

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Columbus State Community College

Project Details			
Title	Switch to Semesters (S2S) Phase Two	Status	REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-30-2011
Timeline		Reviewed	10-14-2011
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-12-2010	Created	12-14-2010
	Target Completion 10-12-2011	Version	1

1: Project Goal

A: *The Switch to Semesters Project/Phase Two* is a top tier/multi-year Cabinet/President level initiative aimed at moving Columbus State Community College toward using a semester calendar of programs/courses starting in Autumn semester 2012. This multi-year project focuses on preparing people, processes, and technology across the college to be ready for the switch to semesters. Phase Two aims to systematically and rigorously manage impacts across the many stakeholders to drive toward defined project success.

2: Reasons For Project

A: A primary goal of the University System of Ohio (USO) is to increase the level of educational attainment throughout the state. To support this goal and to improve transferability options, increase opportunities for multi-campus partnerships, and increase efficiencies across Ohio institutions, Chancellor Fingerhut's Strategic Plan for the University System of Ohio recommended the use of a common calendar. To support the goal of a common calendar, the Strategic Plan strongly encouraged institutions of higher education currently operating on a quarter system to convert to a semester system. Additionally, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) recognized the need to create a comprehensive community college network to facilitate the integration of courses and programs among the state's community colleges. This network would help to identify spending efficiencies and productivity improvements and to implement them statewide.

Giving significant consideration to this academic model and responding to the USO Strategic Plan objectives, the Columbus State Community College Board of Trustees during the May 2009 meeting approved the transition from quarters to semesters by Autumn 2012. Currently ten of the twenty-three Ohio community colleges are on the semester calendar. Each semester is typically 16 weeks long. The remaining thirteen community colleges will be converting to the semester calendar with a proposed launch date of Autumn 2012. Recognizing the enormity of this undertaking the OACC is supporting the effort by creating a statewide committee structure that will provide direction and coordination while preserving individual programs and institutional autonomy.

The switch to semesters decision is founded on compelling and proven benefits such as increased student transfer and mobility, system-wide efficiencies and cost savings, integration of all institutions into the University System of Ohio, more time for in-depth exploration of topics, improved access to summer jobs/internships, etc. Additionally, the S2S project also will promote some additional benefits such as the opportunity to re-examine and enhance curriculum, remove outdated curriculum, revisit longstanding policies, etc.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The scope of this S2S project includes all business and student functions across the college impacted by the switch to semesters. Also included in scope are the update and improvement efforts around programs and curriculum. The college has also chosen to use this conversion as an opportunity to make *qualitative* and "value-added" academic and operational improvements *in concert* with critical quantitative conversion requirements to enhance a student's educational experience. The following are a few examples:

- Comprehensive review and update of academic programs will include the most relevant courses moving forward into semesters
- All academic programs are adding a student success course by Autumn 2012.
- All programs and courses will be reviewed and, when appropriate, updated and improved using the established college guidelines and curricular change processes.
- All Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) courses will be submitted to the Board of Regents for review and approval.
- The semester conversion will cause more students to document and discuss their plans of study with faculty or advisors.
- The College will revisit the late and re-registration policies to increase enrollment accuracy and reduce un-registered

students attending classes.

- The College will modify the registration timeline to allow more planning time for students hence increasing student success.
- Improved user testing approaches and documentation will be developed for key enterprise/student systems which will also benefit future cross-campus projects.
- The Switch to Semesters process provides the opportunity to review key policies and procedures to enhance student success.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The governance structure established for this CSCC S2S project was generally modeled after the OACC Common Calendar subcommittees established. Many colleges across the state are adopting similar structures. There is an overall governing Steering Committee with five interdependent subcommittees reporting up to the Steering Committee. All the co-chairs of the subcommittees also sit on the Steering Committee in addition to other leaders who are representative across the major stakeholder groups. The subcommittees include Curriculum, Enrollment and Student Services, College Operations, Information Technology and Communications.

The Steering Committee will also look to other CSCC governing bodies as needed for guidance, issue resolution and policy approval.

- **Steering Committee and Subcommittees** The established steering and subcommittee structures provide overall guidance and direction for the project. These groups are responsible for key decisions, full academic calendar, policy change recommendations, and project-wide issue resolution. The members of the Steering and Subcommittees serve on a part time basis and meet approximately every two weeks. Each subcommittee has a defined scope of responsibility.
- **Core Implementation Team** The core implementation team is a small group (people) of dedicated resources focused on detailed project/resource planning, implementation delivery, and identifying issues/risks. Members of the core implementation team generally look to their aligned subcommittees for guidance and direction as needed.
- **Supporting Resources** There are many supporting resources and personnel which need to be involved in the project. These are part time roles and serve to support the core implementation team at their direction. These people represent key subject matter knowledge across the many aspects of the College that are impacted by the switch to semesters.
- **Repeatable organizational model** This organizational and governance structure should not be viewed as a one-time, special circumstance. Rather, this project serves as the catalyst for this repeatable organizational model for future top tier College wide projects.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The total time frame of the project is a little under three years dating from the original meeting of the Steering Committee (November 2009) until the beginning of our first Autumn Semester in August 2012. This time frame was based on research into the project plans of similar schools that have undergone semester conversion and an analysis of the tasks needed across the college to accomplish a successful conversion. During Autumn 2009, the Steering Committee engaged in milestone driven work planning to develop a timeline for the various stages of conversion, and we created a project plan which roughly corresponds to the subcommittee structure and contains detailed work plans for each area. The project plan is a living document and we have continued to update it and add detail over the past year.

