

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Project Details		
Title	Design and implement a new comprehensive student intake process.	Status COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated 09-07-2005
Timeline		Reviewed 09-14-2005
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-02-2003	Created 11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	Version 2

1: Project Goal

A: The college is dedicated to improving student success. Having a comprehensive student intake process is a crucial element in getting students off to the right start. Devising and validating an assessment process that will help predict student potential for respective program success will assist staff to better understand individual needs. We will appraise our present process, receive stakeholder input, examine best practices, benchmark, plan a new process, beta test it, and make improvements. As a result, we will develop more diagnostic and prescriptive individualized learning plans for students which should lead to more predictable student success.

2: Reasons For Project

A: This project was chosen as one of our Vital Few as a result of the Constellation Survey and the subsequent conversations. It was identified as a frustration by faculty because of the lower academic scores of some students at entrance, coupled with their desire to help students succeed. Taxpayers have expectations of an open door policy at public institutions of higher education. However, with technology increasing in all career fields, it is important that post-secondary technical colleges start their programming at a reasonable academic level in order for most students to attain the knowledge and skills required for job-entry. Technical instructors should be able to assume that students with high school diplomas can perform at the twelfth grade level, but have found this not to be true, not only here, but data show this to be true on a national basis. This results in students needing remediation either before or during program enrollment. Students with certain academic achievement problems often find conventional remediation to be a repeat of what they failed or were not interested in during high school and may not respond well or may even decide to drop out entirely unless other options are available. We recognize that many students who are not scoring at the twelfth grade, ninth-month level have great potential that has been restricted by conventional educational settings and therefore often not recognized by conventional standardized tests. Students need alternatives that suit their learning styles with activities that engage them. Having a comprehensive intake process that will identify reasons for deficiencies, diagnose a student's specific problems, perhaps uses other indicators of success such as motivation, and offers prescriptive remediation/learning activities as part of the student's individual Academic Achievement Plan (SAAP).

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The assessment staff and academic divisions should be affected by having better tools and processes to understand and help students prepare to enter and be successful in their chosen program.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Initial student assessment will be more comprehensive and diagnostic. Counselors and faculty will have more individualized prescriptive remediation options to assist students. More and varied remediation activities will be used to help students learn.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: A steering team made up of the college president, chief academic officer, Dean of Student Services, Student Effectiveness Committee (SEC) specialist, and SEC chair will lead a series of stakeholder input sessions to identify and clarify issues. The SEC specialist will investigate best practices. The Dean of Student Services will research assessment correlations among a variety of tests. A sub-team(s) will work do a cause and effect and a force field analysis to flush out ideals and problems and to make recommendations for

improving the process back to the steering team. The steering team will draft the implementation process plan and present it to the college Leadership Team for approval/further action/implementation.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Do TABE Test scores directly correlate to student success? What motivates students to do well in a program? How can student motivation be measured?

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Program retention rate improves over time Graduation rate based on academic achievement improves Student satisfaction with instruction improves

8: Other Information

A: 1)Document our present intake process 2)Explore best practices in student intake processes1)Examine assessment test & other activity correlations 2)Identify student problems that affect program readiness 3)Identify diagnostic tools that effectively identify individual student problems and needs 4)Add student goals and student assessment of learning experiences to SAAPs 5)Develop and implement a new student intake process1)Define individual prescriptive remediation activities 2)Define allowances for assessment waiver 3)Institute a team made up of academic specialists and counselors to review waivers 4)Provide SAAPs online for ease of access and updating

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: We have been studying the research from the Lumina Foundation for Education:"Paths to Persistence"; the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy:"To Ensure America's Future"; the Pell Institute: "Raising the Graduation Rates of Low Income College Students";and other sources for foundational data and best practice ideas. We have identified the need to contact potential students much earlier (high school sophomore/junior level) to raise awareness of career program options available at technical colleges and the respective entrance requirements, to do preliminary assessments for student achievement gap analysis, to prepare them for the entrance test, and to offer a variety of remedial options prior to college matriculation. The prime factor of student unpreparedness seems to be lack of awareness of what they need academically, attitudinally, and financially to be successful in college. There is still an internal debate over assessment waivers because of the differences between tests such as ACT, SAT, and the TABE. Some staff want everyone to take the TABE because it is the basis for program entrance standards. Others believe that another test or academic preparedness can demonstrate the same readiness. Further work remains to be done. The Student Academic Achievement Plans (SAAPS) are now available electronically. We will continue to work on developing the new student intake process and will need to expand the timeframe of implementation because of the many aspects needing attention, not the least of which is staff consensus. We have presented the rationale to various college stakeholder groups during the 2004-05 spring semester and 2005 summer session. The college had a presentation at the fall 2005-06 all-staff inservice on the importance of helping students prepare for matriculation. The college has a national presenter coming in October to address the issue deeper and to continue the effort toward staff buy-in. The college is collaborating with the Wisconsin Technical College System to implement a success process for underprepared learners. The plan includes offering a new transitional layer of "general college" courses to augment remedial options for students who do not quite meet their respective program entrance standards. It also calls for more pro-active interaction with high schools and parents to raise awareness and assist with preparing students for college entrance more effectively.

