This project is submitted as part of Columbus State’s Student Success initiatives. The process focus is to increase the number and percentage new and continuing students who declare a major. As the process progresses, it is expected that fewer students will remain undecided, and the focus of the intervention will focus primarily on new, first quarter students. The process change will be to place a restriction on undecided students in their first quarter at the college and all those who have already completed their first quarter, requiring them to seek assistance with career decision-making and selecting a major. The primary service provider will be Counseling Services (career counseling). An on-line web-based tool to assist students with career exploration and major selection will be developed. The college will also take advantage of existing career websites and resources at other 2-year and 4-year institutions and in the community, for assisting undecided students. Based on research regarding student retention, this project is expected to positively impact student success as measured by: course completion, academic progress, and retention (quarter-to-quarter and first-to-second year).

Approximately 10% of each autumn quarter new student cohort is undecided (e.g. 572 for AU 2008), and approximately 2,500 students total are undecided at the college (e.g. AU 2007 there were 2,503 undecided students). National research shows that students who are undecided in their major are less likely to be retained from quarter to quarter, progress academically, and persist to course completion and graduation. For example, from AU07 to WI08, of 2,503 undecided students, 59.3% or 1,500 were retained. Of new students who are undecided, approximately half are lost from the first to the second quarter.
Organizational Areas Affected
List the organizational areas – institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units – most affected by or involved in this Action Project

Admissions, Advising Services, and academic departments.

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

The process by which first quarter students choose then declare a major.

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

Up to 12 months are needed for this project. To determine the impact of this newly implemented process, measures must be taken over a time period to determine its effectiveness.

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

One metric will be monitoring the number of undecided new and continuing students who declare majors as a result of the intervention. Other success measures are listed under I.

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

Metrics will include quarter-to-quarter retention of students, first-to-second year retention, course completion rates, academic progress and graduation.

Annual Update

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

Demographic data was collected on three “cohort” groups of new undeclared students who began either Autumn 2009 (n=309), Winter 2010 (n= 292) or Spring 2010 (n= 285). Information included gender, ethnicity age and educational goal. An intervention strategy was developed and initiated in March 2010. The strategy involved an e-mail to all new undeclared students informing them of a choosing a major workshop, and to update their records if they had in fact declared a major. A second communication was sent in April to all new undeclared students who were still undecided during either the Autumn 2009 or Winter 2010 quarters informing them of a new restriction for undeclared students, and to update their record if they had declared a major. The third communication informed new undeclared students that a restriction had been placed on their record. Students were required to meet with a counselor to have the restriction lifted. A similar process began in July for undecided students registered Spring 2010.

The workshop for undeclared students was developed and offered three times beginning in the autumn quarter. A total of about 20 students attended these workshops.

The following projects are in progress and part of the overall intervention strategy for undecided students:
Development of a career web site with resources to assist students in deciding on a major

Development of a Career Pathways document that shows students over 130 different combinations of certificates, associate degrees and related bachelor’s degrees paths

Collection and analysis of quarter to quarter retention, grade point average, numbers of students declaring a major, and numbers of restrictions applied and lifted.

Development of program sheets on each Columbus State program that highlights key information students need in order to make good career decisions and major choices.

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

In addition to the team members developing the intervention strategies and resources, staff from Information Technology and Knowledge Resources and Planning assisted in writing queries and gathering data for the project. Counseling Services staff are involved in meeting with students and lifting restrictions. The Telephone Information Center staff are involved in updating student’s major records. Team members have also worked with chairpersons in the Career/Technical and Arts and Sciences Divisions and Academic Advising staff on developing resources for career pathways and information sheets for CSCC programs. Staff from the Institutional Advancement Office are assisting with development of content and layout for the career web site.

Next Steps
Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

Continue to identify a cohort of students quarterly who are new and undeclared and apply the intervention strategy. Continue to gather demographic information on each cohort group. Monitor the retention and student success patterns of all cohorts through one year from their initial quarter, as well as whether or not they declared a major. Finalize, post and distribute career web site, career pathway resources, and program information sheets.

Resulting Effective Practices
Describe any “effective practice(s)” that resulted from your work on this Action Project

Most students do not take action on either declaring a major or seeing a counselor until after they have received a restriction. Initial mailings have not seemed to motivate students to see a counselor or update their records. Through the use of a customer relations management system, the college has been able to track the number and percentage of students opening the correspondence sent via e-mail. Involving the Telephone Information Center to assist in lifting restrictions and updating records has helped the college be responsive to students when they seek help.

Project Challenges
What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project? This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback and advice from our review process. Use this section to outline where your blocks, pain, sticking points, or problems are. If you have already fashioned strategies
to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help beyond the review process, explain your need(s) and tell us whom to contact and when.

Since each quarter is a new “cohort” group, tracking multiple cohorts over a year can be problematic if accurate records are not kept. Attendance at workshops, while about average for the college, could be increased to improve efficiency. Students who are 65 and older taking classes for personal interest at the college, have often had a restriction placed on their schedules. Refinement of the data query is needed in order to keep this group of students from receiving a restriction.

### Annual Update

**Reason for completion**
What is the primary reason for closing this project?

This project was a multi-year, multi-phase project. During 2009-2010, initial baseline data was collected, along with the establishment and tracking of cohort groups. An intervention strategy was designed, implemented and evaluated to determine its impact on course completion, grade point average and persistence. Evaluation of the intervention strategy and cohort tracking has given insights into the implementation of Phase II of the project, which will involve increasing web services available to undecided students, expanding workshop offerings, and refinement of the career pathways concept that was identified in the initial project description.

### Success Factors

What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

The intervention strategy requiring students to see an advisor was effective in getting students to access services available to assist them with declaring a major. It appears from preliminary data, this strategy did in fact, help students declare majors. Expanding the web resources available to assist students with declaring a major also appears to have been an effective tool in combination with the restriction requiring students to see an advisor.

### Unsuccessful Factors

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

We are hoping to increase attendance at workshops designed for students receiving this restriction. Additional offerings of the same topic, as well as new topics such as decision making, motivation, and goal setting are being considered. Another challenge was clarifying the intention of establishing “career pathways”. The project team had a narrow definition of pathway, looking at developing materials to help students understand paths to certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor degrees, and what the implications of stopping at any stage meant. Career pathways is a much broader concept, involving institutional involvement and commitment from the president on down, and development of close partnerships with community leaders and organizations. A final challenge was tracking of cohort groups. In tracking new and undecided students each quarter, the complexity of analyzing completion and persistence patterns was at times problematic. Each of the above challenges will be addressed in Phase II of this project.