The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Baker College

Project Details			
Title	Improving General Education through Increased Collaboration	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	5-Leading and Communicating	**Updated**	09-14-2009
Timeline		**Reviewed**	09-20-2009
Planned Project Kickoff	03-01-2007	**Created**	11-24-2009
Actual Completion	12-31-2009	**Version**	3

1: Project Goal

A: Baker College employs approximately 2,000 part-time faculty, the majority in general education and developmental education. Most (75%) of our faculty have been with the college five years or less. To support collaboration with our faculty, this project will utilize a combination of communication strategies, mentoring programs, and professional development to engage faculty. A particular goal is to promote the Baker College mission and culture and increase awareness of our right to try philosophy as well as dispel myths about Baker College. Another dimension of this effort will be to assess if we have sufficient full-time faculty in each area and on each campus. We anticipate beginning our efforts with general education and developmental education faculty, as they represent the largest single group of faculty as well as a group that impacts all students.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Baker College has grown rapidly in the last decade in locations, students, and faculty. Our traditional processes for communication can not support the complex organization that we have become. We rely heavily on adjunct faculty, which adds to the challenges of communication. Not surprisingly, communication was a frequently mentioned concern during our self-study and strategic planning process. We see communication has a two-way process where the faculty can not only be more informed about Baker College, but we as a college can learn from our faculty. Without such a process in place, our ability to implement continuous quality improvement in other areas will be severely limited.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Faculty and academic administrators primarily in general education and developmental education.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: This project will address how we create and build relationships within your institution with respect to faculty and How we assure integration and communication across these relationships.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: We anticipate using the first year to develop an understanding of our current communication and collaboration processes, the second year to develop and pilot improvements with the third year for full-implementation.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The action team will meet monthly to review progress. The leaders of the four action teams will also meet periodically to review progress of the four projects.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: One outcome measure will be faculty satisfaction and engagement. A second set of measures will be the development and results from measures of student learning related to institutional student learning outcomes.

8: Other Information

A: An action team led by the System President has been formed to oversee this project.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The project proceeded according to plan during the September 1, 2008 thru August 31, 2009 academic year. The bulk of the project activity occurred within the committees that were established subsequent to the retreat held for General Education Deans and composition faculty on August 28th and 29th, 2008. Committees formed and active were as follows: • Curriculum and Assessment • Professional Development • Departmental Structure The committees were effective and have developed action plans for the September 1, 2009 thru August 31, 2010 academic year. Following is a brief summary of actions taken by the committees. Curriculum and Assessment This committee developed new Student Learning Outcomes for the Colleges Composition I and Composition II courses. It should be noted that approximately 8,000 students and 6,000 students take Comp I and II respectively during an academic year. The committee's work also included developing the following: • Consistent Course Philosophy • Consistent Assignments • Consistent Point System • Consistent Grading Scale and Assessment Professional Development Prior to this project, the College taught both APA and MLS in the Comp I and Comp II classes. Beginning in the 2009-2010 year, only APA will be taught. "Train the Trainer" sessions were held in March, April and June to participants from all ten campus divisions to facilitate the conversion to APA and to deliver APA training to Comp faculty across the Baker College System. On September 16, 2009, an Annual Writing Conference will be held at the College's Clinton Township campus. Approximately 180 faculty members will participate. The conference will focus on assessment of student writing. The conference answers faculty requests for professional development specific to their discipline. The conference will be conducted annually. Departmental Structure For the 2009-2010 year, all campuses have added a Director of College Writing, established a physical location for a Writing Center and added at least one full time faculty. The structure of meetings to review Comp I and Comp II has been redesigned to insure broader input from all campuses.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Actions taken by the three committees were communicated to all General Education faculty members. The System Director of General Education met frequently with campus General Education Deans and kept them informed of all committee activities. Detailed records of committee meetings are archived and housed on the College's Blackboard site for the project. All committees were comprised of General Education Deans and General Education Faculty. Committee members were allowed to take ownership of the process. Committee members demonstrated a passion for their subject area and a strong desire to produce quality courses for students.

