

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Campus-wide collaboration to develop and implement master facilities plan.	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b> 09-05-2007
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 09-18-2007
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 06-16-2003	<b>Created</b> 11-24-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b>	<b>Version</b> 4

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** To develop and implement a proactive master facilities plan to meet the college's facility needs over the next ten years. This would include the renovation of existing space as well as the building of new structures. The plan would include specific action steps, a timeline for completion, and a continuing process for recognizing and addressing future facility needs.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Due to our rapid growth over the past several years, we have outgrown our home. We have many employees sharing office space and some with no permanent work area. Finding adequate classroom space for our growing student population is a challenge each semester. Our continued institutional growth is limited due to our current space restrictions. Improvement in these areas can lead to improved morale for students as well as all NICC employees. Expansion into the fine arts area will provide cultural growth activities for all stakeholders and will provide a well-rounded educational culture for our students as well as the communities we serve. To continue to provide a high quality educational experience for our stakeholders, we must address our current facility needs and develop a continuous strategy for addressing our future facility needs.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** The organizational areas effected by this plan include, but are not limited to, the following: Library, Bookstore, Maintenance, Student Services, Continuing Education, Student Activities, Child Care, Academic Program areas, and Cafeteria.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** Critical processes most affected are budgeting, facilities planning, curriculum and program development, and all student support services.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** A well-defined plan with action steps, timelines, and personal accountability will help to keep the institution focused on results. We may develop an AQIP monthly newsletter or Intranet capabilities to enhance our ability to communicate AQIP progress and successes across campus. We will expand the original AQIP leadership team to include employees from all areas of the college.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

**A:** The master facilities plan will be well defined and communicated. The action steps will be reasonable and well defined and communicated. The timeline established will be realistic and easy to follow. The responsible parties will be identified and held accountable for their roles.

### 7: Project Outcome Measures

**A:** The plan will provide useful information and is tied into the vision and mission of the college. The plan is proactive but flexible so as to allow meeting the changing needs of the institution and the community.

## 8: Other Information

**A:** Develop the master facilities plan; hold college-wide charettes; and outline the action steps, timeline, and responsible parties. Develop the ongoing process for identifying facility needs. Develop funding sources to implement the master facilities plan. Begin implementation of minor construction and remodeling as indicated by the facilities plan. Continue to monitor action steps, timeline, and responsible parties to assess whether college or stakeholder needs have changed and if the process is on track. Based on availability of funding sources, continue with implementation of the master facilities plan. Continue to review and monitor the current process and assess future college facility needs.

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** We completed a draft of a master facilities plan several years ago. Over the past year, we revisited the plan to trim it back to a more realistic proposal. Our first step was to assess our existing buildings. Some of the buildings are more than 40 years old and have pressing structural and functional problems. We hired a construction firm to assess heating and ventilation systems, lighting, ADA compatibility, esthetics, and structural needs to ensure safety. Next, we held meetings on each campus to gather employee input about the master facilities plan. We addressed both renovation of existing buildings and new construction. Since the building needs were so pressing, the College scheduled a bond referendum for February 2007. A bond referendum committee composed of administrators, support staff, and faculty came up with a marketing plan, with assistance from a consultant with expertise in bond referendums. The plan included face-to-face meetings with internal and external groups, a thorough explanation of tax implications, and an effort to mobilize absentee voters. In order to pass, the bond referendum needed a super majority of 60 percent. It fell short of this majority, with 54 percent of voters voting for the bond referendum. While the bond referendum was unsuccessful, it did provide an opportunity to identify voter concerns. One of these was a general lack of awareness of the College's positive impact on the community. The Board of Trustees determined a date for a second bond referendum in December 2007. In order to build more awareness, the College has launched a campaign called "NICC by the Numbers."

### 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** A number of people were involved in assessing building needs, revising the master facilities plan, and launching the bond referendum.

- The provosts and maintenance staff worked with the construction company to assess building renovations. The provosts also solicited input from employees through meetings and e-mail communication.
- The Board of Trustees took the lead in launching the bond referendum.
- The bond referendum committee involved the Board President, President, and various administrators, faculty, and staff. Each member was responsible for a specific aspect of the campaign, ranging from absentee voting to phone campaigns to educational outreach meetings.
- All employees were invited to participate, and many took the opportunity to get involved in building momentum for the bond referendum. Their efforts included participating in phone campaigns, speaking engagements, and referrals.

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** The steps for the next few months include:

- Complete an assessment of internal and external voter needs to identify any additional issues that need to be addressed in the campaign leading up to the bond referendum in December.
- Continue to develop and implement the "NICC by the Numbers" campaign to share College impact with the public.
- Engage volunteers in other activities to support the bond referendum.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

**A:** While unsuccessful, the bond referendum provided significant lessons for the College. We have found that the following are effective practices in implementing a bond referendum to support facilities needs:

- It is essential to build public awareness of the College and its impact on local communities.
- Some members of the public may support the bond referendum, yet may not make the effort to go to the polls. It is important to emphasize the importance of each vote and to promote the benefits of early voting.
- Members of the public want a clear understanding of how the money will be spent and how the bond referendum will impact their pocketbook and benefit them and their community in the long run.

## 5: Project Challenges

A: In order to move forward with the master facilities plan, we must pass the bond referendum. There is no middle ground. The challenge is to continue the momentum from the first campaign and expand it so that we can pass the bond referendum on the second try in December. The purpose of this action project was to establish college-wide collaboration on a master facilities plan and take steps to implement it. We will complete the action project after the bond referendum in December. If the bond referendum does not pass, we will re-assess our options and plan for a third attempt. In either case, the action project will be integrated into existing college processes.

## 6: AQIP Involvement

A:

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: For any college with multiple campus locations, moving a project forward that relies on widespread community support requires an ambitious and substantive communications effort which can be difficult at best, and NICC's garnering of 54% approval for a facilities bond referendum should be celebrated. Many of the resources you need to move forward on the next referendum you already possess, and the identification of voters' lack of awareness of the college's positive community impact should inform and inspire that effort.

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: Commitment to this stage of your Action Project has been both broad and deep, with involvement from all levels of the college community. An AQIP Principle of High Performance Organizations is Involvement, in which broad-based faculty, staff, and administrative participation encourages better decisions and strengthens individual and group ownership of systems, activities and initiatives. Including students' views and participation in the project could also widen the scope and impact of your project.

### 3: Next Steps

A: At this stage of your Action Project focused on AQIP Category (1) Helping Students Learn, your primary focus on the bond referendum is understandable. You are intent on communicating to the public the benefits that NICC campuses provide not only their students but also other sectors of the communities the campuses serve (AQIP Category (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.)

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: As you move toward the December bond referendum with "NICC by the Numbers" you will benefit from lessons learned, expertise gained, and momentum built in the previous campaign, with multiple unintended positive consequences as employee relationships at all levels will develop and renew.

### 5: Project Challenges

A: Your commitment to this project exemplifies not only AQIP Category (1) Helping Students Learn, but also AQIP Category (6) Supporting Institutional Effectiveness. Your determination to continue the bond referendum initiative until it passes is noteworthy, and to integrate this action project into institutional planning makes good sense. This reviewer commends you for your resolve.

### 6: AQIP Involvement

A:

