The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Columbus State Community College

Project Details			
Title	Achieving the Dream (AtD) – Planning Year Project	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	**Updated**	09-14-2013
Timeline		**Reviewed**	09-24-2013
Planned Project Kickoff	09-01-2012	**Created**	09-26-2012
Actual Completion	09-03-0013	**Version**	1

1: Project Goal

A: The Achieving the Dream – Planning Year Project will result in an Achieving the Dream implementation proposal based on close examination of student success and attainment data. It will follow guidelines from Achieving the Dream to accomplish the following objectives required by AtD:

1. Develop a leadership team and a data team to guide the work
2. Study student success data relating to the five AtD metrics.
3. Engage faculty, staff and students to diagnose issues that may present roadblocks to students
4. Examine policies and practices that may present roadblocks to students
5. Develop intervention strategies to improve student success

Develop plans to measure effectiveness of interventions

2: Reasons For Project

A: Student success and attainment is a top priority for Columbus State. Over the past two years we have implemented a set of initiatives to improve various aspects of student success, focusing in areas such as developmental education, tutoring, and first year experience.

Columbus State's primary goal is to develop evidence based programs and interventions aimed directly at assisting students in the beginning of their college experience and continuing that support into the future, with the ultimate goal of assisting students with the attainment of a certificate or associate's degree, or successful transfer to a four-year institution. The college views participation in Achieving the Dream as a way to unify and focus the excellent work that is underway, as well as to expand and improve our use of data to inform this work.

This Action Project includes the work of the first year of AtD participation. This is a planning year during which we will analyze our baseline data, communicate it widely across campus, and decide which interventions we will undertake.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic Affairs
Student Affairs
President's Office – Institutional Effectiveness

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A:
- Analysis and communication of student success data.
- Study of and planning for interventions to improve student success
- Review of policies and processes that impact students, focused on how students move through our systems for doing business with them

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The timeline for this project was designed to allow us sufficient time to analyze data and formulate plans to improve student success and reduce achievement gaps. We will spend much of Autumn semester on initial analysis and communication of student success

data. We are starting with data we collected earlier this year and disaggregating it to be shared with academic departments. A milestone for this part of the project will occur on October 17th, when we will spend time on our In-Service Day sharing and discussing student success data.

We will spend the latter part of Autumn and early part of Spring semesters drilling further into the student data and collecting qualitative data.

During January and February 2013 we will begin developing intervention strategies to improve student success, and during March 2013 we will write a four-year implementation plan for submission to AtD.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The project will be publicized through a presentation on In-Service day in October 2012, as well as discussion in departmental meetings. The project will have a communications committee which will develop a comprehensive communications plan.

The leadership team will monitor progress using the college's standard project management methodology.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: We will share specific data about student success with each department, and will engage faculty members in discussion and planning based on the data. Our Achieving the Dream intervention strategies will be developed based on this data.

We will have developed clear, data-informed, priorities and implementation strategies for improving student success.

Our four-year implementation plan will be submitted to Achieving the Dream.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A:

This was the planning year for the college's participation in Achieving the Dream, and project teams met their goal of creating an Achieving the Dream implementation proposal. The teams engaged in several phases of work.

The first phase involved assembling project teams to ensure wide participation of college stakeholders. These included a Strategy Team, Leadership Team, and Data Team (http://www.cscc.edu/about/dream/committee.shtml). The teams were assembled in early Autumn and spent the rest of the year engaged in data analysis and planning to develop the implementation plan.

As a first step, the college submitted three years of student success data to the AtD national database in order to support the data analysis which underpinned the development of the plan. By utilizing tools provided by AtD and the college's internal databases for quantitative data, and the AtD fishbone sessions and focus groups for qualitative data, the college identified:

- demographic gaps in student success
- its gateway courses (defined as low success and high enrollment)
- student challenges
- student support needs

In addition, the AtD Leadership Team conducted literature reviews, and the college sent eleven representatives, including six faculty members, to the DREAM institute to collect and analyze best practices. The college also reviewed its historical data gathered through Foundations of Excellence, AQIP, CCSSE, and its various student success initiatives. The teams then conducted nine student focus groups and nine faculty/staff fishbone sessions. By analyzing the qualitative data coming from the sessions, the following themes emerged:

- ? Personal connection matters – our students need it
- ? Student preparedness for and understanding of college can be lacking
- ? Advising needs to be holistic, proactive, easily accessible, and clear
- ? Challenges exist in cultural competency and understanding of students

Students' challenges include:
- ? Self-confidence
- ? Study skills/time management
- ? Comfort with technology
- ? Awareness of available resources
- ? Self-discipline and attendance
- ? Integrating college into their lives

Students want and need:
- ? More accessibility to programs and support
- ? Feedback from faculty
- ? Consistent policies – e.g. attendance, and direct guidance on expectations
- ? Mentoring programs
- ? More availability of tutoring
- ? More supplemental instruction
- ? Dedicated quiet space for study and homework

The data gathered was used to develop the priorities and strategies for the implementation plan. Going forward it will be used to improve college programs and services and to develop formative evaluation to support continuous improvement of student success strategies and interventions. In addition, the ATD teams engaged faculty and staff and prepared a policy inventory. During this process, respondents had the opportunity to identify policies related to student success and to make recommendations for improvement. The AtD teams are reviewing the policy inventory through the lenses of identified priorities, intervention strategies, strategic planning goals, and cohesive evaluation metrics to enhance and improve college policies as they relate to student success.

During Spring semester, the AtD teams developed an implementation proposal and set several key priorities for further w ork:
- · First Year Experience and Student Advising – focused on orientation, advising, placement testing and use of the early alert system.
- · Creating an Informed, Empowered Culture – focused on cultural competency and professional development.
- · Successful Progression & Acceleration through Pre-College Coursework – focused on developmental education initiatives in math and English.
- · Meaningful Connections for Students from Entrance through Completion – focused on out of class support services such as peer-to-peer mentoring, learning communities, and tutoring.

2: Institution Involvement

A:

During the planning year, nearly 200 faculty and students were involved in data collection and analysis by participating on AtD teams, or by facilitating or participating in fishbone sessions or focus groups. Additional faculty and staff were involved in completing the policy framework. Steps to enhance the college community's engagement in student success, and in AtD are ongoing and include several presentations by the President and key stakeholders regarding student success goals and initiatives, the AtD website (including forums that solicit feedback and sharing of success stories), break-out sessions during the college's in-service days, regular publication of AtD information through the *DREAM Digest*, and utilization of ambassadors from the leadership and data teams to facilitate discussion, integrate programs and services, and encourage stakeholders to become involved. Implementation and evaluation of each strategy also reflects the college's ongoing charge to collaborate and engage as reflected by its shared value

of partnership, stating: *"We recognize that more can be accomplished collaboratively than individually, and we seek like-minded partners to advance our shared goals."*

3: **Next Steps**

A: The AtD project now moves from a planning stage to an implementation stage. Currently the AtD teams are working to determine how best to structure the project and manage the work going forward, and how to integrate the work of AtD into college divisions and departments. We are developing workplans for each priority which will help guide AtD work in the next years. We will also continue work that is already in process but is being enhanced and supported by the AtD process, such as developmental math acceleration and Title III student success programs.

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

A: The project teams found the use of fishbone and focus groups to be an effective way to gather feedback from faculty and staff on possible barriers to student success and to engage many interested stakeholders in the project. We plan to continue using this technique for other projects as well as during the further development of our AtD plans.

Additionally, in order to support evaluation of student success work and manage the workload of data analysis, we have begun to engage interested faculty members in this work. The first example has been in evaluation of Math 1099, where math faculty have been engaged in analysis work using raw data provided by the Institutional Effectiveness department.

5: **Project Challenges**

A:

Currently the planning phase of this project is closing down and we are now moving to an implementation phase. The current challenge is to maintain the momentum we had built up around planning as well as the broad engagement and enthusiasm achieved. We are also working to develop an organizational structure that will be functional to achieve the goals of the AtD implementation plan while being integrated into our Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Throughout the project we've been challenged by the fact that we began our AtD participation at a point when we already had significant student success work underway. We continue to strive to support the good work that many faculty and staff have been engaged in for some time while incorporating lessons learned from the AtD process.

Update Review

1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**

A: The institution has made outstanding progress during the planning and creation of an implementation proposal for Achieving the Dream. A real commitment to AtD is apparent. Given the extensive focus on collection and analysis in both qualitative and quantitative data this Action Project aligns easily with AQIP Categories (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs and (7) Measuring Effectiveness.

2: **Institution Involvement**

A: The institution demonstrates it commitment to a Principle of High Performing Organizations Broad Based Involvement, in a variety of ways. Care has been given to develop multiple teams with numerous employee members. Feedback from key stakeholder groups, faculty and students, is collected via focus groups. Collaborative efforts between faculty and staff identify causes and develop strategies in fishbone problem solving sessions. AtD is kept front and center with the entire campus by periodic presentations from the President as well as key stakeholders. The AtD website provides a wealth of information on the project that is easily accessible. Has the College considered listing the positions of the Action Team members along with their names on the website? Doing so would articulate that not only are a significant number of employees involved but that the right people are involved sufficiently for the nature and scope of the project.

3: Next Steps

A: The institution is to be commended for creating so much energy and action surrounding the planning year. With a project of this size and scope the challenge is always to maintain the focus and "buzz" as the real work begins. Important next steps to continue employee engagement could include an ongoing plan to acknowledge milestones and pause as a campus for celebration as milestones are reached.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The institution has made excellent use of the well known quality tool Fishbone Analysis. Other institutions could benefit from hearing the process used to prepare employees, conduct the sessions, and determine action. Has the institution considered sharing these successes at the HLC Annual Meeting?

The institution shows evidence of controlling and planning the project by identifying the increasing need for data analysis with limited resources and as a result has engaged interested faculty members. As the faculty evaluation of Math 1099 progresses it would be helpful to replicate this process to include other areas of campus in similar activity.

5: Project Challenges

A: In the true spirit of AQIP Category (8) Planning Continuous Improvement the institution can move forward with this Action Project. As any deep cultural change comes with some pain and frustration, the College will be well served by preparing for lags in engagement and taking steps to be proactive. Weaving the goals of AtD into the existing organizational structure should help ensure the desired results and produce a change that is enduring. Good luck!

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A:
This project encompassed the planning year for the college's participation in Achieving the Dream. That work is now complete and the implementation plan has been submitted to Achieving the Dream. The project met its objectives and the planning phase is now closing down.

2: Success Factors

A:
All goals were met. The implementation plan was developed with broad input and participation. During the planning year, nearly 200 faculty and students were involved in data collection and analysis by participating on AtD teams, or by facilitating or participating in fish-bone sessions or focus groups. Additional faculty and staff were involved in completing the policy framework. Steps to enhance the college community's engagement in student success, and in AtD are ongoing and include several presentations by the President and key stakeholders regarding student success goals and initiatives, the AtD website (including forums that solicit feedback and sharing of success stories), break-out sessions during the college's in-service days, regular publication of AtD information through the *DREAM Digest*, and utilization of ambassadors from the leadership and data teams to facilitate discussion, integrate programs and services, and encourage stakeholders to become involved.

Project teams were able to sort through large amounts of quantitative and qualitative data and consider input from a broad cross-section of campus stakeholders to develop the following set of priorities which will guide our student success work going forward:

- First Year Experience and Student Advising – focused on orientation, advising, placement testing and use of the early alert system.
- Creating an Informed, Empowered Culture – focused on cultural competency and professional development.
- Successful Progression & Acceleration through Pre-College Coursework – focused on developmental education initiatives in math and English.
- Meaningful Connections for Students from Entrance through Completion – focused on out of class support services such as peer-to-peer mentoring, learning communities, and tutoring.

3:	Unsuccessful Factors

A:

      The current challenge is to maintain the momentum we had built up around planning as well as the broad engagement and enthusiasm achieved. We are working to develop an organizational structure that will be functional to achieve the goals of the AtD implementation plan while being integrated into our Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Throughout the project we've been challenged by the fact that we began our AtD participation at a point when we already had significant student success work underway. We continue to strive to support the good work that many faculty and staff have been engaged in for some time while incorporating lessons learned from the AtD process.