

# Baker College, MI

## College Preparation Program

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

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

**Date Completed:** 10-01-2018

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This Results Report reflects the activity of Baker College in the Action Project Collaboration Network. It is not an official document of the Higher Learning Commission.

## Declaration

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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: Baker College has struggled to attain first year persistence and graduation rates to meet HLC's new threshold of concern for graduation rates of four-year institutions at 25%. One of the primary contributors to attrition was needed developmental coursework. To improve performances, the College will implement the College Preparation Program which requires all incoming students to become proficient in Math and English at the 1000 (or college) level prior to gaining acceptance to the College. If the College can create the structures where students begin Math and English proficient, the College will increase the likelihood of persistence and graduation.

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: Baker College is a non-for-profit private institution that has a long standing belief its responsibility as a provider of higher education to provide access to all students who seek to better themselves through the attainment of some form of post-secondary and/or credential. This includes not only traditional student populations but also a number of traditionally underserved students, at-risk students, military, and nontraditional populations. The College holds as one of its 11 Guiding Principles the philosophy of "Right to Try" for all students.

As a Right to Try institution, Baker has struggled to maintain retention, persistence, and graduation rates aligned with peer institutions with more selective admissions processes. Concerns over retention and graduation rates were cited in the College's most recent portfolio review and increased Federal scrutiny of college performance in the areas of persistence and graduation rates have created a regulatory environment that makes continuing with the existing processes and philosophical underpinnings of Right to Try problematic and potentially unsustainable to the College's ability for continued operation in underserved markets. As a part of the College's continuous quality improvement processes, there was a desire to address this issue. The College wanted to proactively address the challenge of creating the systems, structures, and policies that would allow it to create dramatic improvement on its persistence and graduation metrics while also remaining true to its philosophical, moral, and longheld belief in its responsibility to be a point of access to higher education to all students.

As a result, Baker College has developed and will implement the College Preparation Program (CPP). A committee of Baker College administrators, faculty, and staff was formed in spring of 2016 to begin working on this project. The charge of this group, was to

create structures and processes that would allow all students to still have access to Baker College, but would ensure that any student who started at Baker College taking credit bearing courses, loans, and assuming the risk of pursuing higher education was fully prepared to begin coursework at the college level. The committee was charged to create a system that would allow the College to offer tuition free opportunities to enroll in non-credit bearing developmental coursework and that would give all students the tools and support they needed to be fully prepared. The research and development of this program occurred from spring of 2016 to spring of 2017. The College is now prepared to move to implementation for the fall 2017 semester. This action project will evaluate and examine the implementation and corresponding data sets corresponding to these change of admittance practice for the institution

**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 College Preparation Program (CPP) provides Baker College a responsible framework to minimize the cost of developmental education, provide all students a path to begin studies college ready, and increasing the likelihood of graduation.

The goals of this program are to:

- Develop and implement a framework for ensuring all students fully accepted to attend Baker College are proficient in Math and English to begin their college coursework without remediation
- Develop a holistic and comprehensive strategy for academic placement of incoming students
- Develop and implement low and no-cost developmental education opportunities for those incoming students
- Assess and evaluate program performance for CPP completion, persistence, student success in the first year, and institutional graduation rates

The College Preparation Program offers the College a responsible approach to foundational skill development that protects the student and gives the College a mechanism to ensure its incoming students are fully invested and prepared to be successful. The hallmarks of the full program implementation will be a smooth and well-supported admissions process for students needing developmental coursework, the admission of fully qualified incoming students, increased academic success in the first year, increased fall-to-fall persistence, and increased graduation rates. While Baker will remain aligned with its Mission and institutional value of Right to Try, the College has never placed this level of accountability and commitment on its incoming students. This program creates a new quality and accountability focused paradigm for student admissions that is rooted in the upfront investment to yield long term student success.

