

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details		
Title	Improve Placement Processes	Status ACTIVE
Category	1 - Helping Students Learn	Updated
Timeline		Reviewed
	Planned Project Kickoff 08-15-2014	Created 11-25-2014
	Target Completion 08-15-2016	Version 2

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

A: This project is in progress as the college continues to refine placement processes to best determine academic readiness in college coursework. The project will continue to refine current college placement tools and measures that will provide a basis of assessment for college readiness and to identify developmental education strategies that will contribute to student placement, progression, and retention. This project has been updated from a previous project last year which focused on the implementation of COMPASS and exploration of multiple measures to better place students in courses.

2: PROJECT RATIONALE

A: Despite the setback caused by COMPASS discontinuation and the college being unable to compare its placement levels in developmental math and reading to other colleges, the revised placement scores in math, and the revision and mandatory placement into developmental reading courses from allow the college to analyze data in student retention and completion in math under revised placement scores. The college will also be able to assess the current effectiveness of developmental reading. Changing student demographics indicate a need for review of placement testing for students with English as a second language. This project is a high priority since assessment and feedback will be essential in determining if the changes improved student success and to continue to assess if student needs are being met.

3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: **Goal 1:** Review and update placement guidelines and in ACCUPLACER testing for reading while assessing the current use of reading waivers that allow students to enter programs or classes without placement assessment.

Milestone: The College will review last year's recommendations in reading and work to improve student placement processes and revise recommendations for developmental reading. Review will be completed by January 2016 with revised recommendations initiated for fall 2016 new students. Assessment will be completed each semester via 1) course completion rates and measures of improvement in reading comprehension as evidenced in skills testing.

Actions Steps and Timelines:

- Assess developmental reading options offered in fall 2015 to determine a) effectiveness
- b) satisfaction c) retention of completers/noncompleters (January 2016)
- Revise current courses to create a sequential progression of reading (January 2016)
- Review existing reading waiver policy in relationship to best practices for course placement (November/December 2015)
- Work with online and blended learning to establish guidelines for course readiness in courses with required reading content to include placement scores, previous academic coursework, and other multiple measures (November/December 2015)
- Develop advising and placement standards using reading placement scores and defined multiple measures for student placement. (November/December 2015)

Analysis will include the number of students that:

- Indicate improvement in reading skills as evidenced by increased indication of test scores in MyReadingLab and/or retesting in placement exams by passing proficiency levels in MyReadingLab and/or improving Accuplacer reading scores by a minimum of a 20 points.
- Successfully complete both a developmental reading course and program course.

Desired Outcome

To provide a comprehensive developmental reading program that will promote student retention and success in academic coursework through either co-enrollment in current classes with developmental reading courses.

Goal 2: Implement ALEKS. ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) is a web-based, assessment and learning system. Using adaptive questions it can determine a student's math skill level. Once the assessment is complete, ALEKS can be used to instruct the student on the topics they are ready to learn. The topics build and students are provided opportunities to reassess and measure learning. The original goal to map current math developmental and remedial options was completed in spring 2015 and this assessment and remedial option will be available for use in 2016.

Planned action steps and timelines:

- ALEKS ready to use by spring 2016 for new, incoming students requiring math placement testing. (February/March 2016)
- CIS: Integrate ALEKS into the college's Colleague systems for student identification and score reporting. (December 2015)
- Quality Council Placement Team: Review and recommend testing guidelines to include who will test, where testing can occur, testing recency, remediation time frames, and communication needs to faculty, students, and college staff and for marketing (November/December 2015)
- Provost: Train NICC testing technicians on administering ALEKS and guidance to students on "next steps" after testing. Provide training to Academic Advisors and math faculty (January 2016)
- Vice President of Academic Affairs: Communicate progress to faculty (April 2016)
- Learning Centers: Provide support for students seeking additional math instruction.
- Business Services: Provide guidance on fee schedules. (December 2015)
- Marketing and Publications: Work with Quality Council placement team in updating the Testing web site to provide information on ALEKS. (January 2016)
- Pilot ALEKS after computer integration (February 2016)

Implementation Date: March 2016

Analysis will include the number of students who:

- 1) Achieve the required ALEKS percentage score and are prepared to enter his/her program of study at the required math level upon initial testing.
 - 2) Number of students who remediate in ALEKS without enrolling in a developmental math course and who reach the required math level through ALEKS without enrolling in a developmental math course and/or are able to eliminate one developmental math course from the required sequence. This will be measured through the use of a program cohort that has a mandatory college level placement level to enter the program. Students in this program will be tracked to measure developmental math progression through traditional course completion, ALEKS completion, or a combination of both.
 - 3) Feedback from the previous action project indicated that an analysis of the implementation of a change such as our COMPASS conversion would be helpful. This recommendation would carry over to ALEKS. While ALEKS is an excellent resource for placement and remediation, if the remediation portion is not utilized, the additional cost of the product compared to other products may not be a good investment for either the student or the college. Once implemented, the delivery, usage, and impact needs to be assessed to determine how it is received, did it work well for students, did it work well for the college, and do we want to continue using this tool
- Desired Outcome:

To provide an opportunity for students who indicate need for math skills to remediate into the desired math course without being placed into a series of sequential math courses. The desired outcome is students who actively remediate in ALEKS will improve his/her percentage score enough to enter the required math level and/or skip one or more levels in a sequence of math remediation courses.

Goal 3: Work with Adult literacy to identify and establish parameters for English as Second language (ESL) placement testing.

Planned Action Steps and Timelines

- Identify ESL assessment and testing options (December 2015)
- Establish framework and guidelines for testing (January 2016)
- Determine resources and processes for student not ready for course entry that will best prepare them for classes (February 2016)
- Work with admissions, advising, adult literacy, and academics to review services for ESL students to provide integrated services between adult literacy and academic support services. (March-May 2016)

Analysis will include:

- Number of students who tested in ESL with identified remediation needs as compared to those who did not
- Review of integrated services between adult literacy and academic support

Desired Outcome

To provide a for ESL placement testing that will assist students in identifying the most appropriate service level by the college.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Members in this project have included and will continue to involve the academic deans, students' services, adult education and literacy, learning center faculty, reading/writing/math faculty, academic affairs, testing staff, and the provost offices. To facilitate activities, teams have been formed to work on reading/writing, math, and ESOL.

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: Each goal identified in 3. will be monitored via the timeline indicated by the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness via the Quality Council monthly meetings. This project will have achieved its goals when the College has a comprehensive plan of recommendations in place for ensuring that students are not placed in courses based solely on a single assessment, that students placed into any type of remedial education have services in place to ensure their needs are met and they remain on a career pathway, and testing products truly assess students' abilities and readiness for courses/programs with appropriate cut off scores. This will require ongoing collaboration with academic programs through the academic affairs office.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Implementation is challenged by lack of a centralized responsibility over developmental education, as well as the breadth of staff and faculty affected by process changes.

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: Organizationally, this project will bring to the table data on student success in relation to placement scores, developmental education as it currently is offered, and entrance requirements. It will be important that the analysis of the data is shared and understood uniformly by all involved.