

Action Project

Title: Fostering Community through Enhanced Campus Communication

Version: 3

Institution: Heartland Community College

Status: Completed

Submitted: 2009-11-24

Category: 4-Valuing People

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2006-05-19

Target completion date: 2006-12-19

Actual completion date: 2009-09-25

Project Detail

Project Goal

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

The goal of this project is to foster a sense of community at the College by providing opportunities for more effective communication. Specifically, the College will explore the possibility of designating a particular time each week during which no classes will be scheduled, thus freeing all members of the campus community to participate in inter- and intra-departmental discussion. Other formal and informal opportunities to enhance campus communication will also be explored.

Reasons For Project

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

The AQIP Examiner survey and especially the two-day Campus Conversation exercise revealed that College employees perceive themselves to be isolated from many areas of the College and that employees possess a strong desire to be connected to other parts of the College. Moreover, a significant number of employees from different areas of the College have all suggested creating a privileged, all campus, meeting time as a means of addressing these communication issues. This is a timely action plan in that demographic changes in the student body have caused the College to focus at this time enhancing student activities outside the classroom. Freeing time for both students and employees to participate in campus meetings and events without time conflict would be beneficial to both initiatives.

Organizational Areas Affected

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

The entire campus community will be affected by this project.

Key Organizational Process(es)

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

The key processes impacted by this project are: class scheduling by all academic divisions, the development of the academic calendar, and room scheduling. We expect the following improvements as a result of implementing this project: it will improve morale and create a sense of community, it will foster collaboration, and it will promote awareness of "macro" issues on campus.

Project Time Frame Rationale

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

The project should be completed within eighteen months. This time frame will allow for planning and working with existing standing committees, employee groups, and other stakeholders to implement the change(s) needed, as well as allow for sufficient time to determine if this action project is successful. The College feels it is essential to have something in place within this time frame in order to convince employees of the strength of its commitment to the quality improvement process.

Project Success Monitoring

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

We will conduct satisfaction surveys and compare the results to the AQIP Examiner survey results from Spring 2006. We also will be able to identify the number of participants at campus wide events.

Project Outcome Measures

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

The project will be a success if HCC has identified an appropriate common time slot for meetings (if possible), modified the instructional schedule and implemented a common meeting time, created a year long calendar of common meeting time events, communicated the new calendar to the entire campus community, increased participation levels for campus wide meetings, and increased employee satisfaction levels as indicted by campus-wide surveys.

Annual Update

Project Accomplishments and Status

Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project

Previously, the project focused on specific tasks that we thought would improve campus communication. The team created a set aside time for campus meetings on Friday afternoons, a lounge area in addition to the cafeteria where faculty, administration, and staff could eat lunch together, 360 degree evaluations of supervisors by faculty in addition to the typical faculty evaluations by supervisors, creation of a faculty senate, and the

creation of a college wide employee newsletter called The HEN (Heartland Employee Newsletter). Since these tasks and the organizations to sustain them were for the most part up and running, the final job for the group was to try to evaluate the awareness of the campus that these campus communication tools and projects were out there and in the cases of 360 degree evaluations and Friday set aside days, to see if people liked them. Consequently, at our spring 2009 campus conversation day, we surveyed everyone participating to see if they were aware of the communication projects listed above. In the case of the Friday afternoon set asides, we asked more specifically if they thought that they were working. Additionally, in the case of our 360 degree evaluations, we had informal conversations with supervisors to get their sense of the value of the information they received from their faculty. The results of these various assessments were mixed. For example, in terms of awareness, most people were aware of the Campus Newsletter but only a very few people were aware that there was a lunch lounge other than in the cafeteria. With respect to the Friday set asides, most people liked the concept but a vocal minority complained that now Fridays have become overburdened with meetings. Finally, faculty supervisors were appreciative of the feedback they received in the 360 degree evaluations but several noted that at least some of the negative feedback was less than constructive and that they were at a loss as to what to do with this venting. As a result of this feedback some steps were taken to try to make people more aware of these various communication projects and to improve their usefulness. For example, the Faculty Senate had a mixer at a local watering hole and invited the entire campus. In advance of completing the supervisor 360 degree evaluation forms this past spring, faculty were reminded to make their comments constructive so supervisors might be more readily able to address them. The Instructional Development Center, the "owner" of the lunch lounge space, included "lunch open to faculty and staff" on their monthly calendar of events. Other employee groupings beside faculty were encouraged to create their own version of a faculty senate to spur communication. Finally, an AQIP Celebration day was held at the start of the fall 2009 semester in part to remind people of these and other various accomplishments of the AQIP program.

Institution Involvement

Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project

Each project manager simply solicited volunteers across the campus in order to see that the project came about. There were very few incentives used to entice potential participants and as a result it was hard to get a group beyond the core committee members.

Next Steps

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

Now that a rudimentary assessment of the several projects recommended by the Campus Communication Team outlined in question one has been conducted, this project is being retired. Energies are being redirected into continuing and improving each of those specific projects.

Resulting Effective Practices

Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project

We believe the Friday set aside time for campus meetings, the 360 degree evaluation of faculty and their supervisors, the campus newsletter, the creation of a Faculty Senate, and the creation of a space to have lunch have all been somewhat effective in enhancing campus communication. Most likely the supervisor evaluations and the Friday set aside time have made the most impact on the most people.

Project Challenges

What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project

Annual Update

Reason for completion

What is the primary reason for closing this project?

The project focused on specific tasks that we thought would improve campus communication. The team created a set aside time for campus meetings on Friday afternoons, a lounge area in addition to the cafeteria where faculty, administration, and staff could eat lunch together, 360 degree evaluations of supervisors by faculty in addition to the typical faculty evaluations by supervisors, creation of a faculty senate, and the creation of a college wide employee newsletter called The HEN (Heartland Employee Newsletter). These tasks and the organizations to sustain them are for the most part up and running.

Success Factors

What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

We believe the Friday set aside time for campus meetings, the 360 degree evaluation of faculty and their supervisors, the campus newsletter, the creation of a Faculty Senate, and the creation of a space to have lunch have all been somewhat effective in enhancing campus communication. Most likely the supervisor evaluations and the Friday set aside time have made the most impact on the most people.

Unsuccessful Factors

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

Finding communication methods that are effective for the entire campus community will continue to be a challenge. At our spring 2009 campus conversation day, we surveyed everyone participating to see if they were aware of the communication projects listed above. In the case of the Friday afternoon set asides, we asked more specifically if they thought that they were working. Additionally, in the case of our 360 degree evaluations, we had informal conversations with supervisors to get their sense of the value of the information they received from their faculty. The results of these various assessments were mixed.

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