Project Milestones and Deliverables:

- March 2017-May 2017 CPP implementation begins with all supporting resources and corresponding admissions processes
- June 2017- Summer orientations begin and CPP continues
- June 2017-August 2017- on going assessment and evaluation of CPP completion and advising through admission process
- August 2017- First CPP cohorts begin classes and assessment process for fall cohort begins
- September 2017- CPP process begins for spring semester students
- January 2018- CPP cohorts begin classes and assessment process for fall cohort begins
- January 2018- CPP process begins for summer semester students
- June 2018- CPP cohorts begin classes and assessment process for spring cohort begins
- June 2018- CPP program continues for 18-19 incoming students
- August 2018- Full first year assessment and evaluation process begins as fall-to-fall data becomes available
- August 2018-December 2018- CPP assessment and evaluation teams conducts data collection and statistical analysis
- January 2019- CPP assessment and evaluation team delivers comprehensive program status report to Baker College executive leadership
- January 2019- CQI process for CPP begins utilizing gaps and opportunities identified in assessment and evaluation process

**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 has three primary stakeholder groups admissions, executive administration, and incoming students. From the admissions perspective there is minimal risk; however, this change in framework alters the current processes and approach dramatically. Potentially this initial roll out may place new student start numbers at risk; however, the ethical underpinnings of the initiative far outweigh any potential loss of incoming students. Admissions staff will also be those who can affect the project the most. Admissions will be the front facing entity of the College, helping students understand, navigate, and be successful in this new program, and thus, positioning them for continued success in their studies.

Incoming students in need of foundational skill development will be the most impacted in

this process as they will be the participating stakeholders. Potentially, these student have the chance to obtain the necessary skill development in the areas of English and Math to increase their chances of success in the first year and in matriculating to graduation. Additionally, having a college- prepared student body will improve the overall student experience. While the benefit is great, the ultimate risk to these students is that if they are unable to successfully complete the College Preparation Program requirements, and thus, they will be unable to attend the College and will need to pursue other external opportunities until they can demonstrate preparedness.

Finally, those administrators at the College responsible for retention and campus performance will be affected by this initiative. This would include administrators in admissions, student services, academic affairs, as well as campus presidents. Each of these positions has a role in helping to create understanding for this new program and approach. These stakeholders are already at risk because of the current state of low rates for first year retention and graduation rates. Ultimately, the benefit comes in improving persistence and graduation rates but also in being able to articulate a clearly defined and evidence-based approach to accreditors.

**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:** The goals of this program are again:

- Develop and implement a framework for ensuring all students fully accepted to attend Baker College are proficient in Math and English to begin their college coursework without remediation
- Develop a holistic and comprehensive strategy for academic placement of incoming students
- Develop and implement low and no-cost developmental education opportunities for those incoming students
- Assess and evaluate program performance for CPP completion, persistence, student success in the first year, and institutional graduation rates

To assess and evaluate progress and performance on these goals, the institution will be tracking and monitoring the following data points related to each goal.

Develop and implement a framework for ensuring all students fully accepted to attend Baker College are proficient in Math and English to begin their college coursework without remediation

- This goal will be evaluated primarily through process fidelity. The admittance of students to the college is part of the College admissions process. This includes placement, participation in the developmental opportunities, and verification of appropriate attainment prior to being moved into a fully “accepted” candidate status at the College. After each semester start in the coming year, the college will conduct

an audit of all new student files to evaluate the percentage of student admitted who were prepared for college level curriculum as defined by the College's placement chart. The expectation is that 100% of students should be prepared academically in both Math and English. Any deviation from the 100% benchmark will represent a breakdown in process for investigation. These points will be evaluated September 2017, February 2018, and April 2018.

Develop a holistic and comprehensive strategy for academic placement of incoming students

- This goal will be evaluated through two measures. The first is process fidelity. As part of the aforementioned audits, the auditors will ensure each student was appropriately placed into college level coursework using the College's defined placement grid and philosophy. The expectation is that 100% of students should be placed properly in both Math and English when compared to the College placement matrix. Any deviation from the 100% benchmark will represent a breakdown in process for investigation. These points will be evaluated September 2017, February 2018, and April 2018.
- This goal will also be assessed through the performance and success of students placed using this process and these criteria. These points will be evaluated September 2017, February 2018, and April 2018. The College will collect and analyze the following data sets:
  - Students successful completion of placement courses in Math and English. It should be noted that this is a placement process that will advance students as well as indicate a developmental need. Successful is defined by earning college credit in accordance with the College's grade policies.
  - Students performance in their courses in Math and English using grade data and performance on the institution's direct measures assessments.
  - Where available, this project will also collect and review data on students successful completion of the next course (if any) in Math and English. Successful is defined by earning college credit in accordance with the College's grade policies.