Curriculum revision was a major portion of the conversion work and the project plan for curriculum was created to allow conversion to happen in stages. The development of curriculum supports the beginning of detailed advising, which we scheduled to begin slightly more than one year before the actual conversion. This was a best practice which other colleges who have undergone conversion shared with us.

The table below shows the overall work for curriculum, which includes the work of the faculty in converting courses and programs as well as the work of Curriculum Management in building the new curriculum into our student information systems:

Group	Phase 1 (April - December 2010)	Phase 2 (January - September 2011)	Phase 3 (September 2011 - June 2012)
Arts and Sciences Faculty	Develop crosswalk tables Convert degree structure (plans of study) Approval of crosswalks and degree plans through division curriculum	Full course conversion for state transfer programs (OTM, TAG's) Approval of OTM and TAG courses through division curriculum committees (April 2011) Submission to OBOR for state	Full course conversion for all remaining courses Development/revision of instructional materials Training of faculty

	committees	transfer programs Conversion of distance learning courses	Conversion of distance learning courses
Career and Technical Faculty	Convert degree structure (plans of study) Develop crosswalk tables Approval of crosswalks and degree plans through division curriculum committees	Full course conversion for state transfer programs (TAG's, CTAG's) Approval of OTM and TAG courses through division curriculum committees (April 2011) Submission to OBOR for state transfer programs	Full course conversion for all remaining courses Development/revision of instructional materials Training of faculty Conversion of distance learning courses (could start earlier if ready)
Curriculum Management	Testing – degree audit and Colleague systems Initial DARS encoding	DARS encoding Enter semester courses in Colleague (from crosswalks) Submission to OBOR for state transfer programs	Revisions to DARS Revisions to Colleague Production of catalog Support for initial course section build

We engaged in planning processes across all college areas, and we have similar plans in place for areas such as Records and Registration, Financial Aid, and Information Technology.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A:

S2S will require robust participation of staff across the campus. The following is an outline of the groups who will be involved in monitoring the effort.

- **Bi-weekly Steering Committee meetings** will focus on proactive milestone reviews, Key Business Decision (KBD) approvals, reviews of time sensitive key issues and Risks and Cross subcommittee communication.
- **Bi-weekly subcommittee meetings** will focus on subcommittee specific milestone progress, KBD analysis, task groups as needed, support Core Implementation Team in completing activities, and regular Core Implementation Team Meetings.
- **Progress Reports** are generated by the project manager on a regular basis and will include information from team members. Reports are distributed via Blackboard S2S Community which is accessible to all Steering and Subcommittee members, Core Implementation Team, and key supporting resources. The project manager also provides regular progress reports to key groups such as Cabinet, deans and other administrators, Shared Governance committees, and departments.
- **Blackboard S2S Community.** This file stores key S2S documents and information such as contacts, directories, subcommittee documents, project management documents, links to relevant reference material.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Planning for the S2S effort began at CSCC in September 2009. A master plan of 'milestones' was subsequently developed through to the first semester in August 2012. Milestones, or measures, are major accomplishments over the course of the project schedule which impact most subcommittees' work efforts and are well understood by all subcommittee members. They are significant points in time, tangible achievements, key meetings, key decisions made, key communications, etc. Milestones serve as the foundation for project level progress reporting and help ensure focus on most important events. Milestones will also be included on individual Subcommittee detailed work plans together with all the activities and tasks. This is "milestone driven work planning".

- **Project Documentation and Sharing.** Network folders have been established based on the organization and work plan of the project for ease of finding project documentation.
- **Risk/Issue Management.** A risk register will detail risk, mitigating actions and ownership issues. A log file will compile issue descriptions, resolutions and issue resolution ownership.
- **Questions Log and Process.** This is a mechanism for capturing all S2S related questions from the many stakeholder groups and funneling to the right subcommittee for answer ownership.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Much of our work this year focused on the conversion of curriculum. Faculty members have completed the initial redesign and review of our courses and programs and staff have entered the new curriculum into our information technology systems in order to support advising and course schedule creation. Faculty members are currently working on conversion of instructional materials, with an initial focus on courses used in State of Ohio transfer programs (Transfer Assurance Guides, Career Technical Credit Transfer, Ohio Transfer Module).

The college has made it a priority not only to convert the curriculum to a semester system, but faculty members have also engaged in a rigorous peer review process to ensure the quality of the semester curriculum. Additionally, this curricular conversion process included an extensive cost analysis to insure the conversion is cost neutral.

