

## Action Project

**Title:** HLC Academy for Student Persistence & Completion

**Version:** 1

**Institution:** Heartland Community College

**Status:** Completed

**Submitted:** 2016-03-21

**Category:** 2 - Meeting Student and Other Key Stakeholder Needs

### Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2015-02-02

Target completion date: 2019-01-01

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 seeks to focus student persistence and completion (P&C) efforts for Associate of Arts degree-seeking students by developing our understanding of student intent and learning more about student experiences in their first year. Specifically, the outcomes of this project are:

1. Educate and increase awareness of the HCC community regarding student P&C including definitions and current state of affairs.
2. Create a process for identifying, collecting, and disseminating data on student intent.
3. Use data to create AA student personas with a filter for placement,
- 4, Use voice-of-student data to inform and validate efforts in outcomes 2 and 3.
5. Share and analyze with faculty and staff the P&C of student personas to target improvements in the first-year experience of AA degree-seeking students.
6. Set goal for AA degree-seeking student P&C rates based on evidence uncovered in outcomes 1-5.

#### 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.

We have 14 major initiatives and other important efforts targeted toward student P&C and we do know which ones are working or how well they are working. The Higher Learning Commission's Academy for Persistence and Completion will help us set measures of success for each initiative and track data against results. The Academy is also an important component for our accreditation as it helps us better define our process for tracking student persistence and completion in our AQIP Systems Portfolio. But mostly, the Academy is about better understanding why our students persist and complete and why they do not. In some cases, they may not persist and complete with us because that was never their intent (they only wanted to take one or a few classes). In those cases, so long as we are helping students meet their intent, it is a success, but that requires us to better capture and track that intent alongside persistence and completion rates.

## 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.

By the end of this 4-year project, we will have completed the following:

1. Increased awareness of student P&C in the HCC campus community, including a report dashboard defining terms and reporting our latest fall-to-fall or fall-to-spring persistence, number of completions, etc.
2. Student intent will be meaningful to HCC and be shared with academic advisors, faculty, tutors, etc. to further assist students in achieving their goals at HCC
3. A full analysis of the AA student personas will have been completed and shared with staff and faculty and used to identify improvements in the first-year experience of AA degree-seeking students
4. Goals for student P&C rates will be established

## 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.

By the end of this 4-year project, we will have completed the following:

1. Increased awareness of student P&C in the HCC campus community, including a report dashboard defining terms and reporting our latest fall-to-fall or fall-to-spring persistence, number of completions, etc.
2. Student intent will be meaningful to HCC and be shared with academic advisors, faculty, tutors, etc. to further assist students in achieving their goals at HCC
3. A full analysis of the AA student personas will have been completed and shared with staff and faculty and used to identify improvements in the first-year experience of AA degree-seeking students
4. Goals for student P&C rates will be established

## 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.

This project was initiated in February 2015 with Heartland admission into the Higher

Learning Commission's Academy on Student Persistence and Completion.

The project will be completed January 2019 upon completion of year four of the Academy.

### 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 Academy Team will meet monthly to discuss project goals and progress. Specific KPIs will be developed and added for each of the project goals over time.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

Measures of success will include:

1. A completed data dashboard of measures for student persistence and completion that is updated on a regularly basis and that is visited and used by departments.
2. Set goals for student persistence and completion rates based on the data at both the college level and the department and course levels.
3. A culture within academic departments of knowing what their persistence and completion rates are and establishing goals of improvement along with measures to achieve those goals.
4. Routine collection of student intent data in our student data system and use of the data to better inform student persistence and completion rates.
5. Completed analysis of the role of placement on student persistence and completion rates.

## 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   X   In-progress \_\_\_\_\_ Suspended \_\_\_\_\_ Reopened**

**Original Project Start Date:   3   /  15  /  15**

**Originally Projected End Date:   3   /  15  /  19**

**Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed:   3   /  15  /  19**

**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:**

In HCC's last Systems Portfolio Appraisal (Feb 2014), a key strategic challenge/opportunity that was cited consistently was the need for "intentional process data collection based upon process objectives, data validity, analysis and dissemination, with resultant action and documented improvements." We agreed with the reviewers appraisal and felt a great place to start was with our data structures for student persistence and completion such that we were making informed decisions on resource deployment (but human and fiscal capital) in an area that we viewed as critical for the College.

Specifically, we noted that the College currently has 14 major initiatives targeted toward student persistence and completion, yet we do not know which ones are working or how well they are working. We applied to be a part of the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for Persistence and Completion to help provide assistance and structure for this project to help us set measures of success for each initiative and track data against results.

#### 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.

By the end of this 4-year project, we will have completed the following:

1. Increased awareness of student P&C in the HCC campus community, including a report dashboard defining terms and reporting our latest fall-to-fall or fall-to-spring persistence, number of completions, etc.
2. Student intent will be meaningful to HCC and be shared with academic advisors, faculty, tutors, etc. to further assist students in achieving their goals at HCC
3. A full analysis of the Associate of Arts student personas will have been completed and shared with staff and faculty and used to identify improvements in the first-year experience of AA degree-seeking students
4. Goals for student persistence completion rates will be established

Measures of success will include:

1. A completed data dashboard of measures for student persistence and completion that is updated on a regularly basis and that is visited and used by departments.
2. Set goals for student persistence and completion rates based on the data at both the college level and the department and course levels.
3. A culture within academic departments of knowing what their persistence and completion rates are and establishing goals of improvement along with measures to achieve those goals.

4. Routine collection of student intent data in our student data system and use of the data to better inform student persistence and completion rates.

## 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.

We have focused largely on Goal #1 from above in our first year. Specifically:

1. Development of a Persistence and Completion Data Dashboard: Dashboard was developed and unveiled to all campus at Fall Kick-off (August 2015). The Dashboard is embedded in several faculty and staff sites across campus for prominence.
2. Engaging Faculty in Persistence and Completion Efforts: The "Rewards of Persistence" theme was continued for Spring Kick-off (January 2016) and the Academy Team presented a faculty engagement session whereby we worked on a "Persistence Communication Grid" with participants. The Grid included blank boxes for persistence stages of the semester (Weeks 1-2: New but Shaky; Weeks 3-5: Settling In and Need Reassurance; Weeks 7-8: Midterms and Anxious; Weeks 9-12: Highest Withdrawal Rate; Weeks 13-15: Pre-Finals Feeling Overwhelmed; Week 16: Finals - Remember to Register for Next Semester). Participants worked together to fill in the boxes with strategies/communications they could deploy at each stage to help students persist. We then discussed what of those we could scale up for all faculty to do as a matter of process.
3. Inclusion of persistence and completion data in all enrollment reports (e.g., beginning of semester reports sent out to faculty, staff, presented at Board of Trustees, and sent to media outlets). We now go beyond including our "enrollment" numbers to focusing on our persistence and completion numbers for each semester in these reports.
4. Inclusion of persistence data in program review. We've always looked at program completions, but had not tracked persistence within programs before. Including persistence data in our regular program review process helped to increase faculty awareness.

## 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.

The project team itself was designed to be representative of key areas involved with student persistence and completion (faculty, academic administration, advising, student support services and discipline). Our project team also worked very hard to engage the entire campus community in its efforts by featuring the project at all-campus Best Practices, running workshops at those events to engage campus members in helping us better understand the current state of affairs for student persistence and completion and to identify what information/data we need to improve and better understand our efforts in the future.

## 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?

## 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.

Finding the time to stay on track is always a challenge, but by continuing to give ourselves short-term goals and keeping ourselves accountable by committing to present data and results at Fall and Spring Kick-Off events, hopefully we can stay on track.

## 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.

In the next 6 months we plan to:

1. Complete our Persistence Grid by outlining classroom/faculty activities that we recommend be deployed by all faculty based on the workshop we conducted at Spring Kick-off. Present the grid at Fall Kick-off and publish it.
2. Analyze the data that are currently being gathered on student intent and design a process for collecting, analyzing and disseminating intent information on a systematic basis.
3. Complete one set of student persona filtering by placement by analyzing one entering group of high school graduates (Olympia High School Class of 2014), tracking their placement variable (how they placed in Reading, Writing, and Math), and then tracking their persistence/completion rates through Spring 2014.
4. Establish our AY16-17 goal for college-wide student persistence and completion rates: The College is in the process of establishing Key Performance Indicators for its current strategic plan. One such KPI will be on student persistence and completion rates. We now have 3 terms running for persistence and completion data from which to establish a baseline. We will also collect peer rates to assist us in developing a realistic goal.
5. Continue education and awareness efforts by consistently reporting on persistence and completion data.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

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

No answer at this time

---