Develop and implement low and no-cost developmental education opportunities for those incoming students

- Implementation will be assessed through utilization and performance data collected September 2017, February 2018, and April 2018
  - The College identifies three mechanisms for achieving the needed college level status for acceptance. The College will measure the ratio of student need to student utilization of Baker FastTracks, related StraighterLine courses, and successful completion of aligned classes at a community college or other institution

Assess and evaluate program performance for CPP completion, persistence, student success in the first year courses, and institutional graduation rates.

- It is acknowledged that the graduation indicator will not be assessed during the defined timeline of the project however it felt important to share that the College will be monitoring the cohort progress towards graduation as part of the CQI process.
- Some of these indicators have already been cited as measures for other goals. Collectively these data points will be monitored on an ongoing basis to create a dashboard that institutional leaders and interested parties can use to track and evaluate performance.

**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 stakeholders transition their messaging to prospective students and outline the options that potential students have in order to be successful in College. The messaging **MUST** be consistent, encouraging, and focused on success of each individual student in the on boarding process. This will be a significant cultural change for the institution.

**Q:**

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

**A:** N / A

## Concluding Report

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**Q:**

**What is the primary reason for closing this project?**

**A:** Baker College has moved through two complete cycles of the processes outlined in this action project. The College collected relevant data and was able to conduct a thorough review of process results and metrics. At this time, the proposed one-year cycle for the original action project has concluded. There is no additional work to undertake and as such, management of the process is integrated to a sustainable standard operating procedure. The College Preparation Program (CPP) committee originally formed to develop and implement the project continues as a standing College committee focusing on data analysis and quality improvement initiatives on an annual cycle.

**Q:**

**What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?**

**A:** Numerous aspects of this project demonstrate success and improvement over previous methodologies. Perhaps the most important is that through this action project the College now has a well-functioning and low-cost developmental education program for Math and English. The College took the responsible steps to keep students who were perhaps the most at risk academically and provide them opportunities to be prepared for 100-level coursework. This occurs without these students incurring the student loan debt that would accompany other credit-bearing programs. Another major accomplishment was the improvement and diversification of resources used to support students. During this action project, the College saw success through its partnership with Straighterline ( a low cost developmental education provider) and transitioned its Math curriculum to ALEKS. ALEKS is an adaptive release and self-paced product that decreases time to completion and does not require students to complete work on unnecessary mastered competencies. The final successful aspect of this project is the resulting structure. This action project helped the College organize staff, process, resources, and student support into a clear and well-defined framework that supports student learning. This framework also established a cycle of evaluation, clear metrics, and an ongoing improvement plan.

**Q:**

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

**A:** The College currently is working on two aspects of the original project. The first is in expanding the data analysis to include student performance in the subsequent coursework in the areas of Math and English. The College collected and analyzed a great deal of data

specifically related to student performance in the skill development in Math and English; however, the, the College acknowledged the need to know if success in these frontend experiences led to corresponding success and preparation in subsequent credit bearing college courses. The other aspect of this project that continues as part of the improvement strategies is the overall success rate. Initial data indicates that those who complete the programs successfully are prepared for future coursework; however, a number of students either did not complete the required coursework or never engaged in the course. The College is working to understand those students who were unsuccessful or chose not to engage. The goal is to understand this unique subset of the population in a way that may give the College additional strategies for delivery, methodology, or process.

## Concluding Review

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**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 project is complete. The College collected and reviewed data and metrics. Good work.

## Project: College Preparation Program

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### Version 1.0 - Project

**Q:**

**What is the current status of your project?**

**A:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

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Version 1.0 - Update

**Q:**

**I certify that this project is ready for review.**

A:

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## 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: