

Project Details																					
<b>Title</b>	Integrating the Early Alert Infrastructure to Promote Student Success																				
<b>Category</b>	6-Supporting Institutional Operations																				
<b>Timeline</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Planned Project Kickoff</b></td> <td>09-30-2013</td> <td><b>Status</b></td> <td>COMPLETED</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Actual Completion</b></td> <td>11-21-2014</td> <td><b>Updated</b></td> <td>09-30-2014</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td><b>Reviewed</b></td> <td>10-10-2014</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td><b>Created</b></td> <td>09-30-2013</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td><b>Version</b></td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b>	09-30-2013	<b>Status</b>	COMPLETED	<b>Actual Completion</b>	11-21-2014	<b>Updated</b>	09-30-2014			<b>Reviewed</b>	10-10-2014			<b>Created</b>	09-30-2013			<b>Version</b>	1
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1: Project Goal
<p><b>A:</b></p> <p>The AQIP action project will serve to integrate the college's academic early alert system and processes with college systems and processes, including but not limited to: financial aid, attendance reporting, and mid-term progress reporting. Currently, early alert services are available college wide and provide the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gather information, and notify students in real-time of possible concerns relating to attendance, participation, and progress in face-to-face, hybrid, and distance courses;</li> <li>refer students to college services (including financial aid assistance);</li> <li>provide information regarding mid-term progress, and possible interventions to help students succeed in their courses (automatically and through surveys depending upon instructor preference; and</li> <li>use multiple historic and real-time data points to identify students early (based on success predictors) and customize early interventions to meet their specific needs.</li> </ul> <p>By integrating and coordinating the processes, we can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase student access to support services</li> <li>Increase successful course completion of students</li> <li>Increase the number of students who receive real-time information regarding course performance</li> <li>Reduce the number of students who are dropped for nonattendance</li> <li>Reduce faculty/staff work load while putting processes in place to maintain accountability for students receiving financial aid assistance</li> <li>Establish a communication system, with documentation, to notify students of the consequences of nonattendance and/or poor performance; and drives them to services to help them resolve the challenges</li> <li>Identify and proactively reach out to students with multiple concerns to increase academic success and goal completion</li> </ul>

2: Reasons For Project
<p><b>A:</b></p> <p>Columbus State was awarded a Title IIIA: Strengthening Institutions Grant in 2009. The grant tasked the college to develop infrastructures in tutoring and articulation, including an early alert system to drive students to appropriate interventions and provide recognition when they achieve important milestones. The activities were designed to increase student success in gateway, and subsequent courses; term-to-term and annual retention; completion; and articulation rates. The purpose of this project is to sustain grant activities, while at the same time utilizing the infrastructures developed as a result of the activities to integrate and efficiently deliver operational processes such as attendance and financial aid reporting, and mid-term grade notices, and additional reporting to both increase the quality of the student's academic experience at Columbus State, and to help support the college's financial stability, and institutional management.</p>

3: Organizational Areas Affected
<p><b>A:</b></p> <p>All Academic Departments, Advising and Student Support, Business Services, Financial Aid, Distance Education and Instructional Support, Enrollment Services, Institutional Effectiveness, IT Support Services, and Current Title III office.</p>

4: Key Organizational Process(es)
<p><b>A:</b></p> <p>This project will improve institutional processes of tracking attendance, participation and progress of students receiving financial aid. It will also serve to send students consistent and customized information about their academic performance and drive them to support services to help them be successful. As an added benefit, the process will help us utilize specific data points or predictors of students who are at-risk of non-persistence, and to help the college achieve its mission to educate and inspire, providing our students with the opportunity to achieve their goals.</p>

5: Project Time Frame Rationale
<p><b>A:</b></p>

Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Data Source and Evaluation Methodology	Responsible	Participants	Comments
Reconvene EarlyAlert Steering Committee (EASC) with expanded representation.	10/15/2013	Continued development of processes and impact	Volunteer and recommended basis	Teddi	Megan, Students, faculty, staff, administrators —cross department	See Early Alert Workflow slide in progress
Integrate with Student Information System (SIS)	10/15/13  In progress	Enhanced student folder, predictive modeling, deeper understanding of student academic history	Noel-Levitz, Starfish clients, Colleague	Teddi	Megan,  EASC Predictive Modeling Sub-committee, IT,	In progress



	ongoing	regarding program of study.			Faculty, staff, administrators, advisors, EASC	advisors)
Work with Cohort Leads to establish plans for early intervention	4/15/2014  In progress and ongoing	Early intervention. True picture of students progress in real-time, and historically. Confirmed process and academic plan for students who fall off path.	EarlyAlert Survey, Starfish, AID	Teddi	Megan,  Faculty, staff, administrators, advisors, EASC	In progress (align with AID redesign of advising and also department advisors)

## 6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The AQIP action project will integrate with current ongoing communication regarding early alert, including training sessions; communication through weekly reports, college websites, college news briefs, and other technology (e.g., youtube, social media, professional blogs...). In addition, one of the first tasks of the reconvened Early Alert Steering Committee will be to draft a communication action plan utilizing college tools and resources to further engage the community. As part of the evaluation process, the early alert integration with college processes plan will utilize data collected through various resources identified in the above table, along with surveys and focus groups to be used as both formative and summative assessments in a continuous improvement process.

### 7: Project Outcome Measures

- A:
- Through the Title III office, the existing gap analysis (as it relates to early alert) will be revisited with the Early Alert Steering Committee to include any additional outcomes of the AQIP action project, where we are, and where we want to be.
  - The course withdrawal rates of student cohorts (e.g., first generation, students receiving financial aid, veterans...) will decrease.
  - The successful course completion rates of students in specific cohorts will increase.
  - The term-to-term and annual retention rates of students in specific cohorts will increase.
  - The completion and transfer rates of students in specific cohorts will increase.
  - The percent of meaningful interactions between student and faculty (reported in CCSSE, 2013) will increase to the level of the 2013 Top-Performing Colleges
  - The amount of federal financial aid dollars returned as a result of non-participation of students on federal financial aid will be reduced.

## Project Update

### 1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: General Project Status: Complete  
Original Project Start Date: 9/30/2013  
Originally Projected End Date: 9/30/2014

The AQIP action project was developed to integrate the college's academic early alert system and processes with college systems and processes, including but not limited to: financial aid, attendance reporting, and mid-term progress reporting. Currently, early alert services are available college wide and provide the ability to:

- gather information, and notify students in real-time of possible concerns relating to attendance, participation, and progress in face-to-face, hybrid, and distance courses;
- refer students to college services (including financial aid assistance);
- provide information regarding mid-term progress, and possible interventions to help students succeed in their courses (automatically and through surveys depending upon instructor preference; and
- use multiple historic and real-time data points to identify students early (based on success predictors) and customize early interventions to meet their specific needs.

The project allowed a cross functional team to identify a process that will allow for integration of early alert with financial aid reporting, and utilize the early alert system for mid-term progress reporting. The process has been identified and a plan outlined. The project can be implemented in the future by following current college processes as they relate to policy and procedure development. Early alert is a powerful communication tool that has been shown to significantly impact student success and withdrawal rates. By meshing the financial aid reporting process with the communication tool, the college is integrating a communication, retention, and success strategies that can significantly impact student attendance in class, course withdrawal rates, and the number of students being dropped for nonattendance. Additionally, the integration puts all college staff who support the student on the same page regarding the students' attendance and success trends so that support services can be deployed proactively to help the student.

### 2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

- A:
- Increase student access to support services—the early alert system was expanded to a college-wide service in Spring 2013. In Spring 2014, with the support of the college's faculty committee's the early alert nonattendance report was released college wide. Both expansions extended early alert support services to every student at the college. By Summer of 2014, 88% of the college courses were using the early alert system, and

91% of student grades entered were for students in courses utilizing the system.

- Increase successful course completion of students

Success in courses utilizing the early alert system have increased longitudinally since its inception, Table 1.

Table 1: Success Rates of Courses Using Early Alert

Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Spring 2014	Summer 2014
62.74%	66.42%	67.33%	68.60%	69.04%	70.78%

- Increase the number of students who receive real-time information regarding course performance. Please see the first bullet. Table 1 shows the number of grades reported in courses using the early alert system from Autumn 2013 to Summer 2014.

Table 2: Grades in Courses Using Early Alert from Autumn 2013 - Summer 2014

Modality	Success Grades	Total Withdrawals	Total Grades	Success Rate	Withdrawal Rate
FOCUS Total AU 13	14325	1936	20882	68.60%	9.27%
FOCUS Total SP 14	38721	4406	56084	69.04%	7.86%
FOCUS Total SU 14	20883	2243	29503	70.78%	7.60%

- Reduce the number of students who are dropped for nonattendance. Over the course of the year, the withdrawal rates of students in courses using the early alert system has decreased significantly. While not pulled out, this includes students who are dropped for nonattendance reporting. Figure 2 provides longitudinal data on early alert withdrawal rates.

Table 3: Withdraw Rates of Courses using Early Alert

Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Spring 2014	Summer 2014
13.62%	9.99%	11.00%	9.27%	7.86%	7.60%

- Reduce faculty/staff workload while putting processes in place to maintain accountability for students receiving financial aid assistance

Upon implementation of the process, faculty workload will be significantly reduced because they will use one reporting tool to record attendance. That tool will then feed data into the early alert system which will communicate to students the consequences of nonattendance and direct them to the appropriate support services. Additionally, the early alert system will provide college support personnel with a tracking mechanism to track both student notifications of consequences of nonattendance, but with the implementation of early alert's connect module to financial aid, as well as other support services, we will be able to track student participation in the prescribed intervention.

- Establish a communication system, with documentation, to notify students of the consequences of nonattendance and/or poor performance; and drives them to services to help them resolve the challenges

Documentation and email templates have been developed and the communications are being sent to students now. Integration of colleague attendance data into the early alert system will allow for communication to be sent to the students automatically. Additionally, using early alert for mid-term grade reporting allows for a more robust progress report to students, along with information on specific support services for those students who are deemed at risk of not succeeding.

- Identify and proactively reach out to students with multiple concerns to increase academic success and goal completion

Processes were put into place during the course of the project that allowed for the Title III office and support staff from other departments or divisions to reach out to students who:

- 1) Received flags for repeating 3 or more courses from their previous term of enrollment
- 2) Received 3 flags in the early alert system
- 3) Received 6 or more flags in the system.

Through the proactive outreach process, more than 900 calls were placed in the summer of 2014 and support staff identified individual student needs and were able to direct them to the appropriate college resources to help them meet those needs so they could be successful.

### 3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

**A:** After exploring several potential processes, and to avoid requiring faculty to use multiple systems for daily attendance recording, and attendance reporting, the committee determined the best process would be for faculty to record attendance each class period through the Elucian Colleague attendance field. This information will be stored with Colleague and integrated with the Starfish Early Alert system to trigger communication, flags and interventions to students who are either nonattending, or attending infrequently.

Using Starfish as the system of communication and student tracking of participation in interventions, students will receive an automated message (either email, text, private facebook or twitter) notifying them of the consequences of nonattendance, or poor attendance; and driving them to the appropriate interventions to help them resolve their attendance challenges. For departments with no customized features in early alert, the department will use a one week absence parameter. This process also creates a flag in Starfish, allowing support staff tied to the student to provide intense intervention as needed.

Although Colleague could capture a snapshot of attendance at the drop dates, it is this committee's recommendation that faculty still be required to complete the non-attendance participation verification process as defined by financial aid through Cougar Web. Keeping with

this current process, the committee recognizes that asking faculty to confirm before dropping a student results in fewer accidental drops.

By implementing this process, instructors will no longer need to complete the non-attendance survey delivered by Starfish, yet students will receive timely communication regarding their lack of attendance and impact on grades, financial aid, etc. Additionally, reports from early alert will trigger intensive intervention, drive the student to customized support services, provide the means to verify that students were informed of the consequences, and provide a method of tracking students to identify individual trends in attendance (allowing for proactive intervention and implementation of individualized success plans).

#### Midterm Reporting Process

The current midterm reporting process is for instructors to place an "S" for satisfactory or a "U" for unsatisfactory into Cougar Web at a designated time during the semester based on length of term; however, the current email communication does not specify support services or allow for an intervention process.

By using Starfish as the midterm progress report communication tool, instructors can complete a survey in early alert with the options of unsatisfactory or poor performance (falling or on the verge of failing), mediocre or fair performance (student may need support or intervention to be successful), and satisfactory or outstanding performance kudos (student who is doing well). By completing the electronic survey, instructors will be able to send just-in-time communication to students (customized by department) that not only informs them of their performance to date, but provides intensive and customized support services to drive students to interventions that will help them be successful. Additional benefits are the same as stated in the nonattendance reporting process. This method gives the college a way to:

- verify that all students were informed of level of performance at midterm,
- verify that students with unsatisfactory performance were informed of the consequences of such performance,
- drive students to customized and intensive support services to help them be successful,
- track students to confirm they have attended the prescribed interventions, and
- identify trends in individual student performance over time to develop early intervention strategies for the student.

#### 4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: The cross functional committee charged with proposing the process included:

- Summe Jones (System Specialist Records and Registration),
- Teddi Lewis-Hotopp (Director of Title III),
- David Metz (Director Financial Aid),
- Megan Speakman (Retention Specialist Title III),
- Bryan Wills (System Specialist Records and Registration),
- Terry Worst (VA Coordinator Military and Veteran Services), and
- Susan Van Atta (Analyst Data Center)

After each cross functional AQP committee meeting, the progress, and processes outlined by the committee were also vetted through the Early Alert Steering Committee made up of cross functional faculty, staff and administrators on both the Delaware and Columbus Campuses.

#### 5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: As an added value to the AQP process, the shared governance committee not only identified best practices in real time communication and tracking of student progress, and intervention strategies to meet the specific needs of student cohorts, but as an added value, the institution recognized the impact of 24-hour access to course progress information for the student. As a result, in Spring 2014, a mandate that all faculty use the Blackboard gradebook was approved.

#### 6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Anticipated challenges to project success include the resource of time as integration of the systems will take some time for the college's colleague developers to implement the attendance tracking tool and right scripts to integrate attendance fields to early alert. Additional time will be required for professional development of faculty and staff in using the attendance taking tool. With 88% of courses already utilizing the system, the challenge to mid-term grade reporting revolves around policy development and communication.

#### 7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: The next steps to implementation of the proposed attendance-taking and midterm grade reporting processes include:

Task	Completed by (month and year)
Developing a communication plan for faculty, staff, and students	October 2014
Developing an implementation plan	October 2014
Vetting processes and procedures through the shared governance process to define policy as it relates to early alert and attendance tracking; and midterm progress reporting	December 2014
Working with the Early Alert Steering Committee to identify interventions, communication templates, and timelines for release of midterm surveys.	December 2014

Develop training materials	December 2014
Set up colleague attendance-taking tool.	November 2014
Set up Student Information System attendance field integration in Starfish	November 2014
Set up tracking items, messages, and flow of communication in Starfish	December 2014
Implementation	January 2015

#### 8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: No additional information at this point.

### Update Review

#### 1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: The school indicates the project is complete in its review update and lists results in another section, showing progress on the goal. However, the update also states "The process has been identified and a plan outlined. The project can be implemented in the future..." This makes it unclear as to whether or not the project is actually complete or not; perhaps the school views that an important phase has been accomplished but intends to continue developing the Early Alert process/system.

In the original proposal, these apparent goals are listed:

- \* Increase student access to support services
- \* Increase successful course completion of students
- \* Increase the number of students who receive real-time information regarding course performance
- \* Reduce the number of students who are dropped for nonattendance
- \* Reduce faculty/staff work load while putting processes in place to maintain accountability for students receiving financial aid assistance
- \* Establish a communication system, with documentation, to notify students of the consequences of nonattendance and/or poor performance; and drives them to services to help them resolve the challenges
- \* Identify and proactively reach out to students with multiple concerns to increase academic success and goal completion

As this reviewer understands the Action Project, it originally identified several outcomes to be accomplished. These included:

- Reduce the gap analysis in regard to Early Alert
- Reduce course withdrawal rates
- Increase successful course completion rates
- Increase term-to-term and annual retention
- Increase completion and transfer rates
- Increase the % of meaningful interactions between faculty and students
- Reduce the federal financial aid dollars returned as a result of non-participation

There is not a one-to-one match between the goals indicated and the outcomes identified. (It might be that the outcomes were pulled directly from the Title III proposal and not linked directly to the stated goals.) Since the update refers only to the goals in the first part of the proposal, it begs the question of why the outcomes listed at the conclusion of the proposal were not aligned and were not measured.

Since there is no reference in the update to most of the outcome measures listed in the original proposal, it seems questionable that the project would be listed as "Complete." Perhaps it would be in order to indicate that there was a deliberate change to the original proposal and that some of the measures will be deferred until later.

Since the automated system has been updated and refined to include connection with the financial aid function, and most courses are using the Early Alert system, it does appear that Columbus State has made significant progress on developing and implementing the revised Early Alert system.

#### 2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The goals from the initial part of the project proposal are listed with results for most of them. It appears that several of the goals were attained; in other cases, the information supplied does not directly indicate achievement of the goals. For example, supplying withdrawal rates does not tell us whether or not the College reduced the number of students dropped for non-attendance.

#### 3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: Once again, the reviewer finds it difficult to ascertain the true status of this project. The previous section reports several results as if the system is already in place and functioning yet this section seems to be completely focused on what benefits could be realized if the proposed structure and/or software was put in place. Describing future plans and presenting a rationale for further action hardly seems appropriate for the section intended for detailing accomplishments of the past year. Perhaps the school intends to continue work on this initiative but not as a formal Action Project.

#### 4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: It appears that Columbus State has done a good job of involving key personnel on the core group and of involving faculty and others in the vetting process. Might including student and parent representatives uncover some additional concerns/issues and increase the level of awareness and appreciation from other stakeholders?

**5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

A: The Action Project team is commended for identifying best practices, adopting those and extending student access through the adopting of Blackboard. This could be included in the Accomplishments section, along with information describing the proportion of faculty/courses that are appropriately posting through Blackboard.

**6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS**

A: Adding anticipated responses to these challenges would serve to strengthen this section and provide guidance to the team as it moves forward with this phase.

**7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIME LINE**

A: The update provides specific steps and timeframe for the upcoming actions. Once again, this segment of the update seems to clearly indicate that the project is not yet complete. As additional plans are developed and implemented, the team is strongly encouraged to re-visit the outcomes listed at the end of its original proposal and ensure that each outcome is addressed appropriately, even if it does not do this as a formal Action Project.

**8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS**

A: NA

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**Project Outcome**

**1: REASON FOR COMPLETION**

A: Project is moving forward through college processes to be finalized, through policy and procedures, and implemented.

**2: SUCCESS FACTORS**

A: All aspects. The purpose of the project was to identify processes in which our Early Alert system could integrate with our financial aid reporting system, and to develop a process for using the Early Alert system for mid-term grade reporting. We have identified those processes and developed an implementation plan and timeline.

**3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS**

A: Initially, it was difficult to identify cross-functional team members with the specific knowledge and skill sets required to figure out how to integrate the systems. Once we were able to get the right people at the table, the project took off.