Baker College, MI

Achieving Career Excellence

Participation Start: 09-01-2012   **Participation End**: 09-01-2019

Date Completed: 05-08-2018

Team Leader: Denise Bannan

Team Member(s):   Lesa Louch
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Declaration

Q:

> **Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.**

A: Traditionally, Baker College has offered a career success experience at the end of a student's program. Resume writing, interview skills and professionalism have been introduced and incorporated through a "Professional Career Strategies" course that has been taken at the end of the student's academic experience. Through the work of an ad-hoc committee, it was recognized that these foundational employment skills should instead to be introduced earlier and more often. This project provides an opportunity for the implementation of a more holistic and longitudinal approach to the development and integration of employment skills across the student life cycle.

Q:

> **Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.**

A: The Professional Career Strategies course was initially examined by an ad-hoc committee consisting of both Career Service and Academic personnel. This cross-functional committee worked for over two years to assess the employment skills content needed by all students, irrespective of major. The group was tasked with the goal of "reimagining" and designing a professional career strategies experience focused on employment and workforce skills. As a result of this effort, the committee developed a framework for embedding career-ready skills early and often within each program in the form of learning outcomes, assignments and rubrics.

The current project will focus on the implementation strategies for embedding, assessing, and ensuring the development of consistent foundational employment skills across the curriculum of all majors.

Because the College is in the midst of a strategic initiative to convert from a quarter-based to a semester-based calendar effective fall 2017 and all curriculum is being revised, the timing is ideal to begin this implementation stage.

It is anticipated that the project will take 12 months to complete.

Q:

> **List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.**

A: The project goals for Achieve Career Excellence (ACE) are a series of well-defined, self-paced assignments and activities, structured with a defined timeline, which prepare

students to seek employment or promotion (SEE Attachment Achieve Career Excellence Summary document). The newly designed learning outcomes will be fully implemented effective Fall 2017, replacing the current WRK 291B Professional Career Strategies 1-credit hour course, which will be offered last in Summer 2017.

ACE is integrated throughout a student's academic experience, beginning with the student's initial term at Baker College and ending with a completed employment portfolio approved in the capstone experience. The monitoring of student work will be achieved through the electronic database, *Handshake.* The expectation is that each student throughout his or her academic career at Baker College will complete all assignments through one of three avenues: self-paced individual assignments, program/general education courses incorporating the assignments, or program/ general education courses offering a similar assignment. The student will compile the assignments into an employment portfolio, with final assessment in the capstone work experience course.

An initial outreach communication will be sent to introduce students to ACE, with midpoint and near graduation reminders sent through Handshake, to ensure that students are progressing through the assignments. The final assessment of the assignments will occur in the capstone experience, with the awarding of a certificate of completion and points for the employment portfolio. No credit hours are associated with ACE beyond the credits received in the capstone course or in the program/general education courses.

The formal evaluation progress (with milestones) will be reviewed in the following time table:

August 15, 2016 - September 30, 2016 -- The original project team members will present the framework to all Deans of the Colleges/Schools to include the requirements of the ACE project within each program major.

October 1, 2016 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) -- Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

October 1, 2016 - January 31, 2017 -- Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

February 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) -- Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

February 1, 2017 - March 31, 2017 -- Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

April 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) -- Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

April 1, 2017 - June 30, 2017 – Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

July 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) – All programs will have a template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map

for final review of the project team.

July 1, 2017 – September 29, 2017 – Project team will review all mapping submissions with each College/School of Dean. Project will be submitted for review to the HLC regarding the status of the templates built for each program that outline the deliverables in the semester conversion of the curriculum and program outcomes to ensure quality assurance.

December 31, 2017 -- Feedback received from the HLC and Final Report Summary to Project Sponsor(s) and Project Closure Report submitted to Higher Learning Commission.

Q:

Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

A: The project team for this project will be cross-functional by design. It will include representation from all academic program areas of the institution including Instructional Designers and Career Services personnel. The project team will meet with each Dean of the College/School and key program officials to ensure clear guidelines and expectations regarding the FIVE Career Strategies outlined by the original ad-hoc committee (SEE Attachment Learning Outcomes for ACE Projects).

All programs and students will be impacted by the implementation of the ACE framework. Key performance metrics identified for the projects will demonstrate that the template created for each program identifies where and how each career-ready assignment and student learning outcome is embedded within the content of the coursework for each program area.

Q:

Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

A: Oversight for the strategic plan including all AQIP projects is the responsibility of the Institutional Strategy Council. Additionally, quarterly project updates will be provided to the Academic Leadership team consisting of Deans, Directors / VPs of Academic Affairs, and Directors / VPs of Student Affairs.

The projects consists of the following goals to be measured at the end of 12 months:

- (1) Career-ready Assignments embedded throughout the curriculum content of each program are identified.
- (2) Templates for each program area that highlight 'where and how' the student learning outcomes are being embedded into curriculum content are outlined.
- (3) Process for all program areas to monitoring student progress regarding completion of the career-ready assignments, tracked through *Handshake*, is outlined.
- (4) Electronic employment portfolio for each student prior to graduation during the capstone experience (program completion with the career preparation assignments) is created.
- (5) Transparency of the framework, reporting processes, and annual assessment dates are identified by Academic Leadership.

Q:

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: A significant challenge may arise in helping all program officials transition the career-ready skills and assignments under their leadership to monitor the progress for each student within the program. The program officials MUST ensure that each faculty teaching each course within the program understands the expectations, is knowledgeable of the Handshake system, and ensures students are compliant in completing the assignments. This will be a significant cultural change for the institution.

There may be some challenge to the assumption that the current state for the Professional Career Strategies course (owned by Career Services Personnel) will continue. Additionally, as students re-enter into the College after completion of an associate degree and further their education with the institution, some of the assignments may need to be modified and monitored. It should be noted, however, that because the College is changing to a semester-based calendar, all curriculum and outcomes will be revised and edited for all students who re-enter.

Q:

Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.

A: The project will be successful to the extent that the College has a transparent, consistent communication strategy for all stakeholders to understand the ACE project and educate current and future faculty on the importance of the career-ready foundational skills needed for today's graduates. Taking the approach of embedding these foundational skills throughout the academic journey of each student (instead of at the end of the student's program) will allow for a continuum and reinforcement of career-ready skills early and often.

Concluding Report

Q:

What is the primary reason for closing this project?

A: The primary reason for closing this project is that the original goals outlined for this project have been completed. The intent of the project was to (1) identify and embed career-ready assignments throughout the curriculum content of each program; (2) create templates for each program area that highlight 'where and how' the student learning outcomes are being embedded into curriculum content; (3) create a process for all program areas to monitoring student progress regarding completion of the career-ready assignments, tracked through Handshake; (4) create an electronic employment portfolio for each student prior to graduation during the capstone experience (program completion with the career preparation assignments); and (5) provide transparency of the framework, reporting processes, and annual assessment dates for all stakeholders.

One of the College's academic strategic initiatives, as we transitioned all 1500+ of our undergraduate courses from quarters to semesters, was to ensure that our curriculum development processes included embedding career-ready assignments throughout a program of study and not have these assignments at the end of a program, which had been the past practice. The goals of action project was to have a series of well-defined, self-paced assignments and activities, structured with a defined timeline, which prepare students to seek employment or promotion, along with providing guided activities in soft skills needed for today's workforce. The newly designed learning outcomes were fully implemented effective Fall 2017, replacing the Professional Career Strategies one-credit hour course.

As the initial project charter indicated, each program does have Achieving Career Excellence (ACE) assignments integrated throughout a student's academic experience, beginning with the student's initial term at Baker College and ending with a completed employment portfolio approved in the capstone experience. The monitoring of student work is done through the electronic database, Handshake. Each student completes the outlined assignments throughout his or her academic career at Baker College utilizing one of three avenues: self-paced individual assignments, program/general education courses incorporating the assignments, or program/ general education courses offering a similar assignment. The student completes and uploads the assignments into an employment portfolio, with final assessment in the capstone work experience course.

The project has now concluded with a sustainable framework and implementation strategy that has been tested and edited as appropriate. Input from the numerous stakeholders has allowed for the process to be transparent and easily understood by students.

Q:

What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

A: The successful aspects of this action project include many positive outcomes. Of note, this action project was far reaching. All programs and students have been impacted by the implementation of the ACE framework. Many stakeholders were involved in the initial project team for this project, which included representation from all academic program areas of the institution including Instructional Designers and Career Services personnel. The project team met with each Dean of the College/School and key program officials to ensure clear guidelines and expectations regarding the five Career Strategies outlined by the original ad-hoc committee. The conceptual framework that was implemented provided consistency and clarity for all content experts. This holistic approach provided a standardized process for programs and ensured that student learning outcomes were embedded within the content of the coursework for each program area.

Additionally, another successful outcome of this project was a shift in paradigm for the institution and personnel involved in the process. With the amount of stakeholders involved in the process, the integration of career-ready assignments and reinforcement within the content of curriculum throughout the program allowed these individuals to have a more holistic and longitudinal approach to the development and integration of employment skills across the student lifecyle. Having content experts (faculty) embedding these assignments in courses throughout the curriculum and relating these specifics to the profession allows students to have a clearer picture of how the relationship aligns and the faculty able to articulate the assignment to their chosen profession. The College will continue to refine this alignment within the program areas and further research the benefits gained from a more holistic approach to career-ready skills for our graduates.

A final successful outcome of this project is the time and planning that went into the communication plan and building the conceptual framework by the original ACE ad-hoc committee. The time spent developing a targeted communication strategy to the various stakeholder groups (specifically program officials and content experts assigned to develop curriculum) helped promote consistent knowledge and support the implementation of the framework and the template creation. This strategy minimized confusion, questions, and helped make for a smooth implementation of a wide-reaching initiative for the College's undergraduate programs. This deliberate structural change allowed for a transparent, consistent communication strategy. It allowed stakeholders to understand the framework and be able to articulate the intent and benefits of the career-ready preparation throughout the students' educational journey.

Q:

What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?

A: One aspect of this project that was less than successful was an underestimation of the significant challenge of the implementation of this project for onboarding new faculty and having consistent information shared with this new group of individuals to the Institution. The College continues to educate and train all individuals (specifically faculty) in understanding the goals intended of embedding the ACE assignments throughout the program of study for the students. Program officials continue to education, train, and check for understanding to ensure that each faculty teaching each course within the program understands the expectations, is aware of the usage of the Handshake system by students, and ensures students are compliant in completing the assignments. This has been and will continue to be a significant cultural change for the institution.

As some personnel were not close to the process of curriculum development and embedding

these career-ready assignments into the pertinent courses, they were challenged with being able to articulate 'where' these assignments were in each program area. This has since been rectified by building a consistent electronic model for ease in access for each course and program that outlines 'where' the assignments are threaded into each program area.

Additionally, as the project team had forecasted, students re-entering into the College after completion of an associate degree or only completed a few courses within their program of study have varying degrees of understanding of the newly embedded assignments or the use of *Handshake*. Hence, these students need more support from our Academic Resource personnel to assist in our new processes for using our electronic portfolio tool (*Handshake*) and elements of the career-ready assignments that are embedded in the courses.

Concluding Review

Q:

Do you have any final thoughts or feedback for this institution in regards to this project? Enter N/A if not applicable.

A: The institution has closed this project without review.

Project: Achieving Career Excellence

Version 1.0 - Project

Q:

What is the current status of your project?

A: In-progress

Q:

Please indicate the original project start date, original project end date, and anticipated completion date if project is not completed. Please list dates on separate lines.

A: The original project start date was slated for October 1, 2016, and the original project end date was September 29, 2017. This project is anticipated to close at the end of fall semester 2017 with all deliverables met for this project.

October 1, 2016 – Original Project Start Date

September 29, 2017 – Original Project End Date

December 31, 2017 – Actual Project End Date

Q:

Briefly describe the current status of the project. Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio, if applicable.

A: The action project is nearing completion and has embedded the career-ready assignments through each program of study at each degree level. One of the College's academic strategic initiatives, as we transitioned all 1500 of our undergraduate courses from quarters to semesters, was to ensure that our curriculum development processes included embedding career-ready assignments throughout a program of study and not have these assignments at the end of a program, which has been the past practice. The action project goals for Achieving Career Excellence (ACE) was to have a series of well-defined, self-paced assignments and activities, structured with a defined timeline, which prepare students to seek employment or promotion, along with providing guided activities in soft skills needed for today's workforce. The newly designed learning outcomes were fully implemented effective Fall 2017, replacing the current WRK 291B Professional Career Strategies 1-credit hour course.

As the initial project charter indicated, each program will have ACE assignments integrated throughout a student's academic experience, beginning with the student's initial term at Baker College and ending with a completed employment portfolio approved in the capstone experience. The monitoring of student work will be achieved through the electronic database, Handshake. The expectation is that each student throughout his or her academic career at Baker College will complete all assignments through one of three avenues: self-paced individual assignments, program/general education courses incorporating the assignments, or program/ general education courses offering a similar assignment. The student will compile the assignments into an employment portfolio, with final assessment in the capstone work experience course.

The goal of this action project was to ensure that students were introduced to career-ready, soft skills and preparation as part of their educational journey. No credit hours are associated with ACE beyond the credits received in the capstone course or in the program/general education courses.

Q:

List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal.

A: The original project declaration outlined the following goals to be measured at the end of 12 months:

- (1) Career-ready Assignments embedded throughout the curriculum content of each program are identified.

Update: All programs have identified and embedded the content of the ACE assignments throughout each degree level. See Attached ACE Template.

- (2) Templates for each program area that highlight 'where and how' the student learning outcomes are being embedded into curriculum content are outlined.

Update: Please see the attached 'templates' that outline where and how each ACE assignment is being addressed.

- (3) Process for all program areas to monitoring student progress regarding completion of the career-ready assignments, tracked through Handshake, is outlined.

Update: Two verification specialists have been identified who will be monitoring the student progression of the ACE assignments in the Handshake system and will be reaching out to potential students who are indicating that they are eligible for their work experience course and requirement to ensure all 16 assignments have been completed. The entire process, communication, and verification outline was shared with the appropriate stakeholders at the institution.

- (4) Electronic employment portfolio for each student prior to graduation during the capstone experience (program completion with the career preparation assignments) is created.

Update: This particular goal will be monitored and measured at the end of the fall semester 2017 for potential graduates. This electronic portfolio will be reviewed for accuracy and professionalism by the program officials.

- (5) Transparency of the framework, reporting processes, and annual assessment dates are identified by Academic Leadership.

Update: As we have just deployed the framework for fall semester 2017, we have monitoring dates outlined for continuous quality improvement metrics to ensure the sustainability and viability of the processes outlined.   This project will continue to exist through sustainable measure and checkpoints by various individuals (program faculty, program officials, Deans, verification specialists, and Registrars' office for graduate clearing purposes)

Link 1: ACE Program Templates
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1jN3i3NYUyFeVRoa3ZZQVV1dTQ

Q:

Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year.

A: As explained in earlier responses, the project outlined a template, along with identified milestones of how and where the ACE assignments were embedded in each program area. The project team provided the framework and templates to standardize the reporting process for all program areas. The Deans of each of the Colleges / Schools of met with program officials within their respective disciplines to prepare the assignments, alignment, and templates by which all areas will be measured.

During each semester's faculty discipline specific meetings the ACE assignments will be reviewed and any concerns and/or questions will be addressed at this time. However, if questions arise throughout the quarter by personnel involved in the support of students completing these assignments, Deans or the Director of Career Services will provide the necessary support. This check in period will allow all Deans and Department Chairs and/or Program Officials to identify any gaps in understanding and outline the expectations. As the project continues to evolve throughout the next twelve months, the College will have an outlined assessment plan and continue to clarify and update any expectations as to the measurable outcomes for faculty, verification specialists, program officials, and department chairs.

At this time the College has fully operationalized the implementation of the outlined templates for each program area. As data becomes available, the College will collect, analyze, and report this data to the appropriate stakeholders.

Q:

Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the

project's duration, particularly during the past year.

A: The project team for this project was cross-functional by design. It included representation from all academic program areas of the institution including Instructional Designers and Career Services personnel. The project team met with each Dean of the College/School and key program officials to ensure clear guidelines and expectations regarding the FIVE Career Strategies outlined by the original ad-hoc committee. All programs and students have been impacted by the implementation of the ACE framework. As indicated in this action project implementation, the key stakeholders included all academic Deans, program officials, and faculty who teach at the institution. As stated, our Career Services personnel were involved in the project to assist the program officials in determining the appropriate placement of the career-ready assignments for all degree levels. This holistic approach to the alignment provided a standardized process for programs and ensured that student learning outcomes were embedded within the content of the coursework for each program area.

Q:

Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

A: Traditionally, Baker College has offered a career success experience at the end of a student's program. Resume writing, interview skills and professionalism have been introduced and incorporated through a "Professional Career Strategies" course that has been taken at the end of the student's academic experience. Through the work of an ad-hoc committee, it was recognized that these foundational employment skills should instead to be introduced earlier and more often and was researched as a best practice. This project provided an opportunity for the implementation of a more holistic and longitudinal approach to the development and integration of employment skills across the student lifecycle.

