The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details			
Title	Enhancing Staff Excellence	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	4-Valuing People	**Updated**	09-05-2007
Timeline		**Reviewed**	09-25-2007
	Planned Project Kickoff 06-26-2003	**Created**	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	**Version**	4

1: Project Goal

A: The goals of this project include stimulating an increase in the level of staff communication, effectiveness, and job satisfaction throughout the college by designing, implementing, and evaluating projects in the following areas: (1) staff communication methods and systems; (2) staff orientation and mentoring programs; (3) staff recognition and reward system; (4) staff continued professional development programs.

2: Reasons For Project

A: The college has experienced a tremendous enrollment growth over the last ten years. Though staff size has grown, its growth does not equal enrollment growth. The net result is that NICC employees are being asked to do more with less. Our Constellation survey indicated that NICC employees feel trusted and valued and that the staff possess the skills to improve NICC's effectiveness in the future. However, the survey also indicated a strong desire by all levels of staff for more training and professional development opportunities and for increased effectiveness in the human resources processes, especially hiring and orientation. We have chosen to address this as one of our Action Projects because of the strong interest expressed by members of our staff.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: This plan, well executed, will affect all areas of the organization. Staff who are well-informed, who understand the mission and the vision of the college, and who receive the training they need to do their jobs well will ensure that the institution is well-positioned to serve our students and to meet all challenges presented.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The focus will be placed on enhanced communications, effective orientation, appropriate recognition and reward systems, and identification of and training in the competencies required for effectiveness at each job level in the institution. Processes affected include: human resources, faculty development, staff training and development, institutional assessment, AQIP, finance, and budgeting.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Focus will be maintained through regular reports to the AQIP Leadership Team from the Enhancing Staff Excellence Action Plan team and by sharing goals, objectives, progress, and results with members of the NICC staff.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Process measures that will be tracked include: evaluation of effectiveness of communication systems, evaluation of effectiveness and accuracy of orientation programs, evaluation of satisfaction with recognition and reward systems, evaluation of effectiveness of and satisfaction with training and staff development opportunities.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Outcome measures that will be tracked include: improvements in communications methods and results including response time, number of contacts, and other appropriate measures; improvements in employee knowledge of programs, services, and other elements provided in orientation programs; and achievement of competencies through training and development.

8: Other Information

A: Establish and implement new employee orientation process for all new part-time and full-time regular staff members. Orient 75% of new employees with this program. Establish a committee to develop and test a faculty mentoring program. Involve at least 20 mentors/mentees (total) on both campuses in the program. Work with a compensation/classification consultant to review support staff classification and compensation schedule.Implement faculty mentoring program with target participation of 50% of new faculty. Design, administer, and analyze a staff and faculty development needs assessment with target participation of 75%. Orient 85% of all new employees with employee orientation program.Draft, seek input from staff and faculty, and finalize a staff and faculty development program based on the needs assessment, with a target participation of 25% in year one. Continue faculty mentoring program with target participation of 75% of new faculty.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The College has taken significant steps to move this action project forward by improving orientation for faculty and staff, offering professional development opportunities, establishing new positions, and restructuring supervisory positions. New faculty orientation is now in its fourth year. We continue to refine the orientation to make it as positive and helpful to new faculty as possible. For instance, this year we combined the orientations for full-time faculty and part-time faculty. Our intention was to give adjunct faculty an opportunity to learn more about the College and get to know their full-time counterparts. Another step was to welcome all new employees with an informal reception in their honor. This, too, provided an opportunity to increase new employees' sense of connection with the College. We also provided expanded orientation for other employee groups. For instance, this year all employees with budgetary oversight received additional training in budgeting. As part of this training, they met with staff from our Business Services office to learn about budget responsibility and management and to gain a better understanding of the College's funding sources and their unique requirements. Another area of accomplishment this year was increased support for faculty credentialing. With the implementation of Datatel, we enhanced our ability to monitor faculty credentialing and communicate with faculty in a timely manner. We now notify full-time and part-time faculty about the status of their credentialing on an annual basis. We also offer opportunities for faculty to complete most of the courses required for credentialing at the College. Our Continuing Education program offers three of the four required courses online. We are in the process of developing the fourth course, New Teachers Workshop, and hope to be able to offer it to faculty soon. Another improvement this year was to redesign the NICC website to make it easy for faculty and staff to access college information. We also completed a faculty handbook, which will be given to faculty at workshop days this fall. This year the College also started a thorough analysis of staffing needs. One of the most important outcomes was the realignment of dean positions. Instead of having vocational deans tied to a specific campus, they now serve the whole district. The workload has been redistributed so that each dean is responsible for a smaller number of programs. This will increase the deans' understanding of program needs and will improve consistency and alignment of programs across the district. The College also: • Approved the hiring of a provost for the Calmar campus to manage day-to-day operations and lead the strategic planning process. • Completed an analysis of the Student Activities office and its services. This led to the establishment of a new Office of Student Life, Leadership, and Diversity and the hiring of a district-wide director and a campus-specific assistant director. • Hired two faculty chairs for the Nursing Department to supervise nursing instructors and meet state licensing board requirements. • Established new full-time faculty positions for Massage Therapy, Graphic Design, and Gas Utilities Services.

