

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Baker College

| Project Details | | | |
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| Title | Affirming Student Success Through Data | Status | COMPLETED |
| Category | 1-Helping Students Learn | Updated | 08-08-2013 |
| Timeline | | Reviewed | 09-09-2013 |
| | Planned Project Kickoff 05-21-2012 | Created | 09-04-2012 |
| | Actual Completion 11-01-2013 | Version | 1 |

1: Project Goal

- A:** The first phase of this project is to review the processes and information presented at the monthly JCAC meetings. The desired future state is to:
- Review and edit, if necessary, the approval process for changes to courses and programs
 - Develop a process using data to consistently evaluate outcomes and improve student learning
 - Develop operational practices that support a focus on data-driven decisions at all levels—beginning, and piloting, this practice with the System Directors at JCAC monthly meetings
 - Build capacity among System Directors through a monthly JCAC assessment agenda item to consistently identify, find, interpret, and use data to drive academic decisions related to student learning.

2: Reasons For Project

- A:** Through the Systems Portfolio process, teams identified a lack of data to measure effectiveness of academic programs. The Academic Division has not clearly identified data needed and how it is collected, stored, accessed, analyzed, and used. Our failure to identify and prioritize data has limited our ability to maximize our institutional effectiveness.

With our current practices, relevant evidence relying on assessment data is not consistently used to drive curricular changes. Content experts should evaluate and recommend changes to course / program content based on evidence of student learning gaps. A more deliberate, well-defined process for implementing recommendations will enhance the quality of academic curriculum decisions.

The Academic Division will become a consistent user of relevant data resulting in the improvement of program quality and rigor contributing to student career readiness.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

- A:**
- Academic Division (specific departments include):
 - Business Administration
 - CIS and Technology
 - Developmental and General Education
 - Education and Human Service
 - Health Sciences
 - Assessment
 - Curriculum
 - Effective Teaching and Learning
 - Information Systems Division

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Key processes or activities impacted are the program meetings for course / program review; JCAC meetings; approval processes for curricular decisions, and assessment processes.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The project, as it is conceived, will touch personnel throughout the academic division. Formulated as a series of steps to final goals, each step will need to be implemented sequentially to build on previous work. This process requires work to be done across the academic year with a planned completion prior to the start of the 2013-2014 year.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Action projects at Baker College are monitored by the AQIP Council to ensure that they are on-track and have the support that they need for success. This project, headed by the VP for Academics for the Baker College system, also is supported by a team of academic leaders that have formulated milestones throughout the project. The milestones help direct the timeline and create immediate feedback demonstrating that the project is on schedule or not.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Success of this project will be measured through the documented use of consistent data collection that drives curriculum decisions for continuous quality improvement. The process for curriculum decisions will include incorporating assessment practices as part of the JCAC. Evidence will be provided through assessment reports. These reports will be reviewed by System Directors with program officials, and the recommendations for changes in courses and programs will be driven by this data.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This project has resulted in a new approval process for course and curricular changes. The college sought to streamline the process by which changes were submitted and approved. A new process was developed that allows for quicker decisions and in many cases fewer levels of approval. Once a program determines that a change is needed, the change is taken to the system director. In some cases the system director can approve the request and changes are implemented immediately. In other cases, once approval is received from the system director, the change can be immediately taken to the "evidence room." The evidence room is staffed by a group of the chief academic officers from several campuses. This group listens to the rationale and reviews evidence and determines if the change can be implemented. For some changes, approval can be given at this level. In rare circumstances when a change involves all campuses the decision is delayed until the full meeting of the chief academic officers is held.

At this time the new process has been implemented and is being tracked for efficiency and effectiveness.

2: Institution Involvement

A: This project was undertaken by a team headed by the System Vice President for Academics. The team included CAO's from campuses, system program directors and campus directors and faculty. The project took care to involve individuals from all layers as well as across disciplines and campuses. This was important because all stakeholders needed confidence in any new system that their needs and view points would be understood and respected.

3: Next Steps

A: At the current time the project group is continuing to work to develop standardized forms and to place these forms online for easy access and completion. As more requests are brought forth through the process, forms can be edited to ensure that all necessary data is being collected based on the specific type of request under consideration.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The most effective practice that has developed was moving the decision making as close as possible to the request. Rather than waiting for some period of time, attending additional meetings, and having work-in-progress, allowing decisions to be made when program groups are already together saves time. If a decision is made to implement a change, action can be taken immediately. If a decision is made not to make a change, program staff know this immediately and can respond to remaining needs without waiting for further direction.

5: Project Challenges

A: Data remains difficult to obtain and manage. As professionals, faculty members have very good knowledge and skills and are often aware of the need for change and able to enunciate the change needed. Creating problem statements that are tied to metrics and using those metrics to drive decisions for change is difficult. The college expects to continue to struggle in this area as we strive to better collect, analyze and use data across the institution.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The institution is off to a good start having implemented the initial phase of the action project: a new, streamlined review process for instituting changes in courses or programs. This is an important step, given the demand for colleges and universities to be agile in responding to the changing demands of the workforce, employers and other internal and external stakeholders. The institution also desires to use data to effectively measure how any curricular changes have affected student learning, but indications are that the data collection and analysis piece is a work in progress.

