel valued and the system is able to acknowledge the hard work and contributions above and beyond the typical classroom processes. The college has also implemented professional development sessions specific to developmental education that are required for faculty who teach developmental education courses. This is in addition to required professional development for those that are new faculty and professional development for returning faculty. Morale has been improved by paying close attention to adjunct faculty through both specific professional development and through their involvement in decision making. Contributions from all stakeholders are essential for this project to work for our students and our institution. Awareness levels about developmental education and the students who need developmental courses have been raised in all areas, even those outside Academics. For example, Admissions Departments have experienced improved knowledge and understanding about this program and how it contributes to successful student learning. Information Systems has been supportive with programming that makes this new process possible.

Review (09-24-08):

To continue to develop faculty expertise and commitment, Baker College has implemented day-long working meetings or retreats. By holding an all day meeting focusing on one issue, they ensure adequate time for deliberations, questions and future planning. The implementation of professional development sessions is another effective practice that will positively impact faculty expertise. Involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders in collaborative atmosphere demonstrates another AQIP category, the valuing people (4). The project continues to demonstrate momentum and energy which should culminate in major successes for the college. Principles of High Performance Organizations including Learning, People, and Information are well applied.

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

Three key challenges confront this project specifically. However, these challenges can also be seen as wider issues related to our AQIP initiative and how it needs to be managed across our system. The first of these relates to buy-in from faculty and some administrators. The problem currently is not large, but if not addressed it may create more difficulty as we move forward. One approach to addressing this is to work very hard to disseminate information, to acknowledge accomplishments, and to recognize the hard work of all members of the Baker College community. As a result, the number of people who might be categorized as resistant may be decreasing as we are able to share information, involve them in the process, and assure them that we are committed to this process for the long term. This project is not going away even when it is completed; DEQIP (Developmental Quality Improvement Project/Program) may have begun as a project, but it is now a sustainable “program.” This recognition helps individuals know they will be supported long-term and that their efforts will not be replaced by yet another project in the near future. A second challenge is the time devoted to AQIP projects at the campus level both for supervisors and staff. Our current strategy is to communicate the importance of this work to

our institution, our students, and our individual campuses and how the projects contribute to improved student learning. A final challenge centers on communication. This can be a challenge when we consider all of the campuses and all of the various departments and stakeholders. We are working hard to avoid miscommunication and misinterpretation, but issues may still occur. Our current strategy is to communicate clearly and communicate often. We address misunderstanding in a timely and effective manner when these are brought to our attention. We have put the leadership in place we believe is necessary, and strive to allow top leaders to address concerns whenever possible.

Review (09-24-08):

Buy-in from faculty for any major undertaking that involves change is always a challenge for most institutions. However, Baker College, has from the outset effectively managed change by involving as diverse a group of stakeholders as possible, providing information in a timely manner, using a variety of communication tools, and soliciting feedback.

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 (09-24-08):