The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Project Details

Title	Review Results of the PACE Climate Survey Completed by Employees	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	4-Valuing People	**Updated**	09-13-2010
Timeline		**Reviewed**	10-04-2010
Planned Project Kickoff	08-25-2008	**Created**	11-24-2009
Actual Completion	12-09-2010	**Version**	2

1: Project Goal

A: Southwest Tech has conducted the PACE (Personal Assessment of the College Environment) Survey with our part- and full-time employees on three occasions. 2001, 2004, 2008. While the College has remained consistent in the overall score, we desire to further study the results to see if we can address any lower scoring opportunities.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Participation in the survey is good therefore we feel it is a good representation of the feedback of our employees. Where there are opportunities for improvement, we desire to dive deeper into the questions and the comments provided by the employees to determine process changes.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Because this survey is offered to all part- and full-time staff, all employees are affected. The survey is scheduled by the Director of Human Resources. The College will seek volunteers to assist in further review of the data. The PACE survey data is available to all employees and we encourage the use of the document in college committees and action project teams as relevant.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: We believe the category of Organizational Structure needs to be studied first. This is the category we received the lowest score and the most comments. Having a better understanding of the feedback of our employees may allow us to incorporate changes to items within this category.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The College asked for volunteers on 8-25-08 who are interested in further studying the data. Employees will have until 9-30-08 to declare their interest. From there, meetings can be scheduled and a timeline will be better understood.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: At this time we feel the measurement will be when we conduct the next PACE survey in 2011. However, our progress may become evident sooner based on comments/feedback from our workforce.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Having an interest by employees to study aspects of the survey will be an indicator of success or failure. Use of the data in the PACE report by college committees or action project teams for decision making can be measured.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: In preparation for the 10-21-2009 College Initative Day (CID), a required in-service for all staff, our project team enlisted volunteer facilitators and recorders. The goal of the discussion at CID was to allow for deeper conversations with each department regarding answers to two specific questions from the 2008 PACE survey.
The two questions all departments/divisions studied were: 1.The extent to which information is shared within this institution, and 2. The extent to which a spirit of cooperation exists at this institution.
Each department/division was provided with the score as rated during the 2008 PACE survey. Then responded to this question - if asked the same question today, would you rate it exactly the same? Higher? Lower? If higher, what SPECIFICALLY has changed to allow for an increased rating? If lower, what SPECIFICALLY has changed to require a decreased rating? If exactly the same, do you have any specific requests that would increase the score? What specific practices or policies have changed that may be affecting the rate change?
The rating was then shared with the staff at CID. We allowed staff to make comments or write them down and submit to the recorder. All comments then were typed and shared with the staff and department/division leader. The staff and their leader were then asked to create one to three goals that as a team they would work toward during the spring (January - May 2010) and fall (August - December 2010) year. In May, 2010 the leader was required to gather feedback from their staff about progress or accomplishment of the goals. This information was updated to demonstrate the goal and update/accomplishment and was placed on SharePoint (our internal intranet) for all staff to see. The teams will continue working on those goals through the fall

2: Institution Involvement

A: Because all staff are to attend CID, everyone was afforded and requested to participate in the project. To assure that staff could be open, no leadership team members were present. We sought out 3rd party facilitator's and recorders to allow for as open of conversation as possible. Then all staff and their leader received the new score, the comments, and had the opportunity to develop the one to three goals collectively. Sharing the goals and subsequently the update/accomplishment has allowed for all staff to remain aware of the goals and progress.

3: Next Steps

A: Staff and their leader will continue to work toward updating and accomplishing the one to three goals established yet this semester. In December, the leader will again ask the staff for their feedback about reaching the goals. Some leaders do this through department/staff meetings, some do via Survey Monkey, and some do as a verbal conversation. The Goals and Update/Accomplishment document will then be updated on SharePoint.
Leaders are certainly welcome to develop more goals should they desire.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Allowing all staff to be part of the re-scoring, adding comments and feedback, establishing the one to three goals, and providing feedback about the update/accomplishments clearly allows for staff to be engaged and involved. Having 3rd party facilitators and recorders provided the opportunity for honest discussions.

5: Project Challenges

A: One challenge is that not all employees who completed the 2008 PACE survey are still employed. Not all of the leaders in 2008 remain at the college so there are dynamics that have changed between 2008 and 2010 when this activity occurred. In addition, we only took two questions out of the PACE survey to further discuss. Clearly, there is no guarantee that a deep dive into these two questions will have any affect (positive or negative) on the future 2011 PACE survey results.
Another challenge is that some leaders and some staff did not want to be part of this process as they did not feel it would be a valuable exercise in improving communication within their department or division.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This Action Project was undertaken to delve deeper into the responses of employees to two questions from the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey, administered to all full- and part-time employees on a periodic basis. The two questions asked were: 1.) To what extent is information shared within this institution? and 2.) To what extent does a spirit of cooperation exist at this institution? Scores from the 2008 PACE Survey were shared with participants in the 2009 College Initiative Day (CID) to determine if employee responses would differ and the reasons for any differences. This AP is associated with AQIP Category 4- Valuing People, and is consistent with AQIP Categories 7, 8 and 9 and the AQIP Principles of collaboration, involvement, learning, information and people practiced by high performing organizations.

