

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Columbus State Community College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Implement Career Assistance Process to Help Undecided Students Declare Major (Phase III)	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b> 09-07-2012
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 09-18-2012
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 10-31-2011	<b>Created</b> 12-15-2010
	<b>Actual Completion</b> 07-25-2012	<b>Version</b> 2

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** This project is in its third phase as part of CSCC's Student Success initiatives. The overall focus of this project is to increase the number and percentage of new and continuing students who declare a major. During Phase III, the focus will be to use what was learned from last year's project in the following initiatives: expanding the number and types of workshops or events to assist students in declaring a major, improving cohort tracking of new and undeclared students, and seeking qualitative data on the effectiveness of the intervention strategy from undeclared students who decided on a major.

The intrusive intervention will expand during autumn 2011 to include continuing misaligned students. The Career Assistance Project Team explored different types of continuing undecided and/or misaligned students and selected pre-radiography students as a pilot. The criteria used for the intervention included the following: active (taken classes and earned a grade within the last three years) pre-radiography students who also received financial aid. The pre-radiography group was selected because of its competitive admission criteria and the large number of students waiting to be admitted into the program.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Columbus State is fully committed to improving the retention and persistence of our "undecided" students. Numerous projects across campus are addressing this issue. While some intrusive counseling interventions have thus far shown promising results, the college needs to pay closer attention to this group of "at risk" students. This pilot study of radiography students will allow us to focus our efforts in a measurable way and create a model with expectations of success in other groups of students.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** Areas involved in this project include Counseling Services, Admissions Office, Career Services, Advising Services and the Radiography Department.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** This is a pilot program detailing how first quarter pre-radiography students choose and then declare a major. The highly selective nature of the radiography program - 130-140 applicants vs. 21-24 accepted - will allow us to develop alternative strategies for those students who are not accepted into the program.

Key processes include identifying a cohort group of students, monitor the subset who are less likely to succeed, and develop counseling strategies to meet their needs.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** Evaluation of the intervention strategy in Phases I and II gave significant insights into the implementation of Phase III of the project. During Phase III, the twelve month time frame will allow the project team to gather a year's worth of quantitative data on the effectiveness of a focused intervention strategy combined with new resources.

One of those resources, Career Coach, an on-line web-based tool, was recently rolled out (October, 2011) and is being implemented. The tool is designed to assist students in linking CSCC majors to job titles and job postings in the surrounding CSCC region. Phase III will include this tool in the outcomes measurements.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

**A:** The Career Assistance Project Team will monitor selected pre-radiography students as a pilot. The criteria to be used for the intervention will include the following: active - taken classes and earned a grade within the last three years - pre-radiography students, who also receive financial aid. Material from "Choosing a Major" workshops, is now being presented in relevant classes, especially ASC 190 - freshman seminar, and soon several pre-Radiography courses - all with instructor and department approval. Information includes counseling opportunities, use of the web, and specific Career Coach tools. Feedback will be collected from these sources.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

**A:** Quarter to quarter retention of Autumn 2011 misaligned pre-radiography students will be monitored through Autumn 2012. We will track

- the overall group's attendance and progress in core radiography courses
- the student's use of Career Coach via web metrics
- student response to intrusive counseling approaches
- inter-quarter retention
- Autumn to Autumn retention
- responses to Career Assistance questions that will included on quizzes and exams

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** Taking a proactive approach with new undecided students via the intrusive counseling intervention continues to be an effective approach for connecting students to career exploration tools early in their studies. During 2011-2012 the project focused on extending the intrusive intervention by focusing on "continuing" students. The selective Radiography Program was selected because of its competitive admission criteria and the large number of students waiting to be admitted into the program when compared to the relative low amount of students accepted into the program annually (130-140 applicants vs. 21-24 accepted). The criteria used for the intervention included the following: active (taken classes and earned a grade within the last three years) pre-radiography students who also received financial aid.

