

## Action Project

**Title:** Continuous Improvement Projects Process Development

**Version:** 1

**Institution:** Heartland Community College

**Status:** Completed

**Submitted:** 2014-11-18

**Category:** 6 - Quality Overview

### Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2014-10-31

Target completion date: 2015-09-30

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

This project will establish the processes and infrastructure for soliciting, selecting, deploying, and evaluating all continuous improvement projects at the College. Within that framework, the AQIP Coordinating Committee will be able to select AQIP Action Projects from all the submissions of continuous improvement projects at the College. This is a broad-based project that will affect every organizational area of the College and it will greatly impact our organizational process for initiating projects across the College by providing a process that is both systematic and systemic.

#### 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

Upon completion of our AQIP Systems Portfolio in November 2013, and receipt of our Systems Appraisal in February 2014, we realized we needed to establish a new infrastructure for continuous improvement at the College. We were doing lots of good things across the College, but we were not doing them in a systematic nor systemic manner, and we were not connecting resources, especially data, to continuous process improvement. We also were designating projects as AQIP Action Projects that did not have a clear and direct link to AQIP Systems Portfolio process improvement.

Therefore, we formed a new Institutional Effectiveness Council, and that Council completed an AQIP Action Project to develop the College's continuous improvement infrastructure, which included the establishment of a revamped AQIP Coordinating Team. That Coordinating Team now needs to determine its processes to carry out the functions in its Charter, the first of which is to "Select, Manage, and Review AQIP Action Projects."

## 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

This project will include the following deliverables by a timeline of March 20, 2014:

1. An updated AQIP Website that will include a link to a Continuous Improvement Project (CIP) Submission Form (posted no later than March 15);
2. Development of a CIP review form and process for the AQIP Coordinating Committee to provide feedback to CIP leads helping them connect to resources on campus and to coordinate their project work with other appropriate areas of campus and to select AQIP Action Projects from all submitted projects across campus (developed by Feb 1);
3. Development of an inventory of resources to provide CIP leads (e.g., project/process improvement professional development; connection to data; connection to other related projects across campus) (developed by Feb 1);
4. Delivery of a Campus Conversation on March 20, 2014 to roll out this new process to campus (the Conversation will be recorded and disseminated after the event for those unable to attend);
5. Follow-up communications via email, newsletter, and campus events to promote the new process and encourage submissions.

## 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

This project will be carried out by the AQIP Coordinating Committee, which includes broad-based membership from every organizational area and every employee group at the College. Project leads are the AQIP Coordinating Committee Co-Chairs (one Cabinet member and one faculty member) who will drive project progress and ensure AQIP Coordinating Committee monthly meetings are used effectively to develop and finalize the process in time for the March 20 delivery. Additionally, the project leads will be assisted by the AQIP Action Projects manager, who will ensure we are meeting deadlines for the Project and measuring and recording our progress.

## 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 AQIP Action Projects Manager will set up the project in a SharePoint site that will include a list of project action items and a progress bar to track percentage completion.

## 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

The AQIP Coordinating Committee was newly organized in August, so member knowledge and comfort with AQIP process is still in development stage. Carrying out an action project that has the input and backing of the Committee could be difficult given that all are still learning about AQIP. The project leads will have to work hard to provide a mix of AQIP learning/training and Action Project work in the monthly meetings to ensure everyone feels they can contribute to the project.

The timeline is also ambitious, such that the project leads will have to work in between AQIP Coordinating Committee monthly meetings to ensure the timelines are met.

Institutionalizing learning will take more time, but Institutional Effectiveness/Continuous Improvement have been named by our President as one of four Foundational Commitments for the College and as such have been emphasized at various College events, meetings, and professional development offerings. Those efforts will need to continue to institutionalize the learning and commitment to this process.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

We feel this Project will have a tremendous impact on our College's **Involvement** with continuous process improvement; on our ability to intentionally use **Information** to measure our progress and promote better decision making; and on our ability to **Focus** on the right process improvements/projects/initiatives in times of tight resources.

## Annual Update

### CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

*(Please answer the following questions in the text box below)*

General Project Status:  Completed  In-progress  Suspended  Reopened

Original Project Start Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Originally Projected End Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Briefly describe the current status of the project.

Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio, if applicable

General Project Status: Completed

Original Project Start Date: 10-31-14

Originally Projected End Date: 9-30-15

Heartland had just finished overhauling its organizational framework for continuous improvement, which led to the establishment of an Institutional Effectiveness Council that would oversee the work of a revitalized AQIP Coordinating Committee and a newly established Compliance Committee. One of the first tasks of the AQIP Coordinating Committee was to determine its processes and infrastructure for soliciting, selecting, deploying, and evaluating all continuous improvement projects at the College. Within that framework, the AQIP Coordinating Committee would be able to select AQIP Action Projects from all the submissions of continuous improvement projects at the College. It addressed a pressing need at the College to create a process for initiating projects that works both systematically and systemically.

### ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal.

This project included the following deliverables by a timeline of March 20, 2014:

1. An updated AQIP Website that will include a link to a Continuous Improvement Project (CIP) Submission Form (posted no later than March 15);
2. Development of a CIP review form and process for the AQIP Coordinating Committee to provide feedback to CIP leads helping them connect to resources on campus and to coordinate their project work with other appropriate areas of campus and to select AQIP Action Projects from all submitted projects across campus (developed by Feb 1);
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5. Follow-up communications via email, newsletter, and campus events to promote the new process and encourage submissions.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year.

Each of the deliverables listed in Question 2 have been completed, all within the timeline with the exception of the website link, which was finalized in December 2015, due to an institutional delay in our new website launch. Specifically:

1. We created a Continuous Improvement Portal (called the CI Portal), through which project leads at the College can login to access resources for project development following the FOCUS PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Adjust) model, and then log their project either for inventory only (helps the college track and systemically organize projects) or for review (project leads receive feedback on their project from AQIP Coordinating Committee reviewers). The questions project leads answer in the Portal align with the questions asked of AQIP Action Projects, with focus on project outcomes, timelines, measures, as well as the project's connectivity to College goals, to other projects at the College, and to AQIP processes.
2. The CI Portal was launched at a Campus Conversation on March 20, 2014.
3. Instructional videos were developed to accompany communications about the CI Portal that show how to use the CI Portal, and also provide professional development on the FOCUS PDCA model.
4. The systematic approach to project planning, deployment, tracking, assessing, and adjustment has helped our project processes immensely.
5. The Cabinet and College Advisory Council received a quarterly update on CI Portal activity, noting new projects for better systemic interaction of projects.
6. Projects are categorized by connection to AQIP process when relevant, and AQIP Category Champions are notified of any new project developed with linkage to their Category.
7. The AQIP Coordinating Committee reviews portal submissions monthly, and from those submissions, selects AQIP Action Projects - the College now has 3 new active AQIP Action Projects that address college needs and opportunities identified in our last Systems Portfolio.
7. Since its inception 10 months ago, 42 projects have been logged in the CI Portal from all areas of the College, and by project leads covering all employee groups (our desire was to make it accessible and user-friendly).
8. The CI Portal is featured on our AQIP Website, though the Portal can only be accessed on our intranet. See web link here: <http://www.heartland.edu/aqip/index.html>

## INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration, particularly during the past year.

This project has truly spanned the entire campus. It was lead by our AQIP Coordinating Committee, which has broad-based representation from every organizational Division of the College, as well as every employee group. The CI Portal is intended for use by the entire campus community, as project leads can be any employee. In the first 10 months, 42 projects have been logged into the CI Portal from all areas of campus. Additionally, we have held several face-to-face professional development sessions on the FOCUS PDCA project model that have been attended by a wide array of individuals across campus, and the online professional development modules are viewable by all of campus.

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

Ensuring that our process for initiating projects was both systematic and systemic was a high priority for us. In terms of systematic improvement, we were starting a lot of projects without a lot of thought and as a result, many would quickly fizzle out. The CI Portal has helped our project processes immensely by creating a systematic approach that gives each project focus - we all answer the same questions at the outset to focus the project. It also provides professional development tools that help provide FOCUS to the project: **F**ind the Right Opportunity to Improve, **O**rganize, **C**larify, **U**nderstand, and **S**elect the best ways to improve as well as managing the project (Plan, Do, Check, Adjust). And, it provides accountability (the CI Portal includes a listing of project milestones and the ability to track progress toward meeting those milestones). In terms of systemic improvement, we had a LOT going on around campus and seemingly no way to connect or communicate that activity. The CI Portal provides a central repository for project work that is communicated to Cabinet, College Advisory Council, and all of campus, so that we can all be aware of what is going on, and how the work we are doing might connect.

### ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

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

As with anything, you always worry about keeping the initiative alive and going. The CI Portal is useful if project leads continue to log projects there, and if the campus community continues to view it as a resource. The built-in quarterly updates should hopefully keep this going, but we will also be launching a project to develop better processes for encouraging and rewarding employee engagement with continuous improvement processes, which would include rewards for engagement with the CI Portal.

### PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step.

Over the next year, we will:

1. Continue quarterly updates for the CI Portal to further institutionalize its use and
2. Launching a new project to develop better processes for encouraging and rewarding employee engagement with continuous improvement processes, which would include rewards for engagement with the CI Portal.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

Provide any additional information, inquires, or concerns that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project

None.

## Annual Update

### REASON FOR COMPLETION

What is the primary reason for closing this project?

All of the project goals and deliverables have been met. Specifically:

1. We created a Continuous Improvement Portal (called the CI Portal), through which project leads at the College can login to access resources for project development following the FOCUS PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Adjust) model, and then log their project either for inventory only (helps the college track and systemically organize projects) or for review (project leads receive feedback on their project from AQIP Coordinating Committee reviewers). The questions project leads answer in the Portal align with the questions asked of AQIP Action Projects, with focus on project outcomes, timelines, measures, as well as the project's connectivity to College goals, to other projects at the College, and to AQIP processes.
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## SUCCESS FACTORS

What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

The development of the CI Portal has been very successful as a means for soliciting, selecting, deploying, and evaluating all continuous improvement projects at the College. Additionally, the CI Portal also provides us a way to engage in project work that is both systematic and systemic. Specifically, the CI Portal has helped our project processes immensely by creating a systematic approach that gives each project focus - we all answer the same questions at the outset to focus the project. It also provides professional development tools that help provide FOCUS to the project: **F**ind the Right Opportunity to Improve, **O**rganize, **C**larify, **U**nderstand, and **S**elect the best ways to improve as well as managing the project (Plan, Do, Check, Adjust). And, it provides accountability (the CI Portal includes a listing of project milestones and the ability to track progress toward meeting those milestones). In terms of systemic improvement, we had a LOT going on around campus and seemingly no way to connect or communicate that activity. The CI

Portal provides a central repository for project work that is communicated to Cabinet, College Advisory Council, and all of campus, so that we can all be aware of what is going on, and how the work we are doing might connect.

## UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?

We have not come as far as we would like on a side project to this, which was to create professional development resources for project management. We have started a resource repository for instructional videos on the FOCUS PDCA model, as well as on project management, but we are far from complete on that. Limited institutional resources, and the loss of a key position in the organization (Director of Professional Development) will likely delay our progress on this front, but we have split out responsibilities to timeline completion of this in the coming months.

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