In terms of tracking the efficiency and effectiveness of the new process, it may be possible to describe the old process compared to the new one and indicate how the timelines from proposed change to implementation have been condensed. For your next update, consider comparing the old and new processes to determine what has been effective.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Key academic leadership from top administration down to the faculty level appear to be involved in all phases of the process overhaul. Given this is a predominantly academic endeavor, the need to involve all levels of the academic affairs side of the organization is obvious and the institution recognizes this. At some level, academic processes can also involve student services such as advisors, counselors and financial aid. While the support services may not need to be directly involved in the process change, they can provide input that might help inform the decision-making.

3: Next Steps

A: A standardized form should help in making the new course or program change process more efficient and makes sense as a logical next step in implementing the first phase of the action plan. It would seem logical that another important next step is establishing benchmarks or metrics for collecting and analyzing data to determine the effectiveness of the new process. It would also be important to establish outcomes assessment data to compare and contrast old versions of courses or programs to the new versions to see if the changes brought about desired results.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Since course and program changes are typically proposed at the program faculty level, this process has effectively done what it intended to do, which is empower program areas to drive needed change. As stated earlier, a data collection and analysis mechanism, if not already in place, should be implemented so that proposed changes are data-informed, and results from proposed changes are assessed as well.

5: Project Challenges

A: Tying student success, persistence and completion and articulating institution value will become more and more important in the future given recent statements from President Obama and others. Outcomes assessment based on student performance in courses and programs should provide the institution with a sense for what changes are or are not working. An Employer satisfaction survey could also provide needed data on the effectiveness of these initiatives. If persistence is one criteria of success, perhaps looking at the number of course completers and program completers before and after changes were made would be a helpful way to determine what is or is not working. As you may be aware, HLC offers an assessment academy, which might be helpful in identifying the data sets you need.

As it stands, this project is off to a good start and addresses or will address Category 1: Helping Students learn, Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' needs, and Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.

The institution is making good progress in this action project.

Project Outcome

1: REASON FOR COMPLETION

A: The main purpose of this AQIP project was to review and modify (if necessary) the approval process for approving curricular decisions and institute a framework that would provide program officials with an assessment philosophy that would be implemented holistically throughout the institution. Both of these objectives were accomplished.

2: SUCCESS FACTORS

A: The major accomplishment in this project was to bring all program officials together to work on curricular items in a holistic approach and to utilize an assessment process that provides all programs with a framework to provide evidence prior to making adjustments in curriculum decisions. In previous years, program representatives across the system would come to Flint one or two times per year to talk about curriculum changes in needed based on little to no evidence. The meeting structure provided decisions to be made in a vacuum and if resources (such as instructional design, assessment review, validity of measurement tools, etc.) were needed, the program representatives would have to request this resource for future and most of the curriculum changes were done 'externally' outside the meeting time. This structure provided many inefficient uses of time, work in progress, delays in changes, and costly expenses to the Colleges because the work was being done outside of the meeting time. The following items were identified by the project team as successful accomplishments of this project:

Each campus identified ONE program official (champion, coordinator, director) to represent the program, which expanded the voices of participants (over 400 participants in the program quarterly workshops).

The program quarterly workshop brought resources to the programs for support of evidence-based changes, which provided a message that the infrastructure changes provided a conduit to have more impactful institutional changes versus one program or division making changes. This change made program meetings much more transparent, less secretive, more collaborative, and also raised the level of accountability through the new structure.

System Directors embraced a shared leadership approach, worked in concert, and had an united front. With this new structure, the overall concept of all System Directors helping program officials even when in different divisions allowed all individuals to view the Directors as a larger team. All system academic personnel (instructional designers, assessment personnel, effective teaching and learning staff) became part of the support for all programs and provided meaningful information and workshops to program officials.

Program officials felt empowered to make decisions in their programs that did not need further approval (transparent to the program officials). The approval process for a change was brought to the program level because program officials know whether they have the evidence or not to make a requested change. Program people are feeling the ownership of their program and a much better use of everyone's time. Due to the holistic conversations regarding institutional priorities the program officials were conscientious of credit hour changes and cognizant of duplication of SLO from associate to bachelor level. It was apparent that the sophistication of questions being asked were much more holistic in the approach.

The CAOs facilitated the evidence room conversation. It was evident that the knowledge-level capacity building of the CAOs was phenomenal. The CAOs embraced the concept of providing meaningful evidence and had conversations that explored different ways for approaching the requested changes. Program officials were not only appreciative of the conversations but also gained valuable insight into new ways of defining 'what the root cause' of the problem they are trying to address in their requested changes.

Overall, the entire project provided an outcome that is a well-defined process for improving student learning based on evidence and a well-defined framework for assessment whereby all programs have a clear understanding of the steps in the process that are transparent to all stakeholders.

3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

A:

The project team identified aspects of the project that provided challenges, which include:

- With the increased participants in one location at one time, brought logistical issues with organizing the large group.
- Due to a vast majority of the program officials being adjunct faculty, there was a disparity within the leadership for different programs and some embraced the empowered of being a leader, while groups struggled.
- Programs are still "siloed" under each director. Program team identified that it would be beneficial for each director to be able to facilitate other divisions and be 'less divisional' driven.
- Some leadership levels still struggled with "how" they fit into the overall system program quarterly meeting structure (specifically campus Deans).