### 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** 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. Career Services staff was involved in meeting with students and lifting restrictions. The Telephone Information Center staff was involved in updating student's major records. Chairpersons in the Career/Technical and Arts and Sciences Divisions were involved with ensuring mapping for Career Coach was up to date with S2S programs.

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** The next steps include identifying and creating an appropriate restriction code in Colleague. We will work closely with the Radiography Department and develop correspondence to communicate the new restriction process to students and Student Affairs offices. Career Counselor's will host workshops to help students with the major exploration process. The Radiography Department will host Information Sessions to explain the admission criteria.

We will also use the on-line web-based tool (Career Coach) which is designed to assist students in linking CSCC majors to job titles and job postings in the surrounding CSCC region to identify careers for career pathway development.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

**A:** Columbus State will offer a new class called First Year Experience Seminar (COLS 1100) starting Fall Semester 2012. A key component of the Career Assistance Project was the intrusive nature of helping students who were undecided in their major. The college is scaling up this "intrusive" intervention by making the course a requirement for all new students within the first year of enrollment at the college. The course prepares students to successfully navigate the processes and procedures required to be a successful student at Columbus State.

### 5: Project Challenges

**A:** The college is still working through the necessary steps for to switch-to-semester. Establishing accurate program information from articulating institutions has been slow. Once articulation agreements have been finalized for switch-to-semester and Career Coach is implemented, materials will then be developed.

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** The third phase of Columbus State Community College's (CSCC) Action Project focused on development of a pilot study whereby the College's career exploration and related intrusive intervention is to be extended to pre-Radiography students. Participants in the pilot study will be limited to "continuing" college students (i.e., those completing at least one course within the past three years and receiving financial aid). This Action Project is an important component of the institution's Student Success Initiatives and is designed to contribute to CSCC's efforts to increase student retention. It connects well with AQIP Categories (1) Helping Students Learn and (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.

The College is to be commended for recognizing that misaligned students are not a single, homogeneous group, and that counseling strategies may need to be tailored to the needs of specific subgroups, such as new and continuing students, for optimal effect. Development of a pilot program is a prudent decision.

From the information provided by CSCC in the Annual Update, it appears that the pilot study was not actually conducted, but that online and hard copy resources for the pre-Radiography students were prepared in anticipation of the study's future implementation. However, the scheduled implementation of the online web-based Career Coach did not occur.

It is unclear how the College will determine the effects of its efforts in the pilot study. How will the intervention's success be judged – is the goal an increase in the rate of retention during the next several semesters? Or is it registration of students in career-aligned courses, even if not Radiography? How long will the pilot study track students? Goals that are clearly stated help to assure that everyone is working toward the same objective (AQIP Category (5) Leading and Communicating) and measurable goals enable change to be seen and effectiveness evaluated (AQIP Category (7) Measuring Effectiveness). Similar concerns about goals and data were expressed in a review of an earlier phase of this Action Project that dealt with new students.

### 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** The involvement of advisors, counselors, information technology staff members, and academic chairpersons demonstrates support for this Action project. This broad-based involvement has the added benefit of increasing the level of buy-in to the career assistance process.

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** The project team will develop procedures to work with students in the pilot program, including workshops, information sessions, and other avenues of communication. The College has an opportunity to clearly define the goals for the pilot study and this Action Project, and to develop systematic data collection to measure the state of progress toward these goals. This will support CSCC as it continues its progress in becoming a more effective and continuously improving institution.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

**A:** The College's introduction of a new course called First Year Experience Seminar starting Fall Semester 2012 demonstrates a strong culture of support for identifying and responding to student needs, and it connects well to AQIP Category (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. From the information provided, it is unclear the extent to which this course incorporates information about career pathways.

### 5: Project Challenges

**A:** CSCC is making slow progress on this Action Project. The challenge of switching to semesters has complicated the collection of data. However, the Action Project is an important one, and the potential benefit to misaligned students is substantial. The College might benefit from the best practices identified by other AQIP institutions working on similar projects. The AQIP Action project Directory provides a searchable database to help identify these institutions (AQIP Category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships).

## Project Outcome

### 1: Reason for completion

**A:** The last two objectives for the project included extending the intrusive counseling intervention to “continuing” misaligned students and developing career pathways options for existing CSCC majors including educational pathways beyond the associate degree. Both items are complete.

The intrusive intervention was expanded in autumn 2011 to include “continuing” misaligned students. The Career Assistance Project Team explored different types of continuing misaligned students and selected pre-radiography students as a pilot. The criteria used for the intervention included the following: active (taken classes and earned a grade within the last three years) pre-radiography students who also received financial aid. The pre-radiography group was selected because of its competitive admission criteria, large number of students waiting to be admitted into the program compared to the relative low amount of students accepted into the program (annual amount accepted).

Students received several letters informing them of the new restriction and how to prevent the restriction. Processes were in place to capture students who had met with a career counselor and/or had changed their program of study. A total of 556 students met the criteria and received a restriction W12. Despite multiple communication letters sent to students, the team soon learned that the timing of the restriction was too close to the Radiography Program admission decisions. Students were alarmed by the restriction and worried that the restriction would prevent them from being accepted into the selective program. A decision was made to temporarily lift the restrictions until after the Radiography Program admission process was complete. The team also learned that three year time frame was too short for many students as many took classes slowly in order to earn the appropriate GPA requirements. The time has been extended to five years.

The Project Team continued its examination of developing career pathways options for students. After the S2S program updates were complete more than 80 career pathways for existing CSCC majors including educational pathways beyond the associate's degree were identified. However, this process was challenged with getting accurate articulation information from outside institutions who were also working on S2S.

### 2: Success Factors

#### **A:** Data Collection & Intrusive Counseling Intervention

Academic and demographic data were gathered for AU09-AU10 and AU10-AU11 (all, undeclared and declared) students to measure the impact of the intrusive counseling intervention as it relates to selected student success measures (course completion, GPA 2.0 or above, average GPA, and autumn to autumn retention). The results indicate that “all students” performed at a higher rate than both declared and undeclared students on most all student success measures. For instance, the average grade point average (GPA) for “all students” was 2.84. The GPA for “all students” with a 2.0 or above was 80%. However the course completion rate for “all students” was 85%.

The results indicate that declared students performed at a higher rate than undeclared students across all student success measures. For example, among the AU09-AU10 cohort declared AU09 students course completion was 86 % compared to 79% of undeclared AU09 students. In terms of academic progress, the average grade point average (GPA) for declared AU09 students 2.58 compared to 2.32 of undeclared AU09 students. The GPA for declared AU09 students with a 2.0 or above was 78% compared to 71% of undeclared AU09 students.

Interestingly, the autumn 09 to autumn 10 retention of declared AU09 students (71%) was higher than both the “all students” (43%) and undeclared students (14%).

The results were similar with respect to the AU10-AU11 (all, undeclared and declared) cohort. The results indicate that “all students” performed at a higher rate than both declared and undeclared students on most all student success measures. The average grade point average (GPA) for “all students” was 2.83. The GPA for “all students” with a 2.0 or above was 78%. However the course completion rate for “all students” was 73%.

Among the AU10-AU11 cohort declared AU10 students course completion was 78 % compared to 57% of undeclared AU09 students. In terms of academic progress, the average grade point average (GPA) for declared AU09 students 2.43 compared to 2.03 of undeclared AU09 students. The GPA for declared AU09 students with a 2.0 or above was 71% compared to 57% of undeclared AU09 students.

Finally, the autumn 10 to autumn 11 retention of declared AU09 students (58%) was higher than both “all students” (40%) and undeclared students (10%).

Overall, the “intrusive counseling” intervention pilot has shown positive results for students who have declared their academic major. Declared students were retained at a higher rate than “all” and undeclared students during pilot years one and two. Since the inception of the intervention in March 2010 a total of 3276 students were identified as undeclared. Among the 3276 students a total 1716 (52%) students have declared a major as of January 27, 2012.

**Web Resource-Career Coach**

Career Coach was successfully launched in autumn 2011 and is accessible from the CSCC homepage. The web based tool is designed to take some of the uncertainty out of choosing a career and a major. Current and prospective students can access the latest data on area jobs, salaries, and employment trends as well as learn about educational and training programs offered at Columbus State (see usage report).

Career Coach was also integrated into the WI12 ASC190 curriculum as a pilot. A classroom demonstration of Career Coach was offered during week six or seven to assist students in career and major exploration. Career Coach has been demonstrated in fifteen sections of ASC190 (approximately 20 students per class), and one section of RAD256 (approximately 20 students in the class). Career Coach is being incorporated into the College Success (COLS1100) course in AU12. Students will be required to use the tool to research careers of interest.

A Career Services web page has been developed to include local, state, and national links to help undeclared students with major and career exploration. A Career Resource Center including hard cover, paperback, and e-books on various majors and career exploration is available for student use.

**Career Services Department Established**

Results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) survey, recommendations from the Foundations of Excellence, and data from the intrusive counseling intervention supported the need to implement the project on a larger scale. A Career Advisory Committee was established to assist the department in creating, implementing, and improving the services and programs designed to facilitate the connection between students, alumni, faculty and employers.

The department consists of 4 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff and 2 full-time third party staff. Services include: career development, student employment, and career placement to students. The department also works collaboratively with faculty and staff to provide classroom presentations and workshops. Programs under development include a Mentorship Program, Externship Program, and an Internship Program.

**Autumn 2009 and Autumn 2010 All, Undeclared, and Declared Students (Selected Demographic and Student Success Data)**

Source of Data: Knowledge Resource and Planning

Table 1

Characteristic	Autumn 2009 All Students (N=28,539)	Autumn 2009 Undeclared (N= 100) (%)**	Autumn 2009 Declared (N= 207) (%)#	Autumn 2010 All Returning (N=12,358)	Autumn 2010 Undeclared Returning (N= 14) (%)	Autumn 2010 Declared Returning (N= 147) (%)
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	57%	38 (39.6)	87 (42.8)	57%	2 (14.3)	55 (37.4)
Male	43%	58 (60.4)	116 (57.2)	43%	12 (85.7)	92 (62.6)
<b>Race</b>						
American Indian	.48%	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	.51%	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Asian	3%	5 (5.2)	7	3%	0 (0.0)	7 (4.8)
Black	24%	3 (3.1)	8	21%	1(7.1)	4 (2.7)
Hawaii/Pacific Islander	0	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Hispanic	2%	2 (2.1)	5	2%	1 (7.1)	2 (1.3)
Multiracial	0	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Non-resident Alien	.57%	0 (0.0)	1	1%	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
White Caucasian	67%	85 (88.5)	178	68%	12 (85.7)	130 (88.4)
Unknown	3%	1 (1.0)	4	3%	0 (0.0)	4 (2.7)
<b>Age</b>						

19 and under	18%	47 (49.0)	119	10%	9 (64.3)	91 (61.9)
20-21	18%	22 (22.9)	42	21%	3 (21.3)	32 (21.8)
22-24	17%	15 (15.6)	13	18%	0 (0.0)	7 (4.8)
25-29	17%	5 (5.2)	14	18%	0 (0.0)	8 (5.4)
30-34	10%	1 (1.0)	6	11%	1 (7.1)	5 (3.7)
35-39	7%	2 (2.1)	4	7%	0 (0.0)	2 (1.5)
40-44	5%	0 (0.0)	2	5%	0 (0.0)	1 (0.7)
45-49	3%	0 (0.0)	1	4%	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
50 and over	4%	4 (4.2)	2	4%	1 (7.1)	1 (0.7)
<b>Success Measures</b>						
Course Completion (D or better)	85%	211/262 (80.5)	473/553 (85.5)	77%	20/29 (69.0)	268/392 (68.4)
Number 2.0 and above	80%	70/96 (72.9)	157/203 (77.3)	89%	8 (61.5)	111 (75.5)
Average Cumulative GPA	2.84	2.39**	2.58*	2.89%	2.33	2.55
Autumn to autumn retention	NA	NA	NA	43%	14 (14%)	147 (71%)
	*N=203/207 with grades, 4 students withdrew or were dropped					
	#N= 203/207 with demographic information					
	**N=96/100 with grades, 4 students withdrew or were dropped					
	**N= 96/100 with demographic information					

