

Annual Update Report for Higher Learning Commission
Participative Data Driven Decision Making - 9/14/06

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

The Participative Data-driven Decision Making team met 11 times between November 2005 and May 2006. The team accomplished the following:

➤ **Learned principles / practices of Appreciative Inquiry (AI)**

Several opportunities, one at the beginning of the project and another during spring semester, provided Appreciative Inquiry (AI) training for most team members, review (guidance) team members, and resource staff associated with this team. The intent was for the team to use the strengths-based approach to the study of decision making practices at the college.

Skills such as reframing problems into opportunities, analyzing the components of the system within which the team is working, and using AI interviews were learned and used.

➤ **Studied 3 data-based decision making processes**

Team members provided training for one another related to several dimensions of data-based decision making. Three specific methodologies were reviewed: (1) Nursing Process; (2) Kepner-Tregoe Decision Making Protocol; and (3) Levels of Involvement (consensus).

➤ **Designed a Plan of Work to guide meeting content**

The team developed a planning matrix to outline their long-range goals and document their accomplishments according to a timeline. Various members took responsibility to lead the specific tasks.

➤ **Created AI interview format regarding decision making at WCTC**

Using the standard interview format as a guide, the team developed customized questions and conducted one trial interview each. The questions were: (1) Describe a decision making experience at WCTC where you had a voice, dealt with an important objective, or found it to be a valuable experience; (2) Talk for a moment about some things you value deeply related to decisions that affected you and your personal values related to decision-making habits; (3) What values should the college consider in its decision-making; and (4) What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality and health of the decision-making practices within the college?

➤ **Learned and kept abreast of another college team's work**

This action project team has two members that also serve on another college team that is coordinating the implementation of Oracle's Discoverer which allows trained staff to create data based reports and queries. It is clear to the team that dovetailing our work is essential to staff's ability to use data in their daily decision making work.

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

There are 10 team members and one trained quality facilitator leading the work of the team. Composition is representative of faculty, administration, support staff and others whose work is directly affected by this process. College systems represented include information technology; college administration; teaching and learning in occupational areas; financial accounting/purchasing; grants and contracts; customer service and frontline switchboard operations. Resources staff includes representation from sponsored (external) programs, institutional research and program evaluation; special projects and program faculty.

All review (guidance) team members and resources to each action project team receive minutes and handouts from all meetings in order to keep them abreast of team activities. There are accreditation updates with action project reports given at college-wide in-service days. In addition, we 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 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 eight trial stakeholder interviews using a customized interview guide to collect feedback regarding decision-making best practices, the “positive core,” and to identify roadblocks/barriers to inclusive, data/information-based decision making and to reframe those as opportunities for improvement.

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

(1) Draft specific agenda items for immediate work

(2) Conduct remaining AI interviews

Now that the team has tested the format, each member will conduct three more interviews with internal college colleagues.

(3) Study the current availability of data/information across the college

During the current semester, the team plans to review various sources of data and information available from within the college and from external sources. We will continue our work coordinating with the Oracle Discoverer team which is providing customized reports and queries so that staff can make improved use of available data. One of the college’s goals is to enable staff to access useable, timely, and well-displayed data. In addition, the Quality Review Process for programs and service units provides “scorecards” on 20 indicators of quality – these are comparable data points to compare to other technical colleges in the system that have like programs, to

other programs within the college, and to provide baseline specific program indicators to aid in improvement decisions.

(4) Concentrate on linking parts of the WCTC system related to decision making

The nature of the work of this team requires that members stay connected to other areas of the college that are affected by the work of the team. This connection might be related to the work of a particular committee, department, or division. The intent of the team is to respect the interests of stakeholders involved in similar work or those who will be affected by it.

(5) Study other institutions' action projects related to participative data-driven decision making

(6) In spring 2007, the college will administer a mini-climate survey, selecting items related to decision making from previous surveys to assess whether there has been measurable progress made.

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?
WCTC has experienced turnover in its top administration within the past year. In addition, we lost a team member after the first year's work. In addition, because this is a cross-functional team of people with wide representation from across disciplines, keeping the team cohesive will continue to be challenging.

As we coordinate our work with the roll-out of Discoverer training, we are faced with the ongoing challenge of team members and other staff reaching proficiency in using the software, understanding what data is available to them and what they *really* need, and knowing what questions to ask the information technology experts.

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.