3: Next Steps

A: The Annual Writing conference will be held on September 16, 2009. Participants will provide feedback on the event and future changes will be made based upon the participants input. An inclusive process to construct the Annual Writing conference has been established. A survey has been conducted measuring faculty opinions regarding the project. Suggestions for improvements in communication and collaboration have been requested. Additionally, a series of focus groups were held to obtain additional data to assess the project and its impact. The project will be deemed completed shortly after the Annual Writing Conference is completed. Detailed steps for the conduct of the project have been maintained on Blackboard. The project model is being used to initiate a similar project involving math faculty. A final report on the project will be written.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: 1. A multi-step planning process was used that involved a large percentage of faculty from all campuses. This created broader buy-in, and promoted a cultural shift as the institution moves toward a more collaborative structure of decision making. 2. Assessment of the process was undertaken in addition to assessment of the products. This allows for a better understanding of impact and generalization of learning as we move to work with other faculty groups. 3. Revised System meetings to reduce participants, but get broader input at the campus level. 4. The Annual Writing conference will give faculty a stronger voice in their professional development, and should improve morale and communication. 5. Measurement tools (assessment) have been established to insure

consistent delivery and quality of instruction across the 40,000 student post-secondary system.

5: **Project Challenges**

A: 1. All writing instructors have not embraced the upcoming changes. Campus Deans will work with faculty who are resistant to the changes. The assessment process will promote compliance and consistency in measurement. 2. The Annual Writing Conference needs to be effective. Listening to faculty and honoring legitimate concerns and requests will facilitate a process that is owned by the participants. 3. Communication remains an issue. Some faculty are largely unaware of the project and its impact and additional steps will need to be taken to communicate with and involve this group of individuals.

6: **AQIP Involvement**

A: At this time, the project action team is not seeking additional input or consultation.

Update Review

1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**

A: The objective of this Action Project is create and build relationships within your institution with respect to faculty and to devise methods that will assure integration and communication across these relationships. Working towards consistency in the instruction of large enrollment classes like Composition I and Composition II supports AQIP category 5 -- Leading and Communicating.

2: **Institution Involvement**

A: The coordination of the Registrar, General Education Deans and General Education faculty demonstrates the AQIP principle of Involvement, in that broad-based involvement both encourages better decisions and also strengthens ownership of those decisions among the larger community. If both full-time and adjunct faculty were involved in the conversation, the impact should be even greater.

3: **Next Steps**

A: The institution is making reasonable progress toward completion of this Action Project. The Annual Writing Conference should increase the consistency of faculty assessment of student writing, and further efforts to improve consistent delivery of Composition I & II. Were the focus groups with students or faculty?

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

A: The Annual Writing Conference should serve as a source for continuing communication among the faculty. What tools are being used to ensure broader input at the campus level? A culture of involvement draws on the expertise and practical experience of people closest to a situation and helps leaders across the organization anticipate the complex implications of decisions.

5: **Project Challenges**

A: You clearly understand the particular challenges of this Action Project. Working proactively to inform and collaborate with faculty members should reduce the number of resistant faculty with whom the Deans will need to work. The Annual Writing Conference and the Train the Trainers workshops seem to be the most effective tools for this at your institution. Community building efforts among the faculty (both face to face and online) might also help develop consistency in measurement and instruction while building collaboration.

6: **AQIP Involvement**

A: 9878

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: This project is being closed because the primary objectives have been met. Changes in work patterns, committee structure, department structure, and processes for curriculum review have resulted in increased communication and collaboration. These processes have been institutionalized and a higher level of collaborative work will continue because of infrastructure changes that will continue to support these operations.

2: Success Factors

A: The project was successful to the extent that faculty were able to see an increased commitment on the part of administration to the general education area, and all personnel have been a part of the process that led to restructuring important aspects of the general education English program at Baker College. The processes used have led to increased expectations for ongoing collaboration as well as a broader sense of success that can be achieved through more collaborative decision making processes.

Specific achievements include:
 Curriculum and Assessment –

- Gen Ed Deans and faculty established a standard rubric to be used in all COMP 1 & II courses starting in the 09-10 academic year. The rubric will provide more consistent grading and form a solid base for future assessment.
- Greater consistency has been established for course assignments and the philosophy behind courses in the writing sequence.
- Students were taught both APA and MLS in COMP I and II. MLS was eliminated.

Departmental Structure -

- A full-time Director of College Writing position was established on each campus.
- Tutorial services for writing courses were enhanced.
- Core adjunct writing instructors were added at all campuses.
- Curriculum meetings were streamlined.

Professional Development -

- A process to develop subject specific PD was put into place by Gen Ed Deans and Faculty.
- The first Annual Writing conference was held in September 2009. The conference was attended by approximately 180 faculty.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: Specific criteria and assessment tools were not identified at the start of the project. As a result, assessment of some aspects of the project were difficult. This led to an important lesson learned about how to structure projects early on so that assessment is integral to the project, not added.