We have also focused a large amount of effort on ensuring that our information technology systems will have a smooth transition from the quarter to semester calendar. We created an inventory of affected information technology systems and a list of needed modifications, and we are currently programming needed changes. We have also developed comprehensive test scripts for those systems. We are using the semester conversion as an opportunity to establish a rigorous testing process that will be used subsequently as the college's standard for testing, improving the quality and reliability of system updates and upgrades.

We began advising students on the transition and began cutover of information technology systems as scheduled this summer. In order to prepare faculty and staff advisors, we created a *Semester Conversion Advising Reference Guide* and placed it on a wiki so that advisors could easily reference and search it. We also held a series of advising trainings which over 400 employees attended.

2: Institution Involvement

A: This project has a Steering Committee that guides the entire project. The project is a campus wide effort organized around committees which focus on the various impacted areas. These committees have a broad membership of faculty, staff and administrators who participate in decision making. In addition, we are utilizing standing committees such as those of Shared Governance. Finally, the project is managed day to day by members of a Core Implementation Team who meet regularly with impacted areas and work with staff members in those areas to update processes, documents, and information technology systems as well as to support the updates in the curriculum.

3: Next Steps

A: Our next focus will be on advising, which began this summer and will expand during the coming year. In August we began sending emails to students to encourage them to come speak with an advisor about semester conversion. We will continue email updates this year along with messages on Facebook and Twitter as well as participation in campus events such as Welcome Back.

In June we began submitting our courses to the Ohio Board of Regents for inclusion in TAG, CTAG and Transfer Module programs.

This work will continue into the autumn. Faculty have also begun development on all remaining courses, a process which will continue over the next year, wrapping up in Spring 2012.

In addition, we will begin moving certain information technology system modifications from our development and test systems into our production systems. A critical part of this process is testing, and we have conducted two rounds of integration testing which involved approximately thirty subject matter experts and information technology staff. A third round of testing is scheduled for November, and regular testing will be ongoing throughout this academic year.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: We have used this project as an opportunity to strengthen our use of project management methodologies across campus, as well as to begin more focused and organized project planning and management of resources. We have developed several project tracking tools for this project which are now being used for other projects (for example, the Milestone Report and Progress Report templates). These techniques have allowed us to tell easily when we are on track and when we needed to make some adjustments.

We have also created more standardized systems development processes and documentation as well as testing scripts and methodologies. While our use of these tools is currently focused on semester conversion, we have met regularly with information technology staff and functional experts, and we have begun to use these tools and techniques for other projects as well as operational work.

We have also developed an instructional cost modeling process which we used to ensure cost neutrality during curriculum conversion. We will continue to use and refine this process in order to help improve budget planning.

5: Project Challenges

A: Our main challenge has been in organizing such a large cross-college effort at a time when we are experiencing rapid enrollment growth and many of our faculty and staff members are involved in other projects as well as normal operational duties that also need attention. We have increased staff in critical areas (e.g. advising services, information technology) in order to support the project. We are currently on track to finish the project on schedule.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The college has made tremendous progress in moving this project forward and is making reasonable progress towards project completion (Switch to Semesters (S2S)/ Phase Two). Creating a peer review process for the curriculum shows the commitment to providing quality education to your students (AQIP Category 1 Helping Students Learn). In addition, the Semester Conversion Advising Reference Guide will help to make the transition smoother for faculty. The development of a standard for testing, improving the quality, and reliability of systems updates and upgrades to be used for this project and in the future shows the administration's commitment to continuous improvement. Has a tool been developed to evaluate the success of the transition and to capture gaps that might have been missed in the conversion?

2: Institution Involvement

A: It is clear by the involvement of staff that this project is a priority for the college. Utilizing committees and creating an Implementation Team provide multiple ways for staff to get support as the changes are made (AQIP Category 4 Valuing People). Has the Core Implementation Team been charged with disseminating information regarding the progress of the conversion to all staff? Has the team considered adding students to appropriate portions of the project to ensure their perspective?

3: Next Steps

A: The committee has developed a strong plan to continue to move the project forward. Focusing on advisement could help make the transition to semesters smoother for both students and staff (AQIP Category 1 Helping Students Learn). Implementation and testing of technology systems modifications before the official start date for the transition to semesters could help prevent major slow downs at the start of the semester. Have you considered surveying staff to see if there are any concerns regarding the conversion? Developing a list of potential "roadblocks" before the conversion could allow you time to develop strategies to deal with them if the need arises.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Congratulations! It is clear that you have made tremendous steps in this project. Implementing best practices from this project in other areas and projects throughout the college could help ensure consistency for future endeavors (AQIP Category 8 Planning Continuous Improvements). Including the management of resources as part of the project may help with operational planning for future steps. The implementation of project management software could help ensure that the timeline is clear and key people have been identified for the tasks. Have you considered hosting a celebration at the beginning of the semester to highlight and share the best practices from this project with staff?

5: Project Challenges

A: Many organizations find it challenging to ensure that additional duties don't overload or overwhelm staff. Increasing staff in critical areas supports the commitment to this project and college staff (AQIP Category 4 Valuing People). Is there a strategy to train the additional staff to ensure the advising services are consistent?