

## AQIP Action Projects Summary

2012 – March, 2017

NOTE: Information for these projects are pulled from the peer review reports provided by action project reviewers.

### **Communication Across the Curriculum**

Project Kickoff Date: 12-3-2012

Projected Target Completion: 12-2014

Actual Date Completed: 5-13-2015

#### *Goal of the project:*

This action project focuses on communication and its application to oral, written, and digital acts or products of student learning from across the curriculum as assessed by small teams of faculty using appropriate numeric and descriptive rubrics. Assessment results will be compiled to reflect institutional measurements, and those results will serve as drivers for faculty conversations to create an on-going, sustainable process of continuous improvement and shared responsibility among faculty for enhancing student communication skills as an institutional outcome.

#### *Reason for the project:*

As Ridgewater transitions its Learning Effectiveness Plan from the discipline and program levels to the institutional level, an intended student communication (written, oral, and digital) an outcome of student learning across the curriculum. Further, we understand that transfer institutions and employers of our graduates value the effective communication abilities in our students and graduates. We also recognize the broader importance of communication in contributing to our communities, valuing democratic processes and conversations, and positively impacting the health and improvement of society at large through communication--fostering tolerant public discourse, peaceful civic behavior, and support for diversity.

#### *Success factors:*

The creation of the rubric, collaboration between departments, and exploring new ideas were the most beneficial and successful part of this project. This group also presented a session at our January duty day in-service about how to use the rubric and what it means to measure communication within their classes, which provided great feedback and understanding.

#### *Unsuccessful factors:*

While many programs are able to measure written and oral communication, implementation of the rubric is not required. Also, the committee members will continue to face challenges in order to persist in their efforts to increase and improve students' communication experiences. Perhaps the biggest challenge, as always, is time. Since there is no release time for any member of the committee, anyone who devotes time and energy to the committee and its goals must balance heavy teaching loads, professional development pursuits, volunteer roles (at Ridgewater, for accrediting bodies, and in the community), and family responsibilities with such work. Even finding time to meet is a challenge—as is finding a place to meet together in the same room. The CAC meets usually via ITV, which is not always the most efficient way to meet. Much more could be accomplished if we are all in the same room at the same time. Professional Development Days pose the perfect opportunity to support such gatherings.

## **On Course**

Project Kickoff Date: 3-27-2013

Projected Target Completion: 3-2015

Actual Date Completed: July 2016

### *Goal of the project:*

This action project proposes the implementation of the nationally renowned ON COURSE instructional program as a way to address a set of student learning needs currently unmet by Ridgewater's curriculum. At its core, this program will seek to improve student persistence and success, but rather than relying solely on the traditional study skills method, this curriculum will enhance students' academic and personal decision-making skills by means of a holistic approach which seeks to engage students in outcome-related behaviors.

### *Reasons for the project:*

Student success rates (retention, persistence, and degree/certificate completion) indicate a need to address the current status of student decision-making as a significant causal factor limiting steady and consistent academic progress of students. This foundational concept—student decision-making—impacts the extent to which students persist in or “stop out” or “fail out” in college. Until students learn about their own decision-making choices and related behavior, College efforts to sustain student success through developmental coursework, financial aid programs, and other student support programs will have limited success. The ON COURSE action project purports to improve decision-making in the academic and personal lives of College students, and, as a consequence, to increase their abilities, choices, and behavior to achieve success.

### *Success factors:*

The impact the class the impact this class has had in students. Sometimes it still takes a semester for students to understand the impact and importance of implementing the core lessons will have on their lives.

### *Unsuccessful factors:*

Some administration and technical faculty can see the value of a class like OnCourse, but making the hard sacrifices to completely implement the course and make real change is hard. I would still like to see this as a class that all students coming into Ridgewater take, not just our developmental or more at-risk population.

## **Incorporating & Measuring Social Responsibility Across the College**

Project Kickoff Date: 3-18-2014

Projected Target Completion: 12-2015

Actual Date Completed: Fall 2016

### *Goal of the project:*

Ridgewater College desires to produce socially responsible students and professionals.

### *Reason for the project:*

Ridgewater College values socially responsible students and professionals and therefore is committed to fostering Social Responsibility (SR) in the curriculum and student environment. As a graduate of the HLC Assessment Academy, Ridgewater College has determined this as an area of need for assessment and development at an institutional, program, and course level.

#### *Effect the project had on the institution*

As our data shows from the program review surveys, this project has had an impact—not only from those who participated in the pilot group, but across campus students are learning and understanding the need to be responsible, respectful, and aware. And that understanding is increasing as shown through the data collected in the second round of surveys three years later.

One thing we learned is that this is not easily measured. While it is critical for our students to be good community citizens, measuring this in and out of the classroom is not easy. Faculty sometimes struggle with the understanding of how to incorporate these discussions into their classroom. Through coaching and open dialogue, the work group as well as campus administrators, were able to help them grasp the concepts and principles. Often, faculty were able to see that they were discussing it—just not with the label of “social responsibility”.

Another is that this is happening outside of the classroom, too. Finding a direct measure for this is also a challenge. Our hope is that through the new action project we declared in summer 2016 to collect assessment data across the college—including criteria 4B for co-curricular activities—we’re able to find an assessment method that can capture more data than the CCSSE survey.

#### *Anticipated Challenges*

The work group met outside of other work responsibilities, and any people willing to give information and insight did the same, so it was sometimes prioritized lower than other more urgent tasks. The rubric needed to be explained in person, and we found that we got more in-depth and engaging responses when a team member met with a department, thus becoming time consuming. The project grew beyond the scope of the time frame; it required a large amount of resources to maintain the assessment process and the follow up measures with those departments who made changes after the rubric was completed.

