

Action Project

Institution: Northeast Iowa Community College

Submitted: January 15, 2008

Timeline:

Planned project kick-off date: 1/15/08

Target completion date: 6/30/10

Actual completion date:

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Develop a plan to assess and improve student retention

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

The goal of this Action Project is to develop a plan to assess and improve student retention.
The plan will:

- Benchmark our current retention rates and practices.
- Identify our current strategies for retaining students and tracking attrition.
- Develop methods for identifying and tracking student goals.
- Identify and recommend new retention strategies appropriate for our institution.
- Recommend elimination of ineffective retention strategies.
- Identify proven strategies for engaging the entire College community in student retention.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Helping Students Learn

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now – why the projects and its goals are high among your current priorities:

This project is high on our list of priorities for the following reasons:

- **Dropping enrollment**

Our enrollment has leveled off, and even dropped slightly, over the past three years. This was somewhat expected after a period of explosive growth in high school enrollment. With the rapid growth in enrollment, our focus was on managing that growth. Now, with enrollment numbers leveling off, student retention is at the forefront again.

- **Limited retention**

We are concerned about the number of students who walk out our doors before meeting their goals, understanding that not all students view graduation as their ultimate goal. We need to develop better methods to identify and track student goals. Next, we need to support student retention by recognizing strategies that work and promoting and supporting new and effective strategies.

- **Limited engagement in retention**

While many employees work hard to retain students, we lack an overall, coordinated retention strategy. We need to develop clear roles and responsibilities for student retention. This will include a clear understanding that all employees, not just a few, have a role to play. We need to stimulate college-wide engagement in student retention.

E. List the organizational areas – institutional departments, programs, division, or units – most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Student retention is the responsibility of all College employees. All College employees will play a vital role in implementing strategies to improve student retention as the plan unfolds. Although everyone will be involved, the following will play a primary role in developing and implementing the student retention plan:

- ***Strategic Enrollment Management Team*** – SEM will have overall responsibility for developing and communicating an effective student retention plan.
- ***Quality Council*** – The Quality Council will oversee the college-wide assessment plan, including results generated by the student retention plan.
- ***Student Access and Success Subcommittee*** – The Student Access and Success committee will assist in data collection, review current student retention initiatives, and promote and support new student retention initiatives.
- ***Institutional Research*** - The Institutional Researcher will play a key role in providing internal and external comparison data and analyzing results.

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

This Action Project will affect almost all College processes. The development of a student retention plan is likely to lead to important improvements in the following processes:

- Admissions
- New student orientation
- Student mentoring
- Academic assistance
- Accommodations
- Academic advising
- Academic and personal counseling
- Financial aid counseling
- Early intervention
- Student activities
- Instructional schedules geared to student needs
- Diverse course delivery methods
- Opportunities to interact with faculty and staff in and outside the classroom

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kick-off to target completion):

We expect this Action Project to be completed by June 2010. This estimate is based on the following considerations:

- The Student Enrollment Management Team (SEM) will start by reviewing currently available data on student retention, including data from Datatel, the Community College Survey on Student Engagement (CCSSE), the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP), and our recently completed Clarus marketing scan. The team will complete collection of baseline data by July 2008.
- SEM will investigate and determine methods to track student goals other than graduation by October 2008.
- SEM will establish benchmarks for student retention by December 2008.
- SEM will complete a review of current retention practices and their effectiveness by December 2008.
- The team will make recommendations about which practices to keep, alter, and eliminate by December 2008.
- SEM will develop a new student retention plan by June 2009.

- The plan will be implemented during the 2009-2010 academic year. At that time the plan will be presented to all College employees. They will be informed about their roles and responsibilities in retaining students.
- SEM will review student retention data, establish target retention rates for the following academic year, and make recommendations regarding retention strategies by June 2010.

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

SEM will report quarterly progress to the Student Access and Success Subcommittee of the Quality Council. The chair of the subcommittee will provide quarterly reporting to the Quality Council.

I. 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 following indicators will document success in achieving the goals of this Action Project:

- Establishment of baseline retention rates
- Development of a new system for identifying and tracking student goals other than graduation
- Assessment of current retention practices and their effectiveness
- Recommendations regarding continuation, modification, or elimination of processes
- Establishment of new retention initiatives
- Increased participation in retention initiatives
- Tracking of students involved in retention initiatives
- Comparison of retention between students who participated in retention initiatives and students who did not
- Improved retention rates
- Establishment of target retention rates for the 2009-2010 academic year

J. Other information (e.g. publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):