There are some questions the AP Team might want to consider as they continue their efforts to analyze and understand the responses to these two survey questions. 1.) What is the response the College *expects* or *desires* to these questions, and why?, and, in light of this, 2.) What is the College committed to doing *specifically* to create a work environment in which information is shared and a spirit of cooperation exists? Without clear goals and objectives for follow-up and action in response to any employee survey, especially one designed to elicit feedback to improve the work environment, employees may become skeptical and, perhaps, less likely to respond or to respond honestly to future surveys, when they feel it is a meaningless exercise. This would be consistent with AQIP Categories 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8, as well as the AQIP Principles of learning, information, people, integrity and continuous improvement.

2: Institution Involvement

A: All full- and part-time employees are expected to participate in the CID and complete the PACE Survey. The results were shared with each department and division and goals were developed in response to the survey results. These goals were to be addressed during the spring, fall and into future semesters, until accomplished. This indicates the College's commitment to involve the entire working community to identify and address relevant workplace issues, for which they should be commended, and is consistent with AQIP Categories 4 and 9, and the AQIP Principles of collaboration, involvement, learning, information and people. It would be good to consider developing *SMART* objectives (Specific, Measurable, Action Oriented, Realistic and Time Framed to a year or less), in order to increase the likelihood of accomplishing the desired goals, in accordance with AQIP Categories 7 and 8 and the Principles of learning, information and accountability.

3: Next Steps

A: The departments and division staff members and supervisors are expected to continue working to achieve the goals, based on the feedback from their responses to the PACE Survey. It is not clear how much guidance and support they are given by the College in doing this, whether or not there are similar goals across the institution that might be addressed in a more comprehensive fashion or what, if any, progress has been made to accomplish the goals of sharing information and creating a spirit of cooperation within this institution. It is difficult to assess whether or not the College is making reasonable progress or if progress is too slow on this AP, since the goals and objectives are unclear. It is suggested that clear goals (with clearly defined outcomes) and *SMART* objectives be developed (both for individual departments and divisions, as well as across the institution when appropriate), to increase the likelihood of success of this project and to make it more meaningful for all employees. This is consistent with AQIP Categories 3, 4. 7, 8 and 9, and the Principles of collaboration, involvement, learning, information and systems thinking.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: These practices clearly indicate the good intentions and commitment of the College to involve all employees in a process to improve their work environment. This is consistent with AQIP Categories 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9, and the AQIP Principles of collaboration, involvement, learning, information, benchmarking. Attention to sharing information and creating a spirit of cooperation within the institution is a laudable goal. This is consistent with AQIP Categories 3, 4. 7, 8 and 9, and the Principles of collaboration, involvement, learning and information. The AP Team might consider additional practices, including: developing institutional strategies to further enhance and encourage information sharing and cooperation within and across departments and divisions, especially where "silos" may exist; developing information resources and training to support these strategies; and obtaining information from other colleges and universities about ideas and initiatives they may want to consider adopting.

5: Project Challenges

A: In light of these challenges, it is important to consider the continued relevance of the original Action Project in the current environment,

in light of turnover in personnel, changes in institutional priorities and the perceptions of the College community. If the PACE Survey is considered a useful instrument then the results of future administrations should be analyzed in light of current institutional needs and priorities. The baseline data from previous years can be useful in identifying trends and changes that have occurred, and in understanding current and future needs. A “deep dive” should be considered, the results shared and discussed widely throughout the College, and any questions and reservations addressed through the actions of the AP Team and other institutional leaders committed to the AQIP process. Such changes in personnel and turnover are a natural part of any organization and the use of institutional data can be invaluable in providing important information for planning and management improvement purposes. This is consistent with AQIP Categories 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9, and the AQIP Principles of focus, collaboration, involvement, leadership, learning, information and problem solving.

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: Southwest Tech has created a new Action Project that targets expansion of benchmarking opportunities to more external sources. As part of the project, current satisfaction surveys will be evaluated and in some cases replaced with those that better meet the College benchmarking for continuous improvement needs. This Action Project will be rolled into the new action project, but may involve the use of a different survey tool.

2: Success Factors

A: The project pulled department staff together to re-evaluate data collected through the 2008 PACE Climate Survey. Each department met to set goals to improve in identified areas. This cohesive effort was appreciated by the majority of staff.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: It was difficult to track improvements in identified areas because some departments experienced complete staff turnover. We may have drilled down too far when setting department goals.