

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
ACTION PROJECTS

**Project Details**

**Title** DEAP: Develop Early Alert Process

**Category** 1 - Helping Students Learn

**Timeline**

11-11-2014

05-30-2015

• **1:**

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:

• **A:**

HCC will create an automated early alert system that will notify students and advisors whenever a student manifests evidence of academic risk. Early alert parameters will be identified and these questions answered: At what time during the semester should students receive an alert indicating that their academic work is in need of improvement? What data should be considered to trigger an early alert? Is there a recommended number of graded assignments that should be offered within the first 3 weeks of any given semester? The team will work with the IT department to implement the alert.

• **2:**

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:

• **A:**

Students continue to report on student satisfaction inventories and on the Community College Survey for Student Engagement that it is important for them to have feedback from coursework early and often. Nearly 40% of full time, first time students in the fall semester of each year fail to meet satisfactory academic progress. Those on warning status failed to pass 80% of their classes and failed to maintain a 2.0 GPA. As a part of a Title III grant nearly 10 years ago, HCC paid for software customizations that allowed students to receive automated early alerts when they were not meeting satisfactory academic progress. As software updates were implemented, it became too costly for HCC to maintain the customizations that allowed early alerts to be sent. HCC's processes, policies, and software

capability have evolved so that information about student progress is accessible, but it is not "pushed to the student automatically." Since HCC is entering into a 4-phase reimplementation of its management information system (PowerCampus/MyHCC) software, the timing is right to develop new parameters for early alert notifications. Subsequently, HCC's IT staff will be able to automatically create commands within the database to "push" this information to students. The work of this team aligns with HCC's Strategic Plan: Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning Quality, Resources, and Support; Objective 2: Institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

• 3:

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:

• A:

- **November, 2014:** DEAP Team will be formed. Team membership will include representatives from students, faculty, advisors, coaches, retention team, and student support services. The goal of the team will be to answer the questions, "At what time during the semester should students receive an alert indicating that their academic work is in need of improvement? What data should be considered to trigger an early academic alert? Is there a recommended number of assessments that should be offered and entered into the grade book within the first 3 weeks of any given semester?" The team will determine the time of semester the alert is sent, what grades and/or attendance parameters should be considered in the parameters, and the number of assessments that should be offered within the first three weeks of any given semester to offer a true reflection of a student's academic progress. Other considerations are any needed policy changes, deletions, or additions that would be needed in order for accurate data to be entered into PowerCampus. **Assessment:** Team formed
- **March, 2015:** Milestone-DEAP Team will have identified parameters for students needing early alert. **Assessment:** Parameters document completed. Any process changes or recommendations made in writing to SPC (Strategic Planning Committee). This includes a recommendation for the number of assessments that should be offered within the first 3 weeks of any given course.
- **July 2015:** Milestone-IT will write database program for early alert delivery using parameters developed by DEAP Team. **Assessment:** Database is completed and tested.
- **Fall 2015:** Deliverable-all HCC students who meet the parameters developed by the team will automatically receive early alert notices and

recommendations for intervention in order to improve academic success. **Assessment:** Students receive Early Alert Notification, as defined by DEAP Team.

- **January 2016:** Formal evaluation of DEAP process including suggestions for changes to parameters that might better fit student needs. **Assessment:** Recommendations from DEAP team passed to SPC.

• 4:

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:

• A:

All stakeholders are interested in students making satisfactory academic progress throughout their college experience. Students need to make academic progress in order to progress toward their degree, remain eligible for financial aid, maintain athletic eligibility and eligibility to receive other financial assistance, and even to remain in campus housing. Faculty, coaches, scholarship sponsors, advisors, and students themselves will work together to create parameters for students to be notified when said progress is not being made. After the parameters are set and the early alert system is initiated in the Fall of 2015, the same group of stakeholders will meet at the end of the fall semester to assess their work.

• 5:

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:

• A:

After the DEAP Team creates the parameters for the early alert system and communicates them with the IT department for inclusion into PowerCampus, they will spend the fall semester of 2015 following up with students and staff to see that the system is working. The following measures will be evaluated:

- **Spring 2015:** Students will be surveyed to determine their satisfaction with the current early alert procedures.
- **Spring 2015:** Written parameters will be submitted to SPC by the end of March, 2015. SPC will forward parameters to IT Team for implementation.
- **Summer 2015:** IT staff will have written early alert parameters into PowerCampus/MyHCC and will have tested the system to be sure it is ready for Fall 2015 implementation.
- **Fall 2015:** Early Alert System will be initiated through PowerCampus.
- **Fall 2015:** Instructors will be encouraged to offer a recommended number of assessments prior to the third week of the semester. These

assessments should accurately reflect a student's academic progress to that point in the semester.

- **December 2015:** Students will be surveyed to determine their satisfaction with the implementation of the new early alert system.
- **Spring 2016:** DEAP Team may compare the numbers of students who did not meet satisfactory academic progress prior to implementing the early alert system with those numbers after the early alert was implemented. They may also compare student satisfaction levels from before and after implementation of the early alert system. They will offer any suggestions for improvement in the early alert process to the SPC.

• 6:

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

• A:

- Technology must be dependable.
- Faculty and other instructors must enter data (grades and attendance) into the system in a timely fashion so that students and other sponsors have an accurate account of student progress. Failure to do this will impact the entire Early Alert process.
- Regular assessments from coursework must be entered in order for students to have the most accurate information to determine success potential for the course. Example: By the third week (or its equivalent) of class, a minimum of 4-6 assessment scores should be documented in MyHCC.

• 7:

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

• A:

In an effort to assist students in accomplishing their academic goals, many factions of the campus utilize classroom grade and attendance data to make decisions about student participation. Advisors utilize information as they assist students in completing their degree plans; coaches utilize information to encourage students to remain eligible for participation; the student conduct office utilizes information as appropriate when determining sanctions; scholarship sponsors assist their students in making satisfactory academic progress in order for students to continue to participate in a variety of curricular and extracurricular programs. When the entire campus collaborates to enter and utilize accurate information and especially when students have timely access to this feedback, there are more opportunities for student success.

## Project Details

**Title** Determining a Final Academic Assessment Tool

**Category** 1-Helping Students Learn

**Timeline**

11-01-2013

04-01-2014

• 1:

Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

• A:

We have been using the CAAP academic assessment tool for many years. With a change in Vice President for Academic Affairs, we have determined that the CAAP tool is not really meeting our needs. Consequently, we are looking for another capstone sort of assessment tool to measure the level of academic understanding of our graduating students.

• 2:

Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

• A:

After determining that CAAP doesn't meet our needs, our new Academic Vice President declared the need to replace it for this academic year's graduates.

• 3:

List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

• A:

Academic Affairs for the administration of the new tool, the Registrar's Office for how the results of that new tool will be applied to the student's transcript, and the Admissions Office for promoting the value of the new tool to incoming students.

• 4:

Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

- **A:**

The administration of the new tool may change the way the capstone tool is administered. It may now be administered in a classroom setting at the conclusion of a course rather than in a mass administration setting. It will improve the way we can communicate to key stakeholders the academic understanding levels of our graduating students.

- **5:**

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

- **A:**

Based on her knowledge of academic assessment tools already on the market, the new Academic Vice President is confident that selection of a new tool can be accomplished in time for it to be acquired and administered to the students in this year's graduating class.

- **6:**

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

- **A:**

Our Strategic Planning Council (SPC) has mandated that our Action Projects fit within the Strategic Plan. Therefore, progress on the Action Projects is monitored at each monthly meeting of the SPC.

- **7:**

Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

- **A:**

When we have a new capstone assessment tool in place for our 2014 graduates, this Action Project will be a success. Anything less will be a failure in achieving this goal.

04-01-2011

12-01-2011

• 1:

Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

• A:

The Continuous Improvement (CI) Team identified three CI activities which were worked on in the initial year of the Project, starting small and with the basics. These activities identified the key CI concepts from which to continue building and methods of embedding these concepts into the College culture. The initial three activities are: centering on the PDCA cycle, employee involvement, and understanding/implementing processes.

• 2:

Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

• A:

Two years in to our new Strategic Planning process, it is now clear that an inclusive strategic planning process does not automatically get the vast majority of employees involved with continuous improvement. While involvement has increased, it is apparent that strategic planning initiatives on their own do not provide enough impetus for acceptance of CI concepts throughout the College. The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan goals is dependent on a culture change that fully embraces CI. The CI team's work will focus on that culture change.

• 3:

List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

• A:

This Action Project truly seeks to affect all areas of the organization; no one organizational area will be affected any more than the others. As the result, the entire organization will subsequently be fundamentally changed to positively accept and practice CI concepts.

• 4:

Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

- A:

The Strategic Planning process will be the most affected by this Action Project. Because of the inclusive nature of the Project, all organizational processes eventually will be positively changed/improved.

- 5:

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

- A:

Acceptance of CI concepts across the College is going to require a sea change in employees' approach to their daily functions. The first year was spent determining the current levels of acceptance of CI concepts, attitudes toward CI and reasons for non-acceptance, identifying strategies to address those non-accepting attitudes, and selecting CI champions to lead the identified strategies. The second year will be spent developing and implementing the strategies identified in year one to embed CI concepts throughout the culture. The third year will continue that effort and also assess the increase made in CI concepts being a part of employee approach to daily operations.

- 6:

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

- A:

The use of Survey Monkey is becoming accepted as part of our culture. Annual Spring Climate Surveys include questions related to employee involvement with CI concepts. In addition, members of the President's Staff (executive leadership) are completing an assessment of their staff's level of involvement with CI concepts. That assessment will continue.

- 7:

Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

- A:

This is a Project that is all-encompassing, but the outcome measures will be fairly simple – numbers of employees using CI concepts in their daily functions, and the extent they are using those concepts. Baseline numbers are being compiled with which to compare annually.

## Project Details

**Title** Enhancing Instructors' Effectiveness Using a Web-based Observation/Evaluation Tool

**Category** 1 - Helping Students Learn

### Timeline

09-30-2014

12-12-2015

- 1:

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:

- A:

The implementation of a web-based observation and evaluation tool will allow Highland instructional staff, full-time faculty and concurrent (dual-credit) coordinators to provide prompt, content-based feedback to over 200 part-time instructors. Using tablet or laptop, the classroom observer can send a copy of the observation/evaluation directly to the instructor, which begins a dialogue about best practices observed, professional development opportunities, and suggestions for improvement. The immediate feedback feature allows the instructor to enhance his/her teaching effectiveness during the term, while current students can benefit. The tool's measurement criteria are aligned with the College's Common Learning Outcomes.

- 2:

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:

- A:

A majority of the credit hours taken by Highland students are in classrooms taught by adjunct and concurrent instructors, in nearly 40 locations spanning 9 counties. The Teaching and Learning section of the Strategic Plan, based upon Criterion 3, directs the College to "provide support for student learning and effective teaching" and ensure that "level of quality is consistent across all delivery methods". A recent portfolio did not provide data-supported evidence of systematic evaluation and prompt feedback to part-time

instructors. This initiative will provide the tools needed to observe all part-time instructors over a four-term cycle.

- 3:

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:

- A:

Project Goal 1 (10/01/14 - 12/15/14): Develop and test observation/evaluation criteria using the eWalkthrough (observation) and e4E (evaluation) web-based tools. Conduct at least 50 trial observations in classrooms taught by part-time instructors. Development team meets monthly during this period to assess the criteria and the tool's usefulness. All results from these observations are used as test samples and then discarded.

Project Goal 2 (01/15/15 - 05/15/15): At least 75 classroom observations conducted, with feedback provided to instructors based on best practices established during the trial period. Team conducts 15-20 evaluations are also conducted, with priority given to new instructors and those with identified needs. Observations are repeated for a sample of the instructors who are initially observed.

Project Goal 3 (05/16/15 - 08/01/15): Spring 2015 data is analyzed for reviewer consistency and clarity of evaluation items, Instructor response to feedback is analyzed based on results of repeat visits, looking for evidence of teaching improvement.

Project Goal 4 (08/20/15 - 12/15/15): Process improvements are implemented in the next round of observations/evaluations and analysis of the fall data is reviewed in December 2015. At least 100 observations and 50 evaluations are completed. Project is fully implemented, with scheduled cycle of observations and formal evaluations, begins 01/15/2016.

- 4:

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:

- A:

The initial project team is composed of instructional administrators, regional and concurrent directors, and administrative support professionals. This group will have primary responsibility for developing the evaluation criteria and conducting observations. These individuals also serve on AQIP category teams and the Strategic Planning Council. Full-time faculty will be active in using the tool during the pilot phase to observe adjunct instructors within their disciplines. Adjunct instructors will also serve as focus group members during the analysis phase to provide feedback about the observation experience, such as

perception of feedback clarity and usefulness, response by the institution to provide training and support, and any concerns about classroom disruption.

- 5:

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:

- A:

A detailed analysis and process review is built into this project at the end of each of the four phases. This plan allows for continuous improvement to both the tool itself and the process policies and procedures.

Phase 1: Before the observation and evaluation criteria are utilized in the classroom, each item is mapped to a specific learning outcome and AQIP criteria (Criterion 3 for quality and consistency; Criterion 4 for alignment to academic program outcomes). Sample observation results are analyzed for trends, with particular attention to consistency across observers. Full-time faculty are trained and asked to conduct sample evaluations among their adjuncts.

Phase 2: Data from the first round of observations and evaluations is analyzed by specific item in search of trends in the area of best practice and also in areas which seem to be lacking system-wide. A sample of part-time instructors will participate in focus groups to assess their response to the feedback. Full-time faculty review results, stressing gaps in consistency across teaching formats and locations.

Phase 3: Repeat analysis from Phase 2 and share initial results with AQIP Category 1 Team and the Strategic Planning Council

Phase 4: Process becomes part of the overall campus Assessment Plan as part of a continuous cycle of evaluation.

- 6:

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

- A:

Any observation/evaluation tool may create a threat to the person being evaluated, particularly when they do not see the evaluator very often. The use of the initial observation tool to provide virtually immediate feedback, along with follow-up visits for the purpose of recognizing improvement, has the potential to reduce this perceived threat and enhance the collegial relationships between part-time instructor, full-time instructor, and administrator.

The use of a web-based tool does not eliminate the challenge of dealing with multiple instructional locations over a nine-county service area. There is still a lot of distance to travel for a director whose classrooms are 50-60 miles apart. However, the elimination of paper-and-pencil evaluation documents also eliminates the need to travel back to the office, create a clean copy of the form, print, mail or email the evaluation back, wait for the

opportunity to meet again and discuss the results, a process which most often results in the instructor not receiving feedback until near the end of the term. Instead, the conversation begins right away, resulting in the potential for immediate improvement and institutional response to the problem (such as instructor resources or mentoring).

Finally, there is sometimes a perception among full-time employees that classroom teaching by part-time instructors is sub-standard or lacking in rigor. This initiative, which provides much more relevant data than the older paper-and-pencil evaluation process, allows the college to recognize the expertise and contributions of part-time instructors while addressing any problems that exist.

- **7:**

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

- **A:**

The project team will be joined by an instructional specialist from Southwest Plains Regional Service Center, who is also working with area school districts in implementing the eWalkthrough and e4E web-based tools. One of the benefits of this relationship is that many of our concurrent (dual-credit) instructors will be familiar with the format because their districts are using it as well, although the specific criteria are customized to the college competencies. This partnership gives our team additional perspective in analyzing our results and the benefit of other user institutions' experiences.

## Project Details

**Title** Measuring Common Learning Outcomes

**Category** 1 - Helping Students Learn

**Timeline**

11-04-2014

12-15-2015

- **1:**

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:

- **A:**

Through an extensive collaborative process involving students, faculty, every type of staff and administrators, HCC identified six Common Learning Outcomes (CLO's) in 2011. Since these are intended to be used for all employees as well as students, we will begin referring

to them as "Shared Performance Expectations" (SPE's). This project will focus on developing means of documenting or assessing student demonstration of the SPE's.

- 2:

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:

- A:

The last two reviews of our Systems Portfolios have indicated a need to be more clear in stating and measuring student learning outcomes. We have had the CLO's for three years but have made very little progress in assessing them. It is past time for real progress to be made in this area. While this Action Project will focus specifically on developing measures for assessing students, we anticipate that the rubrics and processes developed will be applicable to all employees as well. We anticipate these SPE's becoming the framework for evaluation of all adjunct faculty, too.

- 3:

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:

- A:

Goals: 1) By November 30, 2014, revise current CLO's to assure applicability for all employees and to achieve clarity and focus. These will become the SPE's. 2) By January 30, 2015, develop preliminary rubrics for measuring each of the SPE's: Competence, Communication, Respect, Decision-Making, Responsibility and Teamwork. 3) By March 15, 2015, identify already existing indicators that can be easily adapted to assessing the SPE's. For example, student attendance and completion of assignments can be regarded as indicators of Responsibility. Specific writing assignments in current courses can be used to assess communication. 4) By April 30, develop proposed processes for documenting demonstration of SPE's, including additional measures and/or activities as needed. 5) By October 15, 2015, refine rubrics and processes through review and pilot testing. 6) By December 1, 2015, present refined processes and rubrics for implementation.

Deliverables: Rubrics for each of the six SPE's, Written processes for assessing the SPE's, List of Existing Indicators that can be used and List of Additional Measures Needed.

- 4:

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:

- **A:**

The Assessment Committee will lead this Action Project, working in conjunction with the Instructional Council. Both groups are currently populated by faculty, staff and administrators. Student input will be used. Other administrators and staff members who are not members of the committee will provide input and review of proposed forms and processes. Regional personnel and adjunct faculty will be included, too.

- **5:**

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:

- **A:**

The co-chairpersons of the Assessment Committee will monitor progress and report to the Academic Vice-President at each checkpoint date. The measures will consist of documenting the rubric and the process. Upon implementation, ratings of students on each of the SPE's will serve as the measures.

- **6:**

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

- **A:**

No effort was made to assure that the CLO's as originally developed were easily measured or documented. Developing rubrics that translate mental constructs into observable behaviors will be challenging. Obtaining consensus on both the measures and the methods from diverse college groups will also be challenging. The time frame proposed is considered ambitious but achievable. The Action Project team will have to deal with institutional inertia. Helping to meet these challenges are: 1) the co-chairs for the Assessment Committee are committed to the project and to action. 2) The Academic V-P has made this a priority for the year. 3) The Instructional Council will be supporting the effort and collaborating with the Assessment Committee.

- **7:**

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

- A:

We believe that we have a realistic view of the challenge and welcome specific suggestions. We will also have a team participating in the Assessment Workshop in October, 2014.