### **Pilot of the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Tools**

Project Kickoff Date: 7-2016

Projected Target Completion: 8-2017

Actual Date Completed: CURRENT PROJECT

#### *Goal of the project:*

To pilot the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment tools as a means of quantifying the computer skills of entering students, especially displaced workers and nontraditional students.

The pilot program will:

- Provide four participating instructors with knowledge of entering students’ basic computer skills: informing advising and identifying those students more likely to be challenged by course/instructor expectations
- Increase student awareness of free computer training resources: improving opportunities for success, retention, and completion
- Allow students and community members to earn digital badges

- Inform College efforts to “develop students who have the knowledge and skill to effectively use state-of-the-art technology for career and personal success”

*Reasons for the project:*

The project addresses these institutional goals:

- The College’s Learning Effectiveness Action Plan (LEAP) identifies computer literacy as an essential skill for all graduates. To further the College’s efforts to accomplish this common learning outcome, direct measurements of entering students’ skill level are needed and provided by this Action Project. Once this baseline is established, the effectiveness of future initiatives to improve computer literacy can be measured.
- By providing a means of proactively identifying students who may not meet instructor/program skill level expectations and directing them to resources to quickly remedy these challenges, institutional goals related to student success, retention and completion are addressed.
- Barriers faced by incoming students are further quantified and identified.
- Informs the College’s Work Plan goal to “assess institutional capacity to meet current and future [technology] needs of faculty and students”
- Contribute to the College’s Work Plan goal to “strengthen advising” by providing a pre-advising assessment of students’ computer skills and knowledge.

*Effect project has had on the college & anticipated challenges:*

Project will have its first yearly report due in May where these questions will be addressed.

**Developmental English Learning Communities**

Project Kickoff Date: 9-2016

Projected Target Completion: 5-2019

Actual Date Completed: CURRENT PROJECT

*Goal of the project:*

The goals of this action are to improve the pass rate for individual developmental English courses, increase retention – both fall to spring and first fall to second fall, and increase the 3-year graduation rate for students starting in developmental English.

*Reason for this project:*

Currently, over 50% of students taking the Accuplacer at Ridgewater test into some level of developmental English. The pass rate for each individual developmental English course is 70-73%. Extensive literature has identified developmental courses as a major barrier to persistence and completion. Additionally, literature has identified learning communities and contextualized learning as approaches to improve the success rates of student in developmental courses. This project will combine those approaches in an attempt to raise the success rate of students in these courses. Student persistence and completion are key areas of focus identified in Ridgewater’s Master Academic Plan. The primary aim of this project is to improve upon those two areas for students starting in developmental English. The project will start in the fall of 2016. Initial success and persistence data will be available following the first semester, but it will take 3 years to assess whether any improvements are made in the graduation rate; therefore, this is scheduled as a three-year project.

*Effect project has had on the college & anticipated challenges:*

Project will have its first yearly report due in May where these questions will be addressed.

## **Assessment Creation and Collection**

Project Kickoff Date: 9-2016

Projected Target Completion: 5-2018

Actual Date Completed: CURRENT PROJECT

### *Goal of the project:*

Review of our AQIP Portfolio feedback fueled our desire to improve collection, archiving, and centralization of specific data sets at the College. In addition, we desire to improve data collection for curricular areas (as required in criteria 4B.) Data collection is happening across campus by faculty and staff; however, we wish to improve the formal process of obtaining copies of those data on a regular basis, establish a method of how data should be tabulated/presented, and centralize the archival location.

This project will not only detail a process/procedure for the collection of course, program and co-curricular department data, but will also assist faculty and staff in how to collect data, follow Ridgewater's approved Learning Effectiveness Plan for Assessment (the LEP) to evaluate the data collected, how to make changes based on the data, as well as setting benchmarks for success & improvement.

### *Reason for the project:*

When we joined the Assessment Academy in 2006, Ridgewater did extensive work on setting institutional level learning outcomes AND created a 5-step plan for assessment called the Learning Effectiveness Plan (LEP). As we continued to look at ways to measure institutional level learning outcomes, faculty were self identifying the types of assessments they were doing on the program and course level that tied directly to the institutional level outcomes. In an effort not to duplicate the work, assessment examples were collected. Upon that collection we identified common themes including:

- inconsistent understanding of direct/indirect measures
- unsure what data to collect at the program/course level
- programs didn't have quick access to some data—it often meant accessing data bases from outside vendors, or digging through stacks of exams.
- Uncertainty in goal setting (such as thresholds and targets) in programs that do not have a program certification or board exam

When we evaluated our co-curricular assessment, we found some offices had mastered data collection, where other offices had very limited data. With Criteria 4B requiring co-curricular assessment we saw a great opportunity to assist our co-curricular offices in goal setting, assessment creation, data collection, data analysis, and applying the LEP's five-step plan for assessment.

To assist with this process, we will be creating a check list for academic programs and co-curricular areas to self-evaluate where they currently are in the process. Templates will be also be created to insure data collected is provided in a format that can be accessed easily and tabulated quickly. Templates will also create consistency and assist faculty and staff as they learn the process.

Overall, this project will help to break down the assessment process by focusing on data collection for the institutional level learning outcomes in an easy-to-understand method. It will also lay the ground work for data collection at the program level which will be implemented in the program review process.

The project should take approximately 18-24 months.

*Effect project has had on the college & anticipated challenges:*

Project will have its first yearly report due in May where these questions will be addressed.