

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Baker College

Project Details			
<b>Title</b>	Improving Learning of Under-prepared Students	<b>Status</b>	COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b>	09-14-2009
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b>	09-21-2009
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 03-01-2007	<b>Created</b>	11-24-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b> 04-01-2010	<b>Version</b>	3

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** This project will establish minimum-competency levels in reading, writing, and math, which will take the form of various types of exit tools, before students can advance from developmental courses to college-level programs and general education courses. Two new courses, one in math and one in English, will be developed to allow an additional ten weeks of instruction for those students who do not meet the competency requirements, but have some measure of success in the first course. Students will be required to complete developmental education courses first in their programs to ensure that they have the basic skills necessary to succeed. The ultimate goal is to improve success rates not only in the developmental courses but also in the college-level courses, as well as to improve overall retention and success toward graduation for this significant portion of our population.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Over 80% of all entering first-time students test into one of more developmental education courses, and 11% of these students test into all three developmental education areas. DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Program) has been building toward this project since Jan. 2004. A Developmental Education Initiative has been approved by the entire Baker College System, from the President's Council to the campus level. The Conversation Days provocative propositions and the Constellation Survey both identified a system wide need to improve the learning of under-prepared students.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** Academics (deans, faculty, programs), Counseling and Advising, Admissions, and the institution as a whole

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** --Student placement and advising, which is near the beginning of the student's experience with our college and its course offerings -- Academics, which includes developmental and general education, and all programs, allowing students to be more fully prepared for the challenges and rigors of their studies --Employers, who will benefit from better prepared graduates who demonstrate competency not only in their program content areas, but in soft skill areas as well

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** While some of the foundation has been laid for these changes prior to the start of this project, the exit tools for the developmental courses will not all be in place until Fall 2007. In addition, in order to measure whether we are truly successful in better preparing these students, we will need to track them through their subsequent college level courses. The results will be much more apparent in two years, with graduated measurements occurring along the way.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

**A:** The action team will meet quarterly to review progress, with subcommittees meeting at various times within the quarters. Data will be collected on a quarterly basis for the results of the competency-based exit tools. Students will also be tracked into their subsequent college-level course to determine if they are more successful as a result of these minimum competencies. The leaders of the four action teams will also meet periodically to review progress of the four projects.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The true measure of success will be an increase both in the successful completion rates of the developmental courses and in the successful completion rates of the subsequent college-level courses in English and math. Improved retention rates of these students to graduation will also be an indicator of success.

## 8: Other Information

A: Deans of Developmental Education have been in place on each campus since Jan. 2004. DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Program) action team: --10 campus deans --2 faculty representatives (one-English, one- math) --System Curriculum and Assessment directors --System Teacher Preparation Director --System Director of Institutional Research --Counseling and Learning Support Center representatives --Instructional Designer --System Director of Effective Teaching and Learning --System Vice-President of Academics --System Director of General Education and Developmental Education Establishment of a developmental education faculty group that will meet quarterly System wide training of over 300 administration, faculty, and staff in CQI, including 20 developmental education faculty Full support of the President of Baker College system

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This action project is formally referred to throughout our institution as DEQIP (Developmental Education Quality Improvement Project). The System Director of Developmental Education and deans responsible for developmental education on the various campuses have continued to meet regularly with the entire DEQIP committee. Additionally, the deans have met with faculty in various subcommittees multiple times during this past academic year to review and revise curriculum for all five developmental courses (COL 111A College Success Strategies, ENG 091 English Review – writing, ENG 098B College Reading, MTH 091 Essential Math Concepts, and MTH 099E Pre-algebra). For the COL 111a and two English courses textbook issues stimulated changes including adding a required MyReadingLab technology portion to the reading course. The math courses continue to use MyMathLab, with traditional sections using the technology for homework and the MML sections using the technology both during and outside of class time. Twice a year professional development opportunities (described in more detail in question 2 below) were provided for faculty. Specific achievements and/or changes in operation as noted below: New Developmental Education Three Attempts Policy: Effective Spring 2009, students who are required to enroll in developmental education courses will have three opportunities including withdrawals to successfully complete the developmental education courses. Learning contracts will support the second and third attempts. Students unable to successfully complete (pass) developmental education courses within three attempts (including withdrawals) will be academically dismissed from the College and unable to attend in future quarters. Data: Data supported the elimination of the additional English (Extended English Review) and Essential Math (Extended Essential Math Concepts) classes beginning fall 2009. Not enough students were eligible to enroll in these courses and of those who enrolled not enough were successful. Data also supported the elimination of the free summer workshops in the lowest level math courses. Again, not enough students were taking advantage of this opportunity and not enough students were completing the opportunity. Data supported the expansion of the demodularized format for MTH 091 to all campuses after the academic year pilot use of this format at five of the ten campuses. This demodularized format no longer uses isolated module tests to demonstrate competency, but uses quizzes and chapter tests to build to a comprehensive exit exam. This is similar in format to Pre-algebra and other college level math courses. More students who persist to the end of the course are successful under this format than in the previous versions. At Baker College, success in developmental writing is determined by submission of a portfolio which is then assessed using trained raters and a common rubric. While labor intensive, this multi-rater system provides a more comprehensive and reliable assessment of student work. Data for the portfolios show an average 84% pass rate for those students who submit portfolios. During this year, more effort has been made to track students past the completion of developmental courses into their initial college courses. Data for the subsequent college level math courses and subsequent college level English course shows that the students who completed developmental coursework are performing as well as those students who did not test into a developmental course. This demonstrates that the alterations in these classes has had a positive impact and is increasing the potential for success of this population of students.

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: This project utilized several strategies to reach different groups of stakeholders and remind them of the progress being made. To reach

out to faculty, several professional development opportunities were arranged. During the fall of 2008 all developmental English faculty were invited to a five-hour professional development session created and delivered by faculty representatives covering topics related to reading and writing. Approximately 45 English faculty attended. At this same time, all developmental math faculty were invited to a five-hour professional development session created and delivered by faculty representatives covering the creation of a community of learners in the math classroom. Approximately 65 faculty attended. Additional professional development was offered during the spring of 2009. At this time, all developmental English faculty were invited to a five-hour professional development session created by faculty representatives and deans covering the use of APA style as part of a system-wide initiative to move all courses that require research to the same style guidelines. Approximately 45 faculty attended. Similarly, all developmental math faculty were invited to a five-hour professional development session created by faculty representatives and deans covering the use of technology in the math classroom. Approximately 70 faculty attended. To reach beyond faculty, the Director of Developmental Education visited campuses to continue to keep this AQIP project in the forefront. Additionally, the director reports on this project to the Presidents and Executive Council as well as the Vice-Presidents of Academics at least twice a year. Campus-based department meetings and curriculum training and roll-outs for faculty were also held in the spring/summer/early fall in preparation for fall 2009. All AQIP Project updates are available on the Website. The Vice-President of Institutional Effectiveness also visits all campuses with periodic AQIP Project updates and results.

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** Our goal is to complete this AQIP Project on Improving Learning for the Underprepared Student by Dec. 2009. The work of this project has become an integral, on-going part of the institution's operations as is evident by the hiring of a full time System Director; full time campus deans at each campus; one fulltime associate dean and at least two full time department chairs as well as core faculty at various campuses. We will be gathering summary data to share with the HLC and all Baker stakeholders in support of the completion of this project.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

**A:** New Developmental Education Three Attempts Policy: Effective Spring 2009, students who are required to enroll in developmental education courses will have three opportunities including withdrawalals to successfully complete the developmental education courses. Students must successfully complete all required developmental education courses. Successful completion of each of the developmental courses noted above requires passing a standardized exit assessment that demonstrates a minimum standard of competency in order to enroll in the subsequent college level courses. Students unable to successfully complete (pass) any one or more of the developmental education course (ENG 091, ENG 098B, MTH 091, MTH 099E) within three attempts, including withdrawalals, will face final academic dismissal from the College and be unable to attend in future quarters. For both the second and third attempts, students will be placed on a Student Learning Contract. (A second attempt contract will serve as a warning, and a third attempt contract will serve as notice of the student facing final academic dismissal.) Limiting students who place in developmental education courses to three attempts is a best practice that helps the students realize the importance of these courses for their future academic and employment careers. It also helps to eliminate a potential financial aid burden for students who may not have the ability to graduate in a timely manner. Developmental Education - Academic Dismissal: Students unable to successfully complete (pass) developmental education courses within three attempts (including withdrawalals) will be academically dismissed from the College and unable to attend in future quarters. However, readmission may be considered if the student produces documentation of transferable college-level math and English courses which were completed following dismissal from Baker College. If a student requests Amnesty after four years and retakes COMPASS, he/she may be readmitted if COMPASS scores indicate that no developmental courses are needed. Taking Developmental Education Course First: Requiring students who place into developmental education courses to take these courses their first quarter or second quarter is a best practice that supports improved student learning in program areas as well as in the general education areas. Consistent and Standardized Curriculum: The use of consistent learning outcomes, consistent delivery methods, and consistent assessment of learning is a key element to ensuring students are gaining the same learning experiences to prepare them for the exit exams and to prepare them for the rigors of the college level courses. Consistent and Standardized Assessment: The use of consistent exit processes and exit exams for the developmental courses is key to establishing minimum levels of competency in order to measure that competency's effect on the college level courses. While the work done in the course prepares the student for the assessment and determines the grade (A – D-), every student has to demonstrate the minimum competency on the same exit exam in order to pass the developmental course. MyMathLab: The use of technology to supplement learning and to provide immediate feedback in math is a best practice. This technology allows for students to work at their own pace, to work in areas of diagnosed weakness, to prepare for quizzes and tests to demonstrate knowledge, and to provide the instructors with additional information to improve and focus instruction. MyReadingLab will be instituted this fall for the Reading class, with the same desired results. General Education math teachers are beginning to want MyMathLab in their courses, and students are requesting the use of MyMathLab in their college-level math courses. Making Decisions based on Data: A best practice that DEQIP is

committed to is to make decisions based on the data and not just on intuition or what faculty or deans think might work best. We have allowed data to change what we are doing even when we thought, for all intents and purposes, our initiative or ideas were sound. All of the above best practices in developmental education are being noted by General Education and other program areas. We often hear, "We should be doing what DEQIP is doing."

## 5: Project Challenges

**A:** One challenge for this AQIP Project is motivating and maintaining sustainability and consistency with adjunct faculty who may not have "buy-in" for this project and with less frequent, but very strategic turn-over of Developmental Education Deans. The institution, system leadership, the campus deans, and the majority of current full time and adjunct faculty are committed to our policies, processes, and curriculum surrounding this project. We will need to continually help new hires understand the project history, accomplishments, and future plans/goals. Another challenge is that with our right-to-try and open admissions policies, we will most likely never be able to achieve 100% pass rates in the developmental education courses, nor 100% successful completion in the subsequent math or English course. We can make improvements in our teaching and delivery of these courses and incorporate new delivery methods involving technology, but will still need to accept the fact that not all students will succeed.

## 6: AQIP Involvement

**A:** At this time, the AQIP Project on Improving Learning for the Underprepared Student does not require additional input to stimulate progress.

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** Baker College has built on its results from the first year of this project by focusing on building consistency through pilot projects, the use of data, the development of new policies and professional development activities. They have made great strides in curriculum revision and in policies (such as the Three Attempts Policy) in order to help assure student success wherever possible (Category 1: Helping Students Learn). The use of data and of pilot projects demonstrates the culture of continuous improvement which is used to address the issue of under-prepared students. The institution has closed the feedback loop of continuous improvement by using results obtained to evaluate the changes made and then revise processes. They have instituted several model processes to assist in student progression, including the Three Attempts Policy, elimination of two courses that were not meeting expectations, building a comprehensive exit exam and using multi-rater review of portfolios. The evaluation of these changes indicates a positive impact on student success as well as demonstrating Baker's commitment to continuous improvement.

### 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** In the prior year, additional full-time positions were added to assist in the Developmental Education Quality Improvement Project, demonstrating Baker's commitment to this endeavor. Several professional development activities have been held for Math and English faculty (Category 4: Valuing People). Attendance was around 45 for the English faculty and 60-70 for the Math faculty, although it is not clear what percentage of the whole English and Math faculty this represents. Processes in place to communicate regarding this project include visits to campuses by the Director of Developmental Education and reports twice a year to the Presidents and Executive Council and the Vice-Presidents of Academics (Category 5: Leading and Communicating). AQIP project updates are also shared with all campuses by the Vice-President of Institutional Effectiveness, helping to create a culture of continuous improvement throughout the Baker system. By providing numerous professional development activities and the leadership communications, Baker is keeping AQIP in the forefront of its strategies and demonstrating it is not just a passing whim. These activities will help obtain buy-in from all stakeholders, which is often a challenge (Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships).

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** Numerous changes have been implemented since the start of this project 2 years ago. Baker has utilized data to evaluate these changes and as a result, has already revised some of the processes, demonstrating a commitment to all phases of continuous improvement. Tracking student success across their semesters at Baker remains a challenge and can be expedited by electronic

processes, which may exist but were not mentioned in the review (Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness). Project success is enhanced by the commitment of resources, especially creation of and hiring into several new positions. Based on the progress to date, this project will likely be completed on schedule. Other institutions could benefit from learning how this project was conducted, perhaps by sharing at the HLC meeting in 2010.

#### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: By utilizing the CI process, especially the systematic collection and analysis of data, Baker has implemented several changes to help students in their progression (Category 1: Helping Students Learn, Category 3: Understanding Students' Needs). The Three Attempts Policy and the Developmental Education Dismissal Policy acknowledge that not all students will be successful and can provide valuable information for these students in seeking other experiences. Development of a standardized and consistent curriculum, including taking developmental courses first, will assist students in their learning experiences. The use of technology has also enhanced the learning methods for students. Baker should consider presenting these processes and findings at educational conferences.

#### 5: Project Challenges

A: Motivating and maintaining sustainability and consistency is a common challenge at most institutions, especially with adjunct faculty. Baker has taken steps to ensure adjuncts are included in the professional development activities and has included them in the project which will help with buy-in. Although all students will not be successful, Baker has implemented processes to assist all students on their educational paths, and should take time to celebrate their accomplishments. By committing resources to developmental education, the institution will be able to continue to apply principles of continuous improvement as they collect and analyze data and then institute the CI process anew as data is used to modify processes. Baker has demonstrated Focus, Involvement, Leadership, Information and People, all principles of High Performing Organizations.

#### 6: AQIP Involvement

A: The institution has achieved an exceptional accomplishment through this project, and its work represents an outstanding practice that ought to be shared with other higher education institutions. 9902

### Project Outcome

#### 1: Reason for completion

A: This project is being closed because the college has created an infrastructure that will oversee and continue the efforts that have been started. Work in the area will continue through the support of a revised departmental structure, increases in personnel, and more system-level processes and support. The closure of this project allows the college and the AQIP Council to turn its attention to other projects at this time.

#### 2: Success Factors

A: Accomplishments (cite data and attach):

- Tracking and monitoring of enrollment in developmental education courses, with a goal of increasing enrollment in the initial quarter(s) for new students. Through programming for our CARINA database, we are able to ensure student enrollment in developmental courses in the first or second quarter. This initially created a large increase in enrollment in developmental education courses, in particular the math courses. We have adjusted with staffing and computer lab access to meet these increases. Enrollment data attached.
- Created, tested, and implemented exit exams in all four courses, with cut scores set for all exits. Revisions to the exits made as dictated by assessment data. Tracking and monitoring of successful completion of developmental education courses, with a goal of improving the successful completion rates. Data attached.
- Tracking and monitoring of successful completion of subsequent quarter math and English courses, with a goal of leveling the playing field to show students in developmental education courses have an equal chance of being successful with students who place directly into the general education courses. Data attached.

- Tracking and monitoring of successful portfolio evaluation, with a goal of improving successful evaluation/completion. Data attached.
- Created an infrastructure to support developmental education with the following positions (human resources):
  - Deans of Developmental Education (all 10 campuses) - Jan. 2004
  - System Director for General Education and Developmental Education -Sept. 2005
  - System Math Coordinator - Dec. 2007
  - System Assistant to the Director for General Education and Developmental Education – June 2008
  - One campus has an associate dean of developmental education
  - Three campuses have department chairs – two fulltime
  - Most campuses have core faculty
- Developed processes supported by programming to track and monitor many aspects of developmental education. Data collection and analysis is accomplished on a quarterly basis and shared with the institution. Data attached.

Institutional Impact: The impact has extended beyond the developmental education courses and group. This project has resulted in a change in the culture, shifting emphasis to strategically meeting the academic needs of this significant portion of the population, rather than leaving it up to chance. Prior to DEQIP, developmental education courses were taken at any time during the student's program as long as they were completed prior to graduation along with the required college level English and/or math courses. An emphasis on improving student learning and student success supported by faculty discipline-specific professional development has been key to this project. This AQIP project is often cited as a model for other projects and initiatives in the collection and sharing of data, in data-driven decision making, and in establishing projects that are focused and supported by the entire institution.

### 3: Unsuccessful Factors

- A:
- The extended courses: students used the extended course as an excuse to not fully complete the original course; stopped working; not enough students were successfully in this extended course process.
  - Credit/no credit proposal for grading: issues dealing with concerns for student motivation derailed this idea; solution became making the exit exams the determinant for moving to the next course; grades were determined by faculty based on student work and were awarded only if exit was passed.
  - Late start/late registration policy and process: manual tracking of students missing first class session and motivating students to attend a make-up session did not work; the solution was to place the responsibility back on the student.
  - Free summer math workshops: while the numbers of students system-wide who took advantage of this opportunity were very low and the success students had in moving to the next level math course were minimal, there are campuses who continue to offer this service on a small scale, with some small successes.