Although this project was a shift in paradigm for the institution and personnel involved in the process, the integration of career-ready assignments and reinforcement within the content of curriculum throughout the program will ensure that students are connecting these skill sets to their chosen career profession. The original thought from the project team was to ensure that students connected their career readiness to their program of study. Having content experts (faculty) embedding these assignments in courses throughout the curriculum and relating these specifics to the profession allows students to have a clearer picture of how the relationship aligns. The College will continue to refine this alignment within the program areas and further research the benefits gained from a more holistic approach to career ready skills for our graduates.

Q:

Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: As was indicated in the project declaration, the institution continues to educate and train all individuals (specifically faculty) in understanding the goals intended of embedding the ACE assignments throughout the program of study for the students. Program officials continue to education, train, and check for understanding to ensure that each faculty teaching each course within the program understands the expectations, is aware of the usage of the Handshake system by students, and ensures students are compliant in completing the assignments. This has been and will continue to be a significant cultural change for the institution.

The Career Services personnel have also been challenged with 'letting go' of the past since they taught the course for many years. Additionally, as the project team had forecasted, students re-entering into the College after completion of an associate degree or a few courses within the program of study have varying degrees of understanding of the newly embedded assignments and, therefore, need to reach out to our Academic Resource personnel to assist in our new processes.

Q:

In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step.

A: The next steps are as follows. The Dean and Program Officials will continue to provide education and training for all faculty to ensure there are clear expectations in each of the program / course areas regarding the embedding of career-ready assignments in the program areas. Meetings and training sessions will continue to be held to ensure that all individuals involved in the process -- faculty, Academic Resource Center (ARC(personnel, instructional design staff, and program officials -- have clear direction to support students in the completion of these assignments. If there is any indication that clarify of individual roles or assignments are not clear, the Deans, along with Program Officials / Department Chairs, will re-assess the outlined strategies. It will be important for the College to assist with holding all employees accountable to the outlined expectations consistently and fairly to ensure students have the necessary skill set (including career ready skills) to be successful in job searches and potential career opportunities.

As part of the ongoing assessment, an annual review of the progress of students and ACE assignments will be outlined for each program area. Any edits to the original outlined assignments and placement will be evaluated by the Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Officials at that time. The goal of this ongoing assessment process will provide feedback, affirm alignment, and continue to monitor progression of career-ready skills for all students in all programs. This process will allow for the comprehensive evaluation of the initial project goals and ensure sustainability of the process.

Finally, ensuring the fidelity of the templates and providing consistency in messaging to all stakeholders will ensure that graduates have the same common career-ready skill set for their chosen profession.

Q:

Provide any additional information, inquiries, or concerns that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project. Enter N/A if not applicable.

A: N/A

Version 1.0 - Update

Q:

I certify that this project is ready for review.

A:

Version 1.0 - Review

Q:

Please comment on anything that is omitted or incomplete in the project status, dates and summary field. Enter N/A if not applicable.

A:

Q:

Check for accuracy and completeness against the original Project Declaration. Are the right metrics or measures included for each goal? If not, what revisions to the metrics/measures would you suggest that the institution consider?

A:

Q:

Has the institution acted in meaningful ways to pursue project success, making progress as anticipated in the original project declaration? If meaningful progress or project success has not been achieved, has the institution made appropriate revisions to the goals or anticipated outcomes for this project? • Are descriptions of resources, organization, concrete results, and reaching milestones included? • Make a statement of global judgment. (i.e. "The institution is making [excellent/good/satisfactory/ acceptable/slow/ casual/no] progress in this action project.").

A:

Q:

Are the appropriate people involved sufficiently for the nature and scope of the project?

• Is there sufficient breadth of involvement?

• Are the right people involved? • Emphasize the roles of those who can enhance the impact, success, or effectiveness of the project.

• Tactfully call attention to any people that appear to have been omitted or bypassed.

A:

Q:

Does the institution show evidence of learning from what it did well?

• Acknowledge any practice that could be replicated internally in future projects.

• Encourage the sharing of best practices with other institutions.

A:

Q:

Does the institution have a realistic understanding of what it needs to address in order to achieve progress and, ultimately, project success? Does it assess its internal and external environments, recognizing the potential forces that could hinder success? Is anything overlooked?

A:

Q:

Does the institution understand the current status of its project and know how it intends to pursue project success?

A:

Q:

Overall, does the institution demonstrate a good faith effort in its pursuit of continuous quality improvement through this action project? Is there anything of concern that should be brought to the attention of AQIP via your mentor?

A: