

Annual Update Report for Higher Learning Commission
Pre-Enrollment Course Assessment Team – 9/14/06

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

The Pre-enrollment Course Assessment team met 11 times between November 2005 and June 2006. There was a great deal of learning that occurred in order to acquaint all team members with the current state of processes that would be affected by the changes in pre-enrollment assessment process. Forming and storming team activities resulted in team learning such as: (1) How to become a successful interdisciplinary team using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) theory and tools; (2) Building an understanding of pre-enrollment testing based on each team member's perspective; (3) Having a visit from our ACT representative where he discussed best practice usages of the Compass assessment instrument as well as experiencing a live demonstration of the Compass Test in areas of reading, writing, and mathematics; (4) Reviewing internal and external research which demonstrated indicators of students success; (5) Reviewing Wisconsin Technical College System work defining the under-prepared learner.

Once a base of understanding was established, the team agreed to endorse movement towards course-based rather than program-based assessment. At that point the following additional accomplishments occurred: (6) A sub team was created to work on flow diagrams of potential new processes for pre-enrollment testing, appeal and assessment referral processes; (7) Another sub team was created to review research and recommend appropriate cutoff scores for course placement; and (8) Team developed a planning matrix that identified tasks, outcomes, measurements, timelines and resources.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

There are 11 team members and one trained quality facilitator leading the work of the team. Composition was representative of faculty, administration, support staff and others whose work is directly affected by this process. College systems represented include enrollment management; program administration; assessment; admissions; registration; college administration; teaching and learning in occupational and general education areas; academic counseling; developmental education; and institutional research. Resource staff includes representatives from faculty, support staff, administration, curriculum, library, and instructional technology.

All review (guidance) team members and resource staff to each action project team received minutes and handouts from all meetings in order to keep them abreast of team activities. There were accreditation updates with action project reports given at college-wide in-service days. In addition, we have recently held a joint meeting with all action project team members, review (guidance) team members and staff resources so that common issues and questions could be clarified and discussed.

We have developed an AQIP webpage as part of our internal communication system that includes minutes and handouts from each of the three action project teams as well as a

variety of accreditation updates, news from the Higher Learning Commission and information about AI.

In order to further involve additional college stakeholders, the team has been trained in AI theories and techniques. The team has focused on conducting thirteen stakeholder group interviews using a customized interview guide to collect feedback regarding assessment best practices, the “positive core,” and to identify roadblocks/barriers to implementing well-delivered assessment and course placement and to reframe those as opportunities for improvement.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

1. Nine meetings are scheduled for Fall 2006.
2. The team will finish conducting stakeholder AI interviews. Once these interviews have occurred, the team will summarize and review the feedback received. The project plan will be adjusted to incorporate this important information.
3. A model for course-based assessment will be designed.
4. Continue to study/improve newly proposed processes.
5. Work in conjunction with Information Technology to address technology implications for course-based testing.
6. Establish cut-off scores.
7. Write new policies and procedures.
8. Pilot test on a small scale for 07-08 implementation.

D. Describe any “effective practice(s)” that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

There were three very effective practices that grew out of the Action Projects at WCTC this year. First of all, because each team was comprised of a diverse representation of departments and processes, there was understandable need for learning, group dynamic “forming and storming,” and realizing the differences between agreement and consensus. Next, most team members went through 8 hours of AI training so that we could use this process to hear the “stories” that our staff told in relation to the work of each of the teams. Those team members that have not yet completed this training will do so within this school year.

Finally, the three team facilitators and the college AQIP liaison met during the off team meeting weeks to share best practices, discuss common issues, and help one another gain a common understanding of the processes being improved by each team's work.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

1. There are tight deadlines with other Wisconsin statewide initiatives such as redesigning courses to meet baccalaureate rigor for college transfer opportunities and

serving the under-prepared learner. Because we want to coordinate implementation of pre-enrollment testing for course placement with the roll out of these other initiatives, our timeline is tight with much work to be accomplished.

2. It will be a challenge to educate WCTC staff about this new process once it is ready to be implemented. We know that people are initially resistant to change so we will develop a plan to ensure widespread buy-in.

3. Creating a simplified new system making it easy for students to understand and for staff to manage.

4. Because this is a cross-functional team of people with wide representation from across disciplines, keeping the team cohesive will continue to be challenging.

5. Finally, integrating technology to support the pre-enrollment assessment process will be challenging.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this project, explain your needs here and tell us who to contact and when?

Not at this time, thank you anyway.