Autumn 2010 and Autumn 2011 All, Undeclared, and Declared Students (Selected Demographic and Student Success Data)

Source of Data: Knowledge Resource and Planning

Table 2

Characteristic	Autumn 2010 All Students (N=30,513)	Autumn 2010 Undeclared (N= 168) (%)	Autumn 2010 Declared (N= 366) (%)	Autumn 2011 All Returning (N=12,314)	Autumn 2011 Undeclared Returning (N= 10) (%)	Autumn 2011 Declared Returning (N= 213) (%)
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	57%	89 (53.0)	143 (39.1)	7,191 (58.4%)	7 (70.0)	81 (38.0)
Male	43%	79 (47.0)	223 (60.9)	5,123 (41.6%)	3 (30.0)	132 (61.9)
<b>Race</b>						
American Indian	0.76%	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	51 (0.4%)	0	1 (0.5)
Asian	3%	1 (0.6)	10 (2.7)	360 (2.9%)	0	5 (2.3)
Black	24%	11 (6.5)	25 (6.8)	2648 (21.5%)	0	12 (5.6)
Hawaii/Pacific Islander	0.03%	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (<0.1%)	0	0 (0.0)
Hispanic	3%	7 (4.2)	10 (2.7)	295 (2.4%)	0	5 (2.3)
Multiracial	1%	3 (1.8)	10 (2.7)	153 (1.2%)	0	4 (1.9)
Non-resident Alien	0.79%	2 (1.2)	4 (1.1)	81 (0.7%)	0	0 (0.0)
White Caucasian	63%	125 (74.4)	280 (76.5)	8118 (65.9)	7 (70.0)	168 (78.9)
Unknown	5%	19 (11.3)	26 (7.1)	604 (4.9%)	3 (30.0)	18 (8.4)
<b>Age</b>						
19 and under	16%	47 (28.0)	191 (52.2)	937 (7.6%)	4 (40.0)	58 (27.2)
20-21	17%	35 (20.8)	77 (21.0)	2451 (19.9)	1 (10.0)	93 (43.7)
22-24	17%	27 (16.1)	34 (9.3)	2258 (18.3%)	0	25 (11.7)
25-29	18%	21 (12.5)	34 (9.3)	2234 (18.1%)	3 (30.0)	19 (8.9)
30-34	11%	7 (4.2)	3 (0.8)	1591 (12.9%)	0	1 (0.5)
35-39	7%	7 (4.2)	6 (1.6)	929 (7.5%)	0	5 (2.3)
40-44	5%	5 (3.0)	11 (3.0)	763 (6.2%)	1 (10.0)	5 (2.3)

45-49	4%	3 (1.8)	2 (0.5)	518 (4.2%)	0	3 (1.4)
50 and over	5%	16 (9.5)	8 (2.2)	1 (<0.1%)	1 (10.0)	4 (1.9)
<b>Success Measures</b>						
Course Completion (D or better)	73%	182/320 (56.9)	695/897 (77.5)	77.5%	16/23 (69.6)	347/519 (66.8)
Number 2.0 and above	78%	96 (57.1)	258 (70.5)	89.5%	6 (60.0)	149 (70.0)
Average Cumulative GPA	2.83	2.03	2.43	2.9	2.26	2.49
Autumn to autumn retention	NA	NA	NA	40.4%	10 (6.0%)	213 (58.2%)

### 3: Unsuccessful Factors

- A:** Career Pathway Development- This project began prior to the statewide switch to semester (S2S) plan. Therefore the team's efforts were stalled as the process was highly contingent upon S2S program updates and accurate articulation agreements with partnering institutions.