2: Institution Involvement

A: All employees have been involved in enhancing staff excellence, but a few deserve special mention: • Human Resources transferred all employee records to the Datatel system. This makes it easy to monitor faculty credentialing status and communicate with faculty and deans. • Human Resources enhanced the new faculty orientation program to make it as relevant and helpful to new faculty as possible. • The campus provost and academic deans assisted in delivering the orientation program. • Academic deans and faculty developed a new faculty handbook, with assistance from Human Resources staff and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. • Administrative staff and academic deans requested new positions through the program planning process. • Marketing staff updated the College website and continues to expand web resources.

3: Next Steps

A: We have made some permanent changes and have integrated those into College processes. A few steps remain: • Pursuing funding for a compensation and classification study of support and professional staff positions. • Reviewing current employee evaluation tools and making appropriate changes.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: We have found the following practices to be effective in promoting staff excellence: • Implementing a faculty orientation program that connects new faculty to each other and to the College. • Providing clear guidelines and expectations for teaching during new faculty orientation. • Establishing a computerized system for monitoring faculty credentials and communicating credentialing status on an annual basis. • Celebrating employee achievements by providing recognition at annual employee functions.

5: Project Challenges

A: This action project has reached a mature stage and will be integrated into College processes.

6: AQIP Involvement

A:

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: On the project page reviewed, there is no timeline, only a submission date. It is difficult as a result, to determine the exact timeline and goals that the institution has set for this project. The project states that it is directed to Category 4: Valuing People. It appears that additionally the project will have an impact on Category 3: Stakeholder Needs and Category 5: Communicating, Category 6: Institutional Operations. A project that impacts so many areas clearly is an important project that can have major impact on many aspects of the institution. The institution clearly listened to what stakeholders expressed through the Constellation Survey in developing this plan and should be commended for working diligently to meet stakeholder needs. This section focusing on update includes a great deal of information showing that the college continues to make changes and grow. However, some of the information included does not appear to be directly related to this action project. For instance, there is discussion of a new provost and new faculty positions. But there is no discussion of how these hires tie into the action project. The overall impact of the project would be easier to assess if the report were focused more specifically on the project and did not include additional information. Further, there are parts of the project that are not addressed. Specifically, the project states it will address communication and employee recognition along with orientation and professional development. It appears that work in the latter two areas continues, but no specific mention is made of work in the first two areas. Given that the project is 4 years old, specific accomplishments in these areas should have been achieved. Perhaps they were noted in previous years and are not available in this update. But if they were not noted, then the project appears to be moving too slowly at this time.

2: Institution Involvement

A: It appears that there has been broad-based involvement in certain components of this action project which is a real positive. The examples provided are helpful. It may be even more beneficial in the future to think about the processes that have been implemented to ensure this broad-based involvement, rather than focusing on specific examples. By highlighting processes, the institution will be identifying the practices that allow it to achieve its goals. It is these processes or practices that provide the base for a successful continuous improvement effort. As noted above, there may be some information included in this section that is not directly related to the questions. For instance, there is discussion of new positions and a college website. But, there is no specific discussion of how these items impact the goals of the action project.

3: Next Steps

A: The next steps described sound like beneficial tasks for the institution to take on. To the extent that these are related to recognition and reward systems, they are next steps. A study of job classification appears less directly tied to the project. It may be that it is time to consider closing the current project, and considering opening a new project that focuses specifically on classification and compensation. This might have the advantage of re-energizing some individuals involved in the project. It would also allow the institution to set a series of very specific goals and a detailed timeline to better track achievements.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: It appears that specific accomplishments and best practices have been identified related to 2 of the 4 project outcomes: orientation and recognition. Other parts of the report speak to professional development, although it is less clear how successful the institution believes their work in professional development has been. The final area, communication, has received little attention in this report. It may be that effective communication processes remain something of a challenge to be addressed.

5: Project Challenges

A: It appears that many aspects of the project have resulted in processes or practices that have been integrated into the college. These are areas of success of which the institution should be proud. By continuing these processes, additional benefits will accrue. If the project has reached a point of maturity where the processes are integrated, then consideration should be given to closing the project, and time given to celebrating the success that the institution has had.

6: AQIP Involvement

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