

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Baker College

Project Details		
Title	Career Concepts	Status IN REVIEW
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated 12-21-2015
Timeline		Reviewed
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-01-2014	Created 06-03-2014
	Target Completion 06-30-2015	Version 1

1: PROJECT GOAL

A: This action project will respond to data collected from employers that students are not as strong in some "career ready skills" as they are in career specific skills." The project will seek to understand conditions that contribute to continued opportunities for student growth specifically in relation to career ready skills including critical thinking, writing, and transfer of knowledge.

2: REASON FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT

A: The mission of Baker College indicates that graduates will be prepared to be successful in their chosen career field. In an attempt to determine potential gaps in the career readiness of Baker students, data was collected via a survey from Advisory Board members (employers) in 2013. Results from the data indicated that some graduates were not adequately prepared in the areas of critical thinking, writing and transfer of knowledge. While students consistently demonstrate strong knowledge in career specific skills, employers have indicated that to be more competitive, students must be better prepared in specific areas.

3: ORGANIZATIONAL AREAS AFFECTED

A: Academics- all divisions

4: KEY ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

A: It is anticipated that this project will impact how the academic division thinks about and defines "career ready skills" across the curriculum. It is also anticipated that this may impact the course/program design process as well as assessment processes at course and program levels.

5: PROJECT TIMEFRAME RATIONALE

A: The project is envisioned as an 18 month project. The project team needs to ensure that they fully understand employer concerns and then have time to work with academic programs to conceptualize responses. Once responses are identified, program changes will need to be made and assessed. The project must continue long enough to ensure that the identified changes are impactful and can be maintained.

6: PROJECT SUCCESS MONITORING

A: The success of the project will be overseen by the project time and by the CAO/System Directors who will receive regular updates on the project. By reporting to the academic leadership team, the project team will need to ensure they are progressing as leadership intends.

7: PROJECT OUTCOME MEASURES

A: At this time, the project has not identified specific metrics for measurement. It is anticipated that a specific definition of "career ready skills" will be developed and that this definition will be operationalized. This will allow metrics to be identified and implemented as appropriate.

Project Update

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A:

General Project Status: _____ Completed ___ In Progress **XX** Suspended ___ Reopened

Project Developed: **2013-2014**

Original Project Start Date: **JANUARY, 2015**

Originally Projected End Date: **JUNE, 2015**

Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed: **DECEMBER, 2015**

This project is being discontinued, due to an unexpected reduction in student registration numbers in identified classes that were to be used to collect data for this project. This created a gap in the ability to collect substantial and relevant data for this project.

While this project was not an explicit challenge in the systems portfolio, a burning platform arose through consistent anecdotal comments from Career Advisory Boards, indicating a lack of consistent expectations, thinking skills and standards for students in externships and internships. In addition, a random sample of Baker students completed the CCTST (California Critical Thinking Skills Test) and scored in the lowest 31st percentile. Using Lean Six Sigma tools and processes to review all of the available data and information, it was determined that the focus of this project would be to improve the quality and consistency of the teaching of critical thinking skills measured through the collection of pre and post-test CCTST student data.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A:

Goal 1: To embed critical thinking skills into curriculum in the business program.

Goal 2: To train faculty in methods of how to effectively teach critical thinking.

Goal 3: To collect baseline data regarding students critical thinking skills levels, using the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) for a selected group of students.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A:

A pilot project grew out of the college's need to understand and identify specific ways in which students could improve the quality of their career-readiness. After a review of available employer feedback and faculty feedback, it was originally designed to include the following steps:

- Identify target group of students to be pre and post tested using the CCTST.
 - Identified Management 101 as the pre-test course and Finance 101 as the post-test course.
- Clarify that students being post-tested must have completed 3 courses, including Marketing 101.
- Identify specific campuses who will be involved
- Revise the teaching plans for four (4) courses to include the deliberate teaching of critical thinking skills within the student learning outcomes.
- Provide specific training in the teaching of critical thinking skills for all faculty who would be teaching the 4 selected Business courses using materials provided by CCTST.
- Create a timeline for the project.
 - Pretesting Winter quarter, 2015
 - Post-testing Spring quarter, 2015
- Complete the pre and post testing of the target group of students.
- Collect the pre and post testing data.
- Develop some conclusions from analyzing the data.
- Debrief the teaching process with the faculty involved in the project.
- Develop a process for improving and expanding the process and data collection.

Initially, 464 students completed the pretest and data was collected. Unfortunately, when the post-test timeline was approached, it was apparent that the original group of students were no longer registered or no longer registered in the appropriate course to take the post-test. Thus, it was impossible to collect any post-test data and the project ended.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: To ensure that this project team involved all perspectives in the identification of improving student's career-ready skills, anecdotal comments/data collected from Advisory Board groups over a several year period was reviewed, in addition to survey data collected specifically designed for this purpose. During the planning time, members from academic leadership, faculty, members from Career Services and Academic Advising were included on the team. During the past year, predominately faculty and academic leadership were directly involved in this project.

The Project Process Owner moved to another institution at the same time that the post-test data was to be collected. At about the same time, it was discovered that the target group of students who pre-tested (464) had diminished substantially, which did not provide a significant enough number to post-test, it was determined that the project could not be completed.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: This project provided the venue for deep discussion about the importance of the teaching and assessing of critical thinking skills. While the pilot model had flaws in terms of how and when to collect the data, the concept will continue to be discussed and considered for future projects.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: See above "status of project"...the Project will not be successfully completed due to an unanticipated reduction in student registrations in courses that were identified as key data collection sites. However, embedding specific critical thinking skills development into the teaching guides is a positive addition. Also, the professional development offered to faculty related to methodology in teaching students to think critically may be considered as a regular offering to new Baker faculty. It is also possible that in the future, the critical thinking skills development issue will be analyzed once again for its impact on a student's evolution from the beginning of their educational journey to the end.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: The addition of critical thinking skill development embedded into MGT101 (Introduction to Business), MKT111B (Principles of Marketing) and FIN101 (Personal Finance) will remain, as this is viewed by faculty as an improvement or enrichment to the teaching plans. Also, the critical thinking questions that were developed in the plans have enhanced the assessment in the courses. During future curriculum revisions, these questions will be reviewed and enhanced, as identified by faculty. Finally, the use of the CCCST will be reconsidered as the College moves forward. How, when and where it is used appropriately needs to be determined.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: The project allowed for the institution to review the curriculum designed for our Business programs to ensure that the 'critical thinking skills' of our students could be measured through their evolution through the Business program's introductory courses. The project team leveraged the skills attained through a Lean Six Sigma training program, designed to train academic personnel on tools and skills utilizing a 'root cause' analysis approach. Although the project could not be sustained based on enrollment trends of our students, the continuous quality improvement for personnel to define, measure, assess, implement, and control a process has provided valuable lessons to the institution on 'what' projects can be sustained and controlled for future project selection criteria.