

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Baker College

Project Details			
Title	AIM – Academic Improvement Model	Status	COMPLETED
Category	8-Planning Continuous Improvement	Updated	08-08-2013
Timeline		Reviewed	09-16-2013
	Planned Project Kickoff 12-15-2009	Created	02-25-2010
	Actual Completion 12-31-2013	Version	3

1: Project Goal

- A:**
1. An institutional definition of what quality teaching and learning looks like.
 2. A plan that shows what processes need to be put in place to enact this definition across the institution.
 3. Processes, policies and procedures in place for those areas defined in goal 2.

2: Reasons For Project

- A:** Because of the rapid growth of the college and subsequent infrastructure changes, the institution can benefit from centralized understandings that drive decisions. Defining actions on the key questions sets the stage for streamlined processes and decisions in every functional area in the coming years.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

- A:** Academics – all areas including Effective Teaching and Learning, Instructional Design, Assessment
- All academic personnel –including CAOs, deans, system staff, faculty, library, counselors, advisors and LSS staff

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

- A:**
- Professional Development
 - Instructional Design
 - Program Assessment
 - Faculty Development

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

- A:** A process for defining quality teaching and learning is in place, and is ready to kick off on December 14, 2009. This process involves campus and system-level input, and should be complete by mid-March. Compiling and condensing the information will take until mid-April. Then information will be communicated across campuses. Simultaneously, phase 2 will be completed. The final year of the project will be spent taking those pieces identified in Phase 2 and revising them to be integrated with our new definitions.

6: Project Success Monitoring

- A:** The project has been set up in three consecutive phases. These phases will provide shorter term goals to ensure the project remains on track. The project will be overseen by a steering committee chaired by the Associate V.P for Academics who will report quarterly to the AQIP Council on the project's progress.
- Phase 1: Defining Quality Teaching should be completed and communicated across the system by June 30, 2010
- Phase 2: Identifying and aligning processes should occur in parallel with Phase 1 – from April 1 – June 30, 2010
- Phase 3: Developing procedures and processes for faculty evaluation, determining professional development needs, revising program assessment, finalizing instructional design processes should be complete by June 30, 2011.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The project is intended to create the foundation for an infrastructure to promote quality teaching. Question #1 above defines three sets of products that the project seeks to implement. Once these products are in place, the project will be deemed a success. However, the work at that point will only be at a beginning stage, because ongoing assessment of the policies and procedures with updates based on collected data will be necessary to develop an efficient and effective system across time.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This project reached its goals by mid-2012. However, those goals, once met, spawned a number of new initiatives. Operating under the general title of "AIM" these initiatives continue to grow and push the institution forward. However, based on the initial goals and scope, the project is ready to close out. The institution has developed a clear model of our commitments and understanding of quality teaching and learning. Those commitments have generated additional actions, and the entire college system is operating based on those commitments in terms of curriculum development, student assessment, and faculty evaluation and support.

2: Institution Involvement

A: This project involved work on every campus by local teams. Representatives from these teams then met as a group to move the project forward. Recommendations from that working group were carried to each level of administration including the Chief Academic Officers/System Directors as well as the Presidents/Executive committee. Since then, the work has filtered back out to large campus constituent groups as specific actions have been undertaken to act upon the recommendations of the group.

3: Next Steps

A: It is intended that this action project, in its current state, will be closed. The primary work in this area is now being undertaken in the areas of faculty growth and evaluation and program/student assessment. These are separate projects and will be chartered independently.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: This project made good use of campus-based teams that were then used to create a representative system-based team. The model worked well as campus personnel knew who was their representative at the system level and knew where to go for information. Similarly, system-level personnel knew who was responsible on each campus for local work.

5: Project Challenges

A: The challenge that remains for this project, as for many educational change endeavors, is to maintain focus. Decisions were carefully made based on solid data and broad representation. However, as the ideas from the original team are filtered into new work projects with new work groups, there is bound to be some drift. It will be important for teams to continuously return to the founding documents to maintain their focus. Managing the institutional knowledge of how we arrived at decisions and communicating the nuances of those decisions will remain necessary.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Baker College recognized the importance of establishing and implementing policies and procedures for improving teaching effectiveness and established an on-going process with "AIM." The project aligns with AQIP Categories 1 Helping Students Learn, 7 Measuring Effectiveness, and 8 Planning Continuous Improvement. Comments in the report indicate the project's success; however,

specific results were not included in the report. It is difficult to tell the level of success the institution has achieved without supporting data. Because the original completion target date has passed and Baker has indicated that the project should be closed, the institution should revise the report including evidence of progress on initiatives and submit the revised report for project closing. When this project is concluded, Baker should consider creating new action projects focusing upon the initiatives described in the "Next Steps" section. In the future, please include additional information in your reports to support your progress on AQIP initiatives.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Baker College may want to utilize campus communication channels to continue to inform constituent groups of the continued progress on teaching effectiveness. Once the new action projects are initiated, Baker may want to bring committee members from the closed and new action projects together to share insights and knowledge gained.

3: Next Steps

A: Furthering the work that has developed from the current action project is commendable. Once the current action project has been closed, establishing a method for moving forward on the resulting action projects will continue your momentum in enhancing the effectiveness of the programs that you offer.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Involving a wide representation of affected constituents in project teams is important. If you have not already done so, you may want to develop an easily accessible list of representatives involved in this project for future reference. The list could be housed on an AIM project web site.

5: Project Challenges

A: Baker College should consider developing internal web pages associated with the AIM project to provide a centralized knowledge source for future reference and to maintain corporate memory. Some of the documents housed in this area could include a listing of those involved in the original and follow-up action projects to ensure that people are aware of their representation on these projects.

Project Outcome

1: REASON FOR COMPLETION

A: The AIM project was intended to accomplish three objectives:

1. An institutional definition of quality teaching
2. A plan to implement the definition
3. Processes and policies to support the plan

Goal 1 in this process was relatively easy and achieved as expected. However, the other goals led to a number of additional projects. The two most important of these were the Faculty Growth and Evaluation Project, and the Assessment Achievement Level Project. The Faculty Growth and Evaluation project was a necessary step because once the College had clearly defined our vision of quality teaching, that vision had to become integral in the work done with faculty in terms of growth as well as evaluation. Similarly, once a definition had been developed, it had to be used as a foundation in the development of assessment to achieve a match. Since these two major extensions of the project have been achieved, the AIM project can be viewed as institutionalized and ongoing. Therefore, it can be closed as a project.

2: SUCCESS FACTORS

A: The project achieved each of its primary goals. To this extent the project was extremely successful. It is clear that since the inception of this project, the discussion about teaching and learning at Baker College has changed. While concepts like "quality teaching" have always been around, previously there was no institutional commitment to what the phrase meant. Therefore, while it was used, it clearly did not communicate the same thing to each person. By having a clear and explicit definition, the College has been able to build policy and procedure to support this vision.

A prime example between the definition of quality teaching and learning and practice is seen in the Faculty Growth and Evaluation Process. Without a clear institutional definition of quality teaching, the evaluation process was forced to remain vague. The result was that the process did not provide meaningful feedback or collect reliable data that could be used for decision making. However, once an institutional understanding of Quality Teaching was enunciated, then the Faculty Evaluation process could be shaped in response to the definition. Data can now be collected that allows individuals to develop professional goals and the institution can target specific gaps between practice and vision.

The tie is now also clearly made between teaching and assessment. We believe that quality teaching and learning requires certain behavior from both instructors and students. Assessments can be built in a manner that assess in ways that are parallel to the manner in which teachers and students behave. No longer will students be expected to demonstrate knowledge in ways that are in conflict with the manner in which they have been taught.

The same idea applies to the curriculum development process. By having an explicit definition of quality teaching, curriculum can now be developed in a manner that explicitly supports this definition.

As can be seen, the project has resulted in a framework that is being used across academics as a defining force for a wide range of activities.

3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

A: Overall, the College did not realize when it began this process what a large undertaking it was. As a result, the project was likely understaffed and over-committed from the start. In the past several years, the College has become much better at recognizing the scope of projects as they are launched and a project such as this would be launched differently than occurred in the past.