

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Project Details		
Title	Build trust in leadership through improving communications and interpersonal relations.	Status COMPLETED
Category	5-Leading and Communicating	Updated 09-07-2005
Timeline		Reviewed 09-25-2005
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-03-2003	Created 11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	Version 2

1: Project Goal

A: Trust is not usually earned through any one event. It is people observing your everyday actions over the long term that earns respect and the resulting trust. Good two-way communications must take place in a variety of ways for this to happen. Our goal is to build staff trust in college leadership by planning and instituting processes that will help eliminate communication problems and build better interpersonal understanding.

2: Reasons For Project

A: This project came as a result of the Constellation Survey, The Vital Focus, and follow-up conversations. Proposals of shared governance and improved communications were put forth as project topics. Though shared governance will not be considered in this project, stakeholder input and improved communications will be. The Board of Directors provides policy governance which it expects the administration to carry out in the operations of the college. Faculty and staff are employed to facilitate instruction in their respective roles. We recognize the importance of each employee carrying out his/her respective duties in order for college operations to be effective. There are bargaining units that represent staff in contract issues. A cause and effect diagram pointed to the need for more communications and improved sense of trust through stakeholder consideration. This does not discount the fact that sometimes communications may be perceived as unpleasant, but nonetheless are necessary. Further, that effective communications depend on individuals taking responsibility to read, listen and respond in a timely fashion if they are sincere about helping improve communications. It is recognized that leadership must take the initial positive action steps to begin this process and nurture its progress.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Leadership Team Deans Council District Board All staff

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Decision making will utilize more stakeholder input. Cross sectional college and work unit teams will be organized to work on problem solving and product and process improvement. Management will make information availability more convenient and timely to access.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The president has taken a lead role in this project. It has been given a high priority with activities and participation scheduled in training, stakeholder input, use of quality tools, and team development and involvement.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Number of information documents available to staff Improved timeliness of information available Number of workload problems solved before the grievance stage Number of staff participating in Round Table discussions with the president Number of teams working on projects Number of Leadership Team members participating in training for improving quality and interpersonal relations

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Stakeholder satisfaction with communication A survey that asks how you have improved as a communicator Improved morale/trust Fewer workload grievances

8: Other Information

A: 1) Make information available on new communication mediums that are easily accessible 2) Begin Leadership Team training that will enhance human/interpersonal relations among the team and with all staff •Foundations of Quality •Color Matrix •Ropes Course •Facilitation skills 3) Convene the joint union-management workload review committee 1) Have meeting reports/notes/minutes from District Board meetings, Leadership Team meetings, Deans Council, and others available within one week by email or posted to the intranet 2) Organize a process for interested people to form teams to work on improvement projects and make recommendations for change 3) Schedule small roundtable discussions with the president for the purpose of discussing issues of concern and affording staff an opportunity to be heard 4) Continue Leadership Team development activities •Practice using the Quality Tools •Develop more stakeholder input methods 5) Continue union-management workload committee meetings 1) As a matter of routine, utilize a variety of quality tools in problem definition and solving

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: 1) Held strategic planning sessions with Board and staff in development of revised College Mission, Vision and Ends statements. An electronic system to track progress on Ends statements will be implemented during this academic year. 2) Developed Ten-Year Facility plan with input from all staff. 3) The Friday morning following a Board meeting, the President distributes a summary of the Board meeting to all staff. 4) PACE Survey completed yielding a 3.60 mean score or middle consultative system indicating a healthy campus climate. 5) Began review of Administrative policies – President's cabinet has this as a primary objective.

2: Institution Involvement

A: All staff including support, faculty and administrative were involved in both the strategic planning sessions and the development of the ten-year facility plan. Strategic planning utilized small groups of 10 – 12 to review present Ends statements and to offer modification or additional statements. A representative of each of the groups formed a team to develop a proposed Vision, Mission and set of Ends statements for presentation to the Board for final approval. A College-Wide Facility Planning Team led the Ten-Year Facility plan development. Divisional meetings were the input sessions followed by the Planning Team molding ideas into a Draft Ten-Year Plan presented to all staff for review and comment at Spring In-Service. The College Board endorsed the plan in August. When an action team finalizes a project, team members are recognized with a certificate at an all staff In-Service. One hundred twenty-one employees have been involved on 30 teams. Four teams have completed, nine are in an "as needed" status and 17 active teams remain. These action teams do not include our nine college-wide standing committees. Action teams are encouraged to form at any time.

3: Next Steps

A: At this time Southwest Tech plans to continue activities related to improving communication such as "Crucial Conversation" training for the Leadership Team and the continued use of Project Teams. After three years of concerted effort in implementing improvements regarding leading and communicating, and realizing these will always need continuous improvement, we think this Action Project is complete.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Using College-wide teams for definitive projects has increased two-way communication. Both the team to develop the draft Vision, Mission and End Statements and the team to move the Ten-Year Facility Plan forward were very effective. At this time the President is considering using a communication team to share information throughout the College. Another effective practice is a question box whereby staff may submit questions to the President. The President also has instituted a "Stump the President" session at In-Service where staff may ask questions directly or through written form. The college president and union president have had monthly dialogues

to improve communications.

5: Project Challenges

A: Communication challenges include what to share, when to share, how to share and who needs to know. As an organization grows the means of communication change and staff must take responsibility for reading their emails and newsletters and seeking answers to questions. There is very little that cannot be shared, it is just figuring out how to best share information so it will reach the most staff. Our new Action Project--Develop and implement electronic communication processes for information dissemination and feedback--chosen by the staff through a ballot process at Fall In-Service, will be replacing this project.

6: AQIP Involvement

A:

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This Action Project, Build trust in leadership through improving communications and interpersonal relations, was first submitted in October 2003. In particular, your past year's accomplishments of developing an electronic system to track progress on college goals and a 10-year facility plan with input from all staff are larger scale accomplishments which indicate excellent progress. Along with that, the indication of a healthy campus climate from the PACE survey is very positive and should be gratifying for your college. The distribution to all staff from the president of the board meeting minutes is a good practice. Is there follow up of this distribution on important topics through departmental discussions or focus group sessions? Do students or student groups get some type of summary of the meeting minutes, especially for highly relevant information?

2: Institution Involvement

A: You have done a fine job of involving college staff with the different components of this Action Project. To add value to the project and the resulting data gathered, it is strongly recommended that you consider involving other stakeholders such as students, the business community, business advisory groups, and community members. The college's facilities along with your vision and goals are no doubt of great interest to these groups of individuals. Most colleges are dependent on the goodwill, opinions, and support of their communities and their students. Involving these other stakeholders will help build long term relationships and help foster an image of a college that cares about their community and students.

3: Next Steps

A: Your next steps will move you towards institutionalization of these Action Project activities. Providing training on improving communication is important to all organizations and should go a long way towards setting up quality communication systems. It is indeed time to consider closing out the Project, celebrating your success, and reaping the benefits of your new systems. Another step might be to search the AQIP Action Project Directory to find schools with related or similar Projects for comparison data. This can help you when it is time to begin writing your AQIP Portfolio report.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: It is exciting that several effective practices are the direct result of this Action Project. Although it is time consuming to work and plan using college-wide teams, the results are often worth the effort due to innovative ideas generated and increased communication and trust. It is apparent that your college members have participated widely in this Project and that you had support for the Project at all levels. These are key ingredients for success in any major change for an institution.

5: Project Challenges

A: It is apparent that you have given a great deal of thought to this aspect of communication. The current body of research supports your conclusions that most information can be shared and that the strategies and methods of sharing are vital if good communication is to be achieved. Continuing to share information instead of trying to hide it and then continually assessing your progress will strengthen your institution. Good luck with your new Action Projects.

6: AQIP Involvement

A: