

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Improve electronic communication processes for information dissemination and feedback.	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	6-Supporting Institutional Operations	<b>Updated</b> 09-06-2007
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 10-02-2007
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 01-06-2006	<b>Created</b> 11-24-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b>	<b>Version</b> 1

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** As part of the continuous improvement process, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College will improve electronic communication processes by taking the following actions: identify official communication systems and processes, determine what needs improvement, establish standards and guidelines for employees to follow, train staff on how to utilize the software and hardware following the established standards and guidelines, and review the communication processes annually.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Southwest Wisconsin Technical College has just completed a Department of Education Title III grant under the Strengthening Institutions Program. With Title III funds the College was provided with the opportunity to purchase many software products as well as upgrade the technology throughout the campus. Although some employees have embraced the new technology and software, many employees have not. Systems, training, and procedures need to be put in place or expanded to help employees use the new tools. Southwest Wisconsin Technical College has limited resources for hiring new employees; therefore, employees need to utilize technology to accomplish their work more efficiently and effectively.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** This Action Project affects all departments, programs, divisions, and units.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** 1. Scheduling meetings - Through the use of the College's Groupwise software, meetings will be easier to schedule using the electronic calendar system. 2. Room and resource scheduling - rooms and media equipment will be scheduled using Groupwise software from employees' work computers. 3. Two-way information flow - Communication flow has been a concern for College employees. The College will require employees to use the communication processes and tools such as email, voicemail, electronic forms, etc., to relay college information. 4. Training Verification - The Center for Learning Innovation is the training center for college staff. A formal procedure for requesting training and verifying that training has occurred for employees will be enforced. 5. Data collection/sharing - Software will be identified for the purpose of collecting and sharing data. Identified software will be supported and maintained by IT staff. Training will be provided on identified software by the Center for Learning Innovation. 6. Improving access to information - Internal and external systems will be identified, developed, or upgraded to share information with internal and external customers.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** This Action Project will be ongoing and reviewed annually. This will be a three-year cycle of plan/do/check/act.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

**A:** Periodic monitoring of resources to verify that staff are scheduling rooms and resources electronically will be tracked through the software system. Staff will be surveyed regarding their experiences with resource scheduling. Staff training will be evaluated through

surveys and employee training checklists conducted by the Center for Learning Innovation. Communication flow will be measured through periodic College climate surveys. A process will be developed to inform staff of information available, where it is located, and how it can be accessed. Staff satisfaction with access and ease of reading or understanding level of information will be monitored through a college-wide survey.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

A: This Action Project will be a success if employees utilize the tools available to them to reduce the time it takes to complete tasks or projects such as scheduling meetings, reserving rooms or equipment, or sending communications. If successful, this project will reduce stress and frustration of employees who need to complete one of the above noted tasks such as reserving rooms or equipment and cannot complete the task because staff are unavailable. Success will also occur if all employees are using the College's identified means of communication to deliver messages, information, reports, etc. Currently some employees do not utilize email, all functions of the phone system, or the calendar system. An increase in the number of employees trained in the use of the available technology will also be an indicator of success.

## 8: Other Information

A:

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: In this project there are six key organizational process(es) that Southwest Tech expects to change or improve. Following is an update of the past year's accomplishments by each key organizational process: 1) Scheduling meetings - Through the use of the College's GroupWise software, meetings will be easier to schedule using the electronic calendar system. GroupWise 7.0 Client began being installed on individual computers in October 2006, and continues as of this date. There are approximately 250 staff computers loaded with GroupWise Client. Along with the installation of GroupWise 7 as an announcement from the Center for Learning Innovation (CLI) that the new GroupWise Client (staff email/calendaring software) had a new look and feel. They announced that the CLI was providing training for the email/calendaring software. The goal of the training had two objectives: demonstrate new features of the software, and verify that each employee could use the email software on a daily basis, including putting their schedule and appointments on the calendar. The Instructional Technology Support Specialist in the CLI provided to all employees a GroupWise Quick Reference Card and the training checklist. Employees were given the opportunity to get advanced standing for power users or to sign up for one of numerous two-hour training sessions. As of September 1, 2007, 150 full-time employees have either received training or been granted advanced standing, and fifty-one (51) full-time employees have not complied with the training request. The names of the untrained staff have been given to supervisors of the untrained staff by the CLI. In addition, an on-line meeting calendar has been established on the intranet which lists all meetings set by the college such as Board, Cabinet, Deans Council, Leadership, etc. Persons interested in putting these meetings on their individual GroupWise Calendar can use an easy automatic "input to GroupWise" feature. 2) Room and resource scheduling - rooms and media equipment will be scheduled using GroupWise software from employees' work computers. Conference rooms have been identified for electronic scheduling via GroupWise resources. GroupWise resources will need to be configured for each of these rooms. A set of instructions on how to use GroupWise resources will be developed and sent out to all staff. Short training sessions will be offered by the CLI to train staff how to reserve conference rooms using GroupWise. Once implemented, the use of paper calendars for reserving conference rooms for meetings will be eliminated. The second phase of implementing GroupWise resources may involve adding additional items such as speaker phones, projectors, notebook PCs, to the resources available for electronic scheduling/reservations. 3) Two-way information flow - Communication flow has been a concern for College employees. The College will require employees to use the communication processes and tools such as email, voicemail, electronic forms, etc., to relay college information. The question states that the College will require employees to use the communication processes and tools such as email, voicemail, electronic forms, etc., to relay information. Up to this point, no formal policies have been put in place, so guidelines and recommendations are what currently exist. Currently, we have a voice mail system, where all staff members have a voice mailbox. Staff members are encouraged to update their message daily to show whether they are on campus or in meetings, etc. Additionally, those staff who are off campus all summer are asked to put a message on their voice mail stating they are gone for the summer. Another system in place is the email system and all staff have an email account. If the staff member is away from his/her email for any length of time, they may use an automatic reply on their mailbox. The calendar feature of GroupWise is also supposed to be updated by all staff to make it easier for those who are scheduling meetings. In the future, we

would like to see our campus Content Management System used for online submission of forms throughout the College, which will provide quicker communication of such forms. 4) Training Verification - The Center for Learning Innovation is the training center for College staff. A formal procedure for requesting training and verifying that training has occurred for employees will be enforced. A process was developed by the Center for Learning Innovation. A Training Checklist was developed identifying the faculty person's name, date of training, instructor presenting training, and a competency checklist of skills needed. During the training the faculty member checks whether they are able to complete the competency or not. The document is signed and returned to the instructor to be stored in the CLI. At the end of training, the faculty member fills out a Review and Reflection Form identifying additional training the employee may need. This document is also stored in CLI. The Instructional Technology Support Specialist followed-up individually with the faculty member to complete competencies not checked. 5) Data collection/sharing - Software will be identified for the purpose of collecting and sharing data. Identified software will be supported and maintained by IT staff. Training will be provided on identified software by the Center for Learning Innovation. Data collection and sharing continues to be a struggle on campus. The College provides access to what is known as the "N" Drive, which is a networked drive with reports available. However, in its current state it is somewhat difficult to manage and to access information, so this needs to be looked at for additional functionality and efficiency. The students have access to PeopleSoft now through a portal system. This allows them to access data important to their education. Additionally, staff will be getting a similar portal interface to access the data that is pertinent to their job function. This will be happening sometime in the 2007/08 year. The faculty have the curriculum bank where all curriculum is supposed to be placed for all courses. This acts as a central repository accessible via Web interface, so it is accessible from anywhere with an Internet connection. iWebfolio is currently the electronic portfolio system that is used as the central repository for program information for each program offered on campus. Again this is available through a Web interface, making it accessible to staff from anywhere with an Internet connection. TracDat is the software used for collecting information regarding program outcome assessment and QRP (Quality Review Process) – Program Improvement Plans for the College. PeopleSoft is the system used for our financial information, payroll information, and student and academic information. One person on campus requests system access for people through Madison (MATC), who is a member of the consortium we are involved in for that software. Currently, we are in the process of adding additional functionality within this program, allowing employees to view pay stubs, submit time and labor, and bill students electronically. Additionally, we are planning to implement online registration this year. The grade book capability within PeopleSoft is also a way for faculty to collect and share information with students. However, this is not a standard for the College yet, so it is not being used by all faculty. Training provided by the Center for Learning Innovation for SWTC Institutional initiatives: Software Training Method GroupWise Web Access Required all staff - Inservice GroupWise Client 7.0 Required all staff – Scheduled Classes QRP Web Access of Program Data Required all faculty - Inservice PeopleSoft Posting Grades Required all faculty – Scheduled Classes FERPA Required all staff - Online Introduction to WIDS Optional – Scheduled Class TracDat – Strategic Planning Required Administration TracDat – Program Outcome Assessment Required all faculty – Cancelled optional – Scheduled Classes N Drive New Administration and Faculty – Scheduled Time iWebfolio Required all faculty – Inservice Program data review 6) Improving access to information - Internal and external systems will be identified, developed, or upgraded to share information with internal and external customers. We are working on improving access to information at the College. However, this is a slow process. We developed the student portal last year, allowing students to access information. We are planning to implement a portal for staff this year, allowing them to access many different types of information, such as different PeopleSoft modules, email, TracDat, iWebfolio, etc. Additionally, we are working on a new Content Management System this year, which will house our website and our intranet, as well as provide additional functionality in the future, such as online forms, calendaring, blogging, and wikis. The intranet functionality will be significantly improved through the use of the content management system as well. This will happen yet this year. Finally, we are going to work on how to make the content currently on the "N drive" more accessible and usable by those who need the information.

## 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** There is a four member Steering Committee for this action project including the Information Technology Coordinator, Network Specialist/IT Systems Lead, Instructional Technology Support Specialist and the Institutional Advancement Director (Retiring). Each of these steering committee members has a unique role in this action project. The Network Specialist/IT Systems Lead guides the action project in the purchase and installation of new hardware and software. The Instructional Technology Support Specialist is the link to staff training and has the most responsibility in reaching out to the entire staff on the training requirements and use of new software. The Institutional Advancement Director is the link to the administration as a member of the President's Cabinet. It is through the cabinet that policies are written, reviewed and revised based on actions/requests from all College committees/departments. The Information Technology Coordinator is a new position started in August 2007. It is currently funded at 50% and is an administrative position. The creation of the position was vital to the success of this action project. It has in the short time of its existence been able to provide coordination and planning between the six members of the IT department and the staff of the College. All staff at the College have been involved in this action project, either in providing training or being trained on software. Some staff have been trained on specific software associated with their individual jobs. As noted above all staff have been or will be trained within the next month on GroupWise Client 7.

### 3: Next Steps

A: The College will continue to work on the initiatives started in 2006-07 to refine the practices/processes put in place. In addition five new initiatives will be started: they include: On-line registration Implement online forms processes Design and implement the staff portal Create the Content Management System with all functionality Revise a new process for accessing reports to replace the current "N Drive"

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Although some of the practices are still under development or are too new to be fully evaluated at this point, two practices have proven to be very effective. First, the practice of scheduling meetings using GroupWise Busy Search has saved an enormous amount of time for staff. All meetings involving administration are scheduled using this system. In addition a large number of support staff and instructors also put their schedules on GroupWise. This new practice of scheduling meetings replaces a system where you had to call everyone you wanted at the meeting, check their schedules, compare all schedules and then send out an internal memo announcing the meeting. The new system takes minutes compared to an hour(s) under the old system if a number of people need to meet. The second practice that has proved extremely effective was developed by the CLI and is called training verification as previously described above in this update.

### 5: Project Challenges

A: Time, accountability, acceptance of change and effective practices are some of the challenges Southwest Tech has when it comes to fully utilizing the hardware and software currently owned by the College. It is very difficult to focus on all of the new initiatives, working on them from the development stage to the implementation stage, while still trying to focus on doing normal daily jobs. Many times staff are expected to do these extra initiatives in spare time, or over and above the current work load, and it slows the process down. Additionally, the more integrated the College becomes with information technology, the more difficult it becomes to juggle all of the activities within the IT Department because the department is not increasing staffing enough to handle the additional work load. Accountability is another challenge we still face. We struggle with holding people accountable for using the systems in place, and following the procedures laid out. The lack of processes and policies may be partially to blame, but people must be held accountable for any of these new processes and procedures to be successful. In addition prior to August 2007 it was a challenge to coordinate IT staff in regard to assignments, workloads, etc., due to the lack of a dedicated administrator to the department. We still have a challenge in this area since the current Coordinator is only assigned 50% to this position for a period of one year. This will be reviewed during the 2007-08 year at the request of the Information Technology Coordinator.

### 6: AQIP Involvement

A: At this time Southwest Wisconsin Technical College is not requesting assistance. Thank you.

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: You have given a very detailed and thorough explanation regarding your past year's accomplishments. Your institution has shown a real commitment toward the success of this Action Project. And, as a result, this Action Project will be a key tool for you to accomplish your college's mission and vision. This Action Project is also connected to AQIP Category 7 (Measuring Effectiveness) which examines the systems your institution uses to collect and analyze information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. This includes studying how your institution collects, stores, manages, and uses information and data at all institutional levels. Likewise, this Action Project is connected to AQIP Category 8 (Planning Continuous Improvement) which examines your institution's planning processes. This includes asking how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision.

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: It is very noteworthy that you have made staff training a critical and necessary function. Likewise, your statement "All staff at the

college have been involved in this Action Project" shows your comprehensive institutional commitment to the success of this Action Project.

### 3: Next Steps

A: You have stated several key and important steps. In particular, by keeping stakeholders aware of these steps and about the importance of this Action Project, you should be able to make significant progress. Your institution has shown a real and significant commitment to the success of this Action Project; as well as an understanding regarding this Action Project's importance.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: It is indeed noteworthy that you have discovered that scheduling meetings using Group Wise Busy Search has saved an enormous amount of time for staff. Likewise, that you have created and used "training verification." You could benefit and help other colleges by sharing your experiences and findings. You could do this by presenting your experiences and findings at the Annual Higher Learning Commission Conference held each spring in Chicago.

### 5: Project Challenges

A: You have described several very important issues (e.g., time, accountability, acceptance of change) that are crucial to the implementation and continuance of this Action Project. It is apparent that the AQIP Steering Committee and others directly involved with this Action Project have a clear understanding of the challenges and needed outcomes. For example, that faculty and other stakeholder buy-in with this Action Project is very important. Perhaps faculty and stakeholders from a college that has already completed a similar Action Project; or, that is currently involved with a similar Action Project, can give you advice and feedback. Another college familiar with your challenges could present workshops to your institution and act as a consultant to your institution. The AQIP Action Project Directory is a helpful source to identify institutions performing similar Action Projects. It sounds necessary despite your budget shortfalls and other restricting issues, to increase your IT Department staff including the addition of a dedicated full-time administrator. Pulling these various groups together and solving these challenges, will be difficult, but not insurmountable. As you continue to attack these challenges, you should experience significant gains toward student success, service, and improving your institutional procedures. Change and moving individuals away from the status quo is difficult and time consuming. Building faculty and staff knowledge and understanding about the issues and about available strategies for improvement, will continue to move your institution toward obtaining the goals of this Action Project. With the instructional and student services groups working together, along with a commitment from your central leadership, you should be able to make significant progress toward accomplishing this Action Project.

### 6: AQIP Involvement

A: If you have any questions or concerns in the future please feel free to contact the Higher Learning Commission. 9835