2: Institution Involvement

A: A cross-college team consisting of instructors, an academic dean, the chief academic officer, the student services dean, remedial staff, a program counselor, and a high school transition coordinator have been meeting biweekly to study stakeholder input, data, and process considerations. The assessment staff has prepared student preparation seminars that can be offered on campus or at local high schools. High school counselors were briefed on the concept at our annual "Counselor Day". High school teachers attending the Summer Academy were given an overview of the vision. Information sessions have been held individually with the student services

staff and the leadership team, and the entire college staff at inservice. Another major event is planned for the entire staff at the October inservice.

3: Next Steps

A: The college has decided to continue this project as one of its Vital Few under *Helping Students Learn* because of its comprehensive nature, importance for student success, and need for more time. The team will continue to sort through and debate data and issues in an effort to come to consensus on a prototype intake process that the college can initiate in the near future. We will continue to sell the stakeholders on the need, importance, and responsibilities involved in a comprehensive intake process. Faculty will need to identify course prerequisites or readiness levels so counselors will know what students need before enrolling them. Identify courses that will make up the transitional level of remediation. Identify means to raise student interest and success in general studies courses. Devise more network opportunities with high schools and parents to build awareness and support.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The college has instituted TABE test preparation workshops that raise potential student awareness of college expectations, testing skills, typical test questions, and some post secondary planning. The college is utilizing Image Now (software) to image student academic achievement plans and make them available to faculty via their computers.

5: Project Challenges

A: The challenge appears to be getting internal consensus. The project is moving slower than anticipated but it really involves more than most expected. The project is extremely important to the college with respect to student success and coincides with the System's under prepared learner initiative. Student academic readiness for college entrance is only one of the crucial elements; others include attitude, financial ability, career goal, and personal situation. To be successful, the new student intake process must address these.

6: AQIP Involvement

A:

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The New Comprehensive Student Intake Process is an Action Project that relates well to AQIP Categories (1) Helping Students Learn; (3) Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders' Needs; and, (7) Measuring Effectiveness. The College has undertaken a detailed review of current research on the topic and extracted best practice ideas. In so doing, three areas of student under preparedness were identified: academic, attitudinal and financial. Several innovative ideas have already been implemented to bring about change and others have been scheduled for adoption. In particular, the College is working with the Wisconsin Technical College System with the adoption of a success process for under prepared learners. By so doing, the College supports AQIP category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships. In furtherance of AQIP Category (4) Valuing People, the college has labored to effect staff consensus. This remains a hurdle, although progress has been made. Establishing a more firm time line for staff discussion and input might hasten the accomplishment of this Action Project.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Internal involvement in this project is both extensive and representative. The college has reached out to share the vision with appropriate high school personnel as well as its own support personnel. This connects well with AQIP category (4) Valuing People. Has the College considered adding members from any external groups such as the alumni or community to work on the project? This might broaden participation throughout the university family and local community and further support AQIP category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships. In support of AQIP category (7) Measuring Effectiveness, the college has utilized its data in the development of this project. The upcoming in-service training at the college will further communicate the project plans and reinforce AQIP category 8, Planning for Continuous Improvement.

3: Next Steps

A: With the information collected on intake processes, Southw est Wisconsin Technical College plans its next primary effort to secure consensus for the prototype. Simultaneously, faculty is being asked to identify course prerequisites, key remedial courses, and w ays to heighten student interest and contribute to their success in general courses. The College plans to increase netw orking w ith high schools and parents to enhance further support. These next steps support AQIP category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships. It w ould be helpful to establish a time line to more closely monitor steady progress.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: As part of the intake process, Southw est Wisconsin is using test preparation w orkshops to acquaint perspective students w ith college requirements. In addition, imaging softw are is being utilized to provide faculty w ith student academic achievement plans via their computers. This is commendable and, in support of AQIP categories (1) Helping Students Learn and (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs, and w ill contribute to more informed student academic advising.

5: Project Challenges

A: The College acknow ledges the challenge of obtaining internal consensus and resulting limited progress on the Student Intake Project. In addition to student under preparedness, attitude, financial ability, career goals and personal situations contribute to student success. The college is w ise to note the hurdles now limiting progress and plan to address these other impediments to student success in the upcoming year. By so doing, AQIP category (1) Helping Students Learn w ill be practiced.

6: AQIP Involvement

A: