The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southeastern Community College

Project Details

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<td>Student Advising by Faculty</td>
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<td>3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs</td>
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1: Project Goal

A: Create a student advising process that actively involves faculty. Implement a pilot on both campuses in both academic divisions.

2: Reasons For Project

A: The Quality Checkup reviewers who visited SCC in July 2012 wrote in the feedback report: “It became clear to the Quality Checkup Team that SCC has an opportunity to involve faculty more fully and systematically in student advising... SCC should implement a faculty advisor plan as soon as possible.”

Additionally, SCC’s IR Director wrote a report entitled Analyzing Academic Advising Effectiveness. This report relies on data from the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The IR Director reported the following key findings:

- Students who plan to transfer were more dissatisfied with the feedback they received on how they’re progressing toward their academic goals, compared to students who do not plan to transfer. These potential transfer-out students were also dissatisfied with their advisors’ knowledge of the transfer requirements of other schools.
- Career-related services were important to both SSI and CCSSE respondents, and both surveys found students to be significantly less satisfied with what they received.
- CCSSE respondents gave higher scores to the importance of academic advising/planning than they did to their satisfaction with it.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic Affairs and Student Services

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Student advising.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: A team of faculty, enrollment specialists, and Academic Affairs administrators will design the faculty advising project during the fall 2013 semester. This will include researching existing faculty advising projects and meeting with SCC faculty who have agreed to participate in the pilot as well as enrollment specialists. The pilot will be implemented in the spring 2014 semester. The advising process will be fully implemented in the fall of 2014.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Academic Affairs administrators will be integrally involved during the planning stages of the project. They will also work closely with the faculty involved during the pilot to ensure that there are no unaddressed issues.
concerns or challenges. Additionally, SCC will be creating an AQIP Quality Team in the fall of 2013. This team will monitor the progress of all AQIP Action Projects and will make regular reports to the Cabinet. The project will be publicized to all faculty during professional development and/or in-service days.

### Project Outcome Measures

**A:** We will use as a baseline the CCSSE and SSI scores from the past few years on survey items chosen from the list below. Items selected and target scores will be dependent upon the design of our project. The goal, however, will be increased survey scores on the survey items from those students receiving faculty advising compared to all comparison groups.

**SSI:**
- My academic advisor is available when I need help
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements
- My advisor helps me apply my program of study to career goals
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about transfer requirements of other schools
- I receive ongoing feedback about progress toward my academic goals

**CCSSE:**
- Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
- Frequency: Academic advising/planning
- Frequency: Career counseling
- Frequency: Transfer credit assistance
- Satisfaction: Academic advising/planning
- Satisfaction: Career counseling
- Satisfaction: Transfer credit assistance
- Importance: Academic advising/planning
- Importance: Career counseling
- Importance: Transfer credit assistance
- Developing clearer career goals
- Gaining information about career opportunities

### Project Update

**1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY**

**A:** The Faculty Advising Action Project is in progress. The original start date was September 2013, and the original end date was May 2014. The new completion date is September 2015. The faculty advising project was initially declared in June 2013. However, the project did not move ahead for approximately six months. In the fall of 2013, SCC’s President tasked the newly-formed Helping Students Learn Improvement Team with creating a faculty advising project. SCC’s improvement teams were described in SCC’s 2013 Systems Portfolio:

SCC has created two improvement teams focusing on the Systems Portfolio Categories: 1) Helping Students Learn (Category 1); and 2) Valuing People (Category 4). Improvement team responsibilities include:

- Investigating SCC issues and concerns in the focus area.
- Following a prescribed format for defining and solving a problem (7-step process), using CPI tools as appropriate.
- Creating a clear plan and an expected outcome which would include a timeline and departments/individuals responsible for implementing the project.
- Making status reports to the AQIP Quality Team as requested.
- Presenting completed plan to the AQIP Quality Team. Upon receiving AQIP Team's approval, present the plan to Cabinet.

The Helping Students Learn team originally consisted of five faculty members. Two more joined the team to assist with the Faculty Advising project. Status of the project is described under question 3.

This project directly relates to a statement in our 2012 Quality Checkup Site Visit report: “... SCC has an opportunity to involve faculty more fully and systematically in student advising. ... SCC should implement a faculty advisor plan as soon as possible.”
In our 2013 Systems Portfolio, SCC stated the following: “SCC is in the planning stages of implementing a faculty academic advising program, which will be the focus of our next AQIP action project.”

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: Following are the outcomes stated in the original project declaration:

We will use as a baseline the CCSSE and SSI scores from the past few years on survey items chosen from the list below. Items selected and target scores will be dependent upon the design of our project. The goal, however, will be statistically higher survey scores on the survey items from those students receiving faculty advising compared to all comparison groups.

SSI:
My academic advisor is available when I need help
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements
My advisor helps me apply my program of study to career goals
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about transfer requirements of other schools
I receive ongoing feedback about progress toward my academic goals

CCSSE:
Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
Frequency: Academic advising/planning
Frequency: Career counseling
Frequency: Transfer credit assistance
Satisfaction: Academic advising/planning
Satisfaction: Career counseling
Satisfaction: Transfer credit assistance
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Gaining information about career opportunities,

While the Improvement Team will monitor results for the CCSSE and SSI items listed above, the Team will focus on the measures listed below that they will track over the next two years as the project is piloted. Please note: specific measurable outcomes have not yet been established for these indicators:

- Improvement in student retention
- Improvement in Grade Point Average
- Improvement in persistence
- Success in courses
- Increase in number of students.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: During the past year, the project was assigned to the newly-formed Improvement Team as described above. Since its launch in January 2014, the team accomplished the following:

- Recruited two additional team members.
- Researched best practices in faculty advising. Sources included the EBSCO online database and the Education Advisory Board, which provides an online source for best practice research.
- Met with all of SCC’s enrollment specialists to determine how to complement their processes rather than compete with them. As a result of these meetings, the Improvement Team members determined that they should not counsel students on selection of courses or articulation to four-year schools since these requirements are exacting and the enrollment specialists are trained to provide this information. Instead the team is creating an advising process that will focus on students’ future goals, career possibilities, information about specific courses, and class load.
- Decided to primarily focus on students enrolled in Arts & Sciences programs. Career and Technical faculty already advise their students.
- Designed a pilot that will allow the team to track progress toward the goals listed under question #2, above. Developmental education students will be the participants for the first pilot. Enrollment Services staff will randomly select approximately 100-120 developmental ed students who will be assigned to faculty advisors in accordance with their interests and goals. These students will be tagged as having an advisor in SCC’s MIS system. The developmental ed students who are not assigned to an advisor will also be tagged appropriately as the control group. The team will solicit approximately 10 faculty members to participate in the pilot (five have already volunteered). Each faculty member will be assigned approximately ten students. Details regarding the process have not yet been finalized, including how often advisors and advisees should meet and how these visits should be documented.

### INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Since its first meeting in January 2014, the team has focused on researching best practices and obtaining information about current practices at the college. As noted above, the team recruited two new members and engaged the college’s enrollment specialists. Next steps will include holding open meetings with all faculty during the fall 2014 semester and recruiting faculty for the pilot.

### BEST PRACTICES

A: Since the faculty advising project has not yet been implemented, this question will be answered in the next update.

### ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Faculty members on the Improvement Team recognize that there will be challenges involved with implementing the project:

- The time commitment for the faculty may be significant.
- Some students register for classes online and do not receive any guidance from enrollment specialists. The faculty will need to determine the best way to reach these students.
- Students should be matched with faculty in accordance with each faculty member’s area of expertise and the student’s interests and goals. Logistically, this will be difficult.

### PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: September-October 2014: The Helping Students Learn Improvement Team will hold open meetings with faculty. The team will explain the Faculty Advising project and the pilot and will seek approval for both. The team will also solicit volunteers for the pilot.
- September-October 2014: The team will present its project to the AQIP Quality Team and ask for approval of the concept.
- October-November 2014: If it receives approval from the Quality Team in September, the team hopes to present to the Cabinet in October or November to ask for approval of the project.
- November 2014: The team will launch its first pilot in November 2014, after the spring semester schedule becomes available. This pilot will last for two years. A second pilot may be launched in the fall if enough faculty volunteer to participate.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: N/A

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**Update Review**

**CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY**

A: Southeastern Community College (SCC) has provided a good overview for the beginning of their Faculty Advising Action Project (FAAP). The original plan, as indicated by the team, became stalled for reasons that were unclear, but the college’s President and initiative to indirectly restart the FAAP appears to have been a success. It is apparent SCC has taken on this initiative by including two teams to approach the project. It is clear that SCC has aligned this initiative to the Quality Checkup, but most importantly the categories...
2: **INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

A: It isn’t clear if SCC has identified the acronyms of CCSSE or SSI. For this review, it may be beneficial for SCC to provide these definitions early in the project narrative to help aid the reviewer. However, it is assumed these acronyms stand for a type of survey instrument the college has implemented sometime during the years in question. It may be interesting to learn how the team established from the baseline data collected in the above mention surveys how student retention, grade point average, persistence, course success, and student increased enrollment relates to faculty advisement. It is understood SCC is going to monitor the items listed, but it would be helpful to include how this will be established. Finally, since SCC will be using baseline data as mentioned above, when will the additional data be collected in order to measure if outcomes have been met?

3: **PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE**

A: Bullet 3 indicates SCC has enrollment specialists and the faculty advisors should not compete against them by not suggesting which courses to take for articulating into 4-year programs. This is confusing as it would seem the faculty advisors would have direct and immediate contact with their student(s) once they have been admitted into the college through enrollment services. It would seem that having a faculty advisor provides the student with a consistent and trustworthy academic relationship that provides the students with earned knowledge in what courses are best or most beneficial to the student and their program of study. However, perhaps SCC has found that best practices researched in the EBSCO database has indicated otherwise. It is questionable whether a pilot will provide enough reliable data to support conclusions of student retention, grade point average, and etc, in addition to whether or not advisement is the intervention that contributed to this improvement or decline. It would be beneficial for this review and to SCC to establish proven models that have validated instruments and reliable data that could possibly be used for this project.

4: **BEST PRACTICES**

A: As noted above, it is not clear how Academic Advisors and Enrollment Specialists are differentiated. The focus of this project should articulate clear descriptions of how these roles are different and the same.

5: **ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS**

A: This review sees challenges in what SCC is using as indicators to determine the success of the project. Additionally, it is not clear if SCC completely realizes the role of the Academic Advisor and appears to indicate the Enrollment Specialist’s role is to academically advise students which may be competing with the Academic Advisor. It appears challenges for SCC are defining what the Academic Advisor’s role is in helping to improve the survey scores it is using to measure success.

6: **ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES**

A: While this item is asking for Goals and Deliverables, SCC clearly is providing anticipated challenges (Item 5). In bullet 2, SCC is indicating the students register online without advisement, yet it was mentioned above these students will be used as a control group. It is also unclear that if Academic Advisors are not to help students select courses, what purpose do they serve and why should students that self-select courses and register on their own impact the advising project?

7: **ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR**

A: While the timeline seems to be adequate, the first bullet does not appear to have been communicated to the rest of the faculty/staff as the team appears to be seeking approval for a concept that has been proven to be successful throughout academia.

8: **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS**

A: NA