
Action Project

Title: The College Completion Project

Version: 1

Institution: East Central College

Status: Active

Submitted: 2014-12-17

Category: 1 – Helping Students Learn

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2014-09-01

Target completion date: 2016-05-31

Actual completion date:

Project Detail

PROJECT SUMMARY

Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

The goal of the AQIP Action Project team on College Completion is to study and recommend the design of proactive, research-based student retention and completion strategies.

PROJECT RATIONALE

Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio.

Students are faced with many challenges when attempting to obtain a certificate, degree or some other personal goal when attending East Central College. These challenges may be academic, social, economic and/or personal in nature and affect the students' ability to be successful. East Central College has an intentional desire and great interest in determining which challenges should be addressed to assist students with completion of their educational goals. The current perception is that East Central College has low graduation rates. However, the problem lies in identifying what an acceptable rate should be, and recommending ways in which to reach the targeted goal rate. The college needs to work on how it manages its data and how it uses results according to the latest portfolio response, so success in this project should help us in those areas. Early explorations and meetings with key players have already revealed that we have much more information to work with than we fully realized. One goal, then, will be to maximize our use of our own resources, including first figuring out just what sorts of information we have to work with, and then coordinating efforts to get the best completion and retention results possible.

PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for

each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed.

Fall, 2014

1. Identify existing retention/completion strategies on campus. Define *current* student persistence and completion strategies that are specific to ECC, its programs, and its student populations.

-Create an inventory of current retention and completion strategies by department

-Determine if current strategies are being evaluated for effectiveness

2. Review and evaluate current ECC retention and graduation data

-Determine gaps in types of data either available or currently reported

-Make recommendations for a data-driven dashboard

3. Review existing best practices and literature

Spring, 2015

1. Define and develop a data-driven dashboard for completion data that further defines patterns of student success by defining *current* capacity for collecting, analyzing, and using data and other information to identify student persistence and completion patterns;

2. Develop benchmarks for the defined dashboard data points.

Fall, 2015

1. Identify new or expand current initiatives and/or strategies for successful retention/completion by researching and comparing current and emerging practice in evaluating and improving student persistence and retention.

Spring, 2016

1. Analyze effectiveness of the project, modify, and report results

INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

The following organizational groups are important stakeholders in this project:

- Students: Students have a vested interest in completing their educational goals
- All faculty: Faculty have the greatest level of interaction with students and are most likely to identify potential issues with students and can be the first line of

interaction for retention actions.

- Student Services: Student Services advisors, financial aid staff, counselors and other individuals will need to be involved with retention issues and completion issues, funding issues, and are key players in the success of student entry through graduation.
- Academic Departments: Programs and courses may need to be adjusted to align with retention strategies. New offerings may need to be established to assist with various challenges.
- Sending and Transfer Schools: These educational partners have a direct relationship with the success of ECC students.
- Information Technology/Institutional Research: Data needs to be collected and analyzed to

establish metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of a particular solution and help identify areas of opportunity.

- Advisory Boards and surrounding communities: Increased graduation success also improves the quality of life in the community. This includes employers and their expectations of graduate success.

Key Organizational Process(es) Affected/Involved

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A. Assessment process | G. Degree audit |
| B. Strategic plan implementation | H. Transcript evaluation |
| C. Academic program review | I. Financial aid literacy and default |
| D. Enrollment management | J. Admissions and Advising |
| E. Course scheduling | K. Learning support |
| F. First year experience | L. Campus Image/Marketing |

PROJECT CONTROL

Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

The project will be included in the bi-annual In-Service Week activities for faculty and staff. In addition, updates and faculty/staff involvement will occur in the scheduled AQIP activity day each semester. The ECC website will contain information regarding the project. The project will be monitored utilizing the semester-by-semester milestone activities and reported in the Assessment Committee minutes.

Outcome Measures:

- A. An inventory of current retention and completion strategies will be posted on the

Assessment website.

B. A Dashboard with current retention and completion date will be available on the Assessment website.

C. ECC specific benchmarks for retention and completion goals will be identified.

D. New or enhanced strategies for completion will be identified, monitored for effectiveness, and reported to the Assessment committee.

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

Success of this project will require the following to be in place.

- Consistent campus-wide communication to staff, students, and faculty regarding the current problem(s) and proposed solution(s);

- Campus-wide commitment of staff, students, and faculty to develop and assess progress and plan of action;

- A clear and concise plan to systematically implement proposed solution(s);

- An institutional plan to provide students with a pathway for success from admission through completion;

- Cross-discipline teams, comprised of stakeholders, and empowered to implement the solutions;

- Buy-in from staff, faculty, program coordinators, advising, etc. that the solution(s) proposed will improve successful navigation and completion of a given student's pathway

- to completion;

- Allocation of reasonable budgetary funds, if necessary, to implement and monitor solution(s);

- Accurate data collection and analysis with measurable metrics to determine effectiveness of the implemented solution(s).

There are always pitfalls in a project of this scope. There are some concerns specific to this issue that must be monitored and can be addressed to reduce the roadblock effect. These concerns include:

- Lack of acceptance by the stakeholders there is an issue with student completion or lack of ownership of an issue in specific departments;

- Lack of understanding or buy-in for proposed solution(s);

- Inconclusive data or second guessing data to help support proposed

solution(s).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Provide any additional information that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project.

Of primary concern is sustainability and that the project have a "home" and the solutions generated become integrated and aligned with our processes. We hope to complete the tasks by the target completion date, but we will leave the project open and in play until we are sure that it will have a life beyond the work of the project team.
