

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details			
Title	Monitoring and Improving Employee Satisfaction	Status	COMPLETED
Category	4-Valuing People	Updated	09-30-2013
Timeline		Reviewed	10-14-2013
	Planned Project Kickoff 11-01-2011	Created	09-28-2011
	Actual Completion 10-01-2013	Version	2

1: Project Goal

A: The goal of this Action Project is to review and analyze the results of the Noel-Levitz College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS) administered at NICC in February and March 2011 and, from this review and analysis, design appropriate initiatives to improve employee satisfaction in key areas.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Until administering the CESS earlier this year, the College had never surveyed all faculty and staff regarding their satisfaction with their jobs and with the institution. The results of the 2011 survey have provided a baseline and offer the opportunity to evaluate these results and design initiatives aimed at improving satisfaction in key areas. This project is high among NICC's current priorities because we believe that employees who are satisfied with their work environment will work hard to improve student satisfaction and success.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: This project involves all areas of the institution.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The most significant gaps between 'importance' and 'satisfaction' in the survey results include:

1. communication between College leadership and employees,
2. maintaining a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.
3. providing an effective employee orientation, hiring, and promotional processes.

The entire survey will be analyzed and initiatives designed to improve employee satisfaction in key areas identified in survey results will be developed.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The survey was administered in February and March of 2011. The results were made available to NICC by Noel-Levitz in mid-April 2011. Responsibility for administering the survey was assigned to the NICC Quality Council's College Environment and Diversity Subcommittee. At the Quality Council meeting in October 2011, responsibility for analysis of the survey results will be discussed and assigned. A report on the analysis of the survey results and recommendations on initiatives for improving employee satisfaction in key areas identified by survey results will be due to the Quality Council by January 2012. Between February 2012 and February 2013, when the CESS is administered for the second time, the Quality Council will implement appropriate initiatives aimed at improving employee satisfaction in the key areas identified through the analysis of the 2011 survey. By June 30, 2013, the results of the 2013 administration of the CESS to NICC employees will be analyzed and compared to the 2011 baseline measures.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The NICC Quality Council will hear updates on progress of this project at its monthly meetings beginning in November 2011. The Quality Council will receive the report of the group assigned to analyze the survey and present recommendations for initiatives in January 2012 and will hear updates on the progress of the initiatives developed to improve employee satisfaction in key areas between March

7: Project Outcome Measures

- A: Success with this Action Project will be determined by comparing the results of the 2013 CESS to those of the 2011 CESS in the key areas targeted by the initiatives developed to improve employee satisfaction.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A: After NICC administered the Noel-Levitz College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS) in the spring of 2011, three focus areas were determined by the size of the gap between “importance” and “satisfaction”. Those areas and the past year’s accomplishments include:

Communication between leadership and employees:

- 1) NICC President Dr. Liang Chee Wee continues to hold open forums with employees quarterly. These forums are very well attended by members of the staff and faculty and they provide an opportunity for lively, open dialogue with the President and among staff and faculty.
- 2) The NICC College Senate has continued to grow and evolve. College administrators work with the Senate leadership to provide information and data for study and consideration when issues are under discussion. The president of the Senate is a full member of Dr. Wee’s Cabinet and attends all meetings.
- 3) Dr. Wee instituted a leadership training for members of his Cabinet. This six-month program is designed to build a strong, cohesive senior team and to strengthen and enhance each individual’s leadership abilities. Key among the focus areas of the training are the importance of communication among members of Cabinet and between members of Cabinet and the college community.

Maintaining a Spirit of Cooperation and Teamwork:

- 1) Interest Based Bargaining was instituted at NICC during the spring of 2013. This process was used in place of traditional bargaining with both the NICC Support Staff Association and the NICC Higher Education for bargaining the 2013-2014 collective bargaining agreements. The two IBB teams included Association leadership, administrative team members, and two members of the NICC Board of Trustees. Not only did using this process result in agreements without mediation for the first time in over 10 years, it broadened and strengthened communication among the staff, faculty, administrative team, and the Board of Trustees.
- 2) The College has undertaken the first major gifts campaign in its history. An internal campaign has been organized with a goal of 100% participation by full-time staff. The steering committee for the internal campaign is comprised of representatives from the faculty, support staff, and professional non-bargaining staff. A variety of fun activities designed to focus on the importance of participation in and support of the campaign have served to bring staff and faculty together for a common goal. With three months until the conclusion of the campaign, over 90% of full-time staff and faculty have contributed to the campaign.

Providing effective orientation, hiring, and promotional process:

- 1) An expanded faculty orientation program was developed and implemented in the fall of 2013 with over 25 new faculty participating.
- 2) A central location on the employee portal was designed and implemented to allow faculty and staff access to training calendars, webinars, streamed content from trainings, and other professional development information.
- 3) The position management and applicant tracking system (PeopleAdmin) are fully implemented and all users have been trained by the Technology Training Coordinator. Survey results from users indicated over 90% satisfaction with the training and with the system. The onboarding module and an additional module which will provide managers, staff, and faculty to performance management tools will be fully implemented by the summer of 2014.
- 4) The compensation and classification RFP release was delayed until the fall of 2013 because another low a community college asked to partner with NICC in a joint RFP. This was deemed to be mutually beneficial for data sharing and budgetary reasons. The RFP will be released in October 2013.

Because the College participated in *The Chronicle of Higher Education’s* Great Colleges to Work For survey in 2012 and 2013, the decision was made to delay the second administration of the CESS until the spring of 2014 thereby establishing an every third-year cycle for the CESS. In the interim years, the Great Colleges to Work For survey will be administered. This strategy was deemed more reasonable from a budgetary perspective.

2: Institution Involvement

A: During this reporting time period, the evolution from the previous Quality Council structure has continued. The College established a new Cabinet-level position—Executive Director (ED) of Institutional Effectiveness—which will provide leadership and continuity to the AQIP efforts. The new ED, Kristin Dietzel, formerly held the position of Director of Grants and Contracts for NICC. Her broad knowledge of the College, her ability to organize and lead large projects, and the respect which staff and faculty have for her have allowed her to begin to shape a more effective approach to quality improvement across the College. This project continues to be assigned to the NICC Quality Council's Fiscal Stewardship team and, as that team becomes more active, team members will assist Human Resources with decisions regarding future survey administration, analysis, and distribution of results. All activities designed to address gaps between "importance" and "satisfaction" in the CESS will include faculty and staff in their design, implementation, and analysis.

3: Next Steps

A: The CESS survey will be administered again in the spring of 2014 and the results will be analyzed by the Fiscal Stewardship team and shared with the college community. Based on survey results, strategies will be developed to address gaps between "importance" and "satisfaction" in survey responses.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) process proved to be a very effective practice. Initiated by Dr. Wee, both teams participated in training prior to beginning IBB. The same facilitator worked with both IBB teams and one member of the Board of Trustees participated on both teams which provided continuity with the process.

5: Project Challenges

A: Many projects have been successfully implemented to improve communication, build a spirit of teamwork and cooperation, and provide employees with an orientation, hiring and promotional process. However, we still struggle with definitive measurement of our results, due to the subjectivity of survey responses and difficulty in determining cause and effect in terms of employee satisfaction.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Congratulations. This project appears to have met the objectives of each phase or milestones outlined for the project. HLC appreciates the level of detail that the institution provided concerning its accomplished results pertaining to improving communication, collaboration and performance among its personnel. The involvement of stakeholders will be important to ensuring continued improvement in employee satisfaction and institutional participation (AQIP Category 4: Valuing People). A byproduct of the institution's efforts appear to be the emergence of a systematic approach to improving the institution's effectiveness in its training and hiring practices as well as improved service access. The communication and technology enhancements will contribute greatly to increasing organizational productivity as well as satisfaction (AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness and AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations). The status of the project is completed.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The Quality Council appears to be a key advisory group concerning the continued planning, monitoring and implementing of outcomes associated with employee satisfaction efforts. HLC is assuming that representation among this group includes individuals from all appropriate stakeholder groups. HLC's criterion related to resource planning and institutional effectiveness encourages institutions to monitor fiscal as well as human resources in relationship to its operation (HLC Criterion 5: Resources, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness). Thus, HLC applauds the institution's inclusion of a specific team within the council that focuses on the fiscal impact of its plans. This will be very instrumental in establishing a culture of continuous improvement long term (AQIP Category 9: Planning Continuous Improvement).

3: Next Steps

A: The institution's "next steps" are appropriate given the objectives of the project.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: It was great to read an example of how an organization's effort to foster higher levels of employee satisfaction and collaboration parlayed into shifting the institution's culture in respect to collective bargaining. What a great example of a high performing organization (AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationship).

5: Project Challenges

A: Good observation. It is important that the organization realizes that while it has made considerable progress by establishing a process for monitoring and improving employee satisfaction, there is more work done in the area of assessing the impact of these efforts. It may be beneficial to the institution to research outcomes associated with the alignment of key satisfaction indicators, appropriate work processes, personnel performance and professional development measures (AQIP Category 4: Valuing People).

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: While we are closing this project with AQIP, we fully intend to continue monitoring employee satisfaction and creating initiatives to address the issues brought to light through our employee satisfaction survey and the initiatives that are currently underway. The primary reason for closing the project is because we feel that this project has a firm foundation and the initial goals have been accomplished.

2: Success Factors

A: We believe that we have made significant strides in improving communication across the College. Examples of these improvements include our President's (Dr. Wee) quarterly open forums with faculty and staff, the continued growth of the College Senate, and the Cabinet (senior leadership team) participation in a leadership training program which included a strong emphasis on the importance of communication across the College.

Further, we have vastly improved our spirit of cooperation and teamwork by moving from traditional bargaining to interest based bargaining (IBB) in 2013. All members of both bargaining teams reported very positive experiences from the IBB process. The Dubuque (IA) Area Labor Management Council has honored both teams with its' 2013 Labor/ Management Honor Roll award for our success.

We have improved our orientation, hiring, and promotional processes in several key ways during the life of this action project including an improvement and expansion of the new faculty orientation process; creating a central location on the employee portal for faculty and staff to access the college training calendar, webinars, streamed content from trainings, and other professional development information; and we designed and implemented a web-based position management and applicant tracking system which has made the application and hiring process much more accessible to applicants and internal staff. Further, the system has vastly improved our access to essential hiring data and metrics.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: Throughout the life of this project, initiatives have been successfully implemented to improve communication, build a spirit of teamwork and cooperation, and provide employees with an orientation, hiring and promotional process. However, we still struggle with definitive measurement of our results, due to the subjectivity of survey responses and difficulty in determining cause and effect in terms of employee satisfaction. We will continue to seek to find better ways to measure the results of our efforts.

We also need to do a better job of bringing more voices to the table to analyze results and design initiatives after our next survey is completed in the spring of 2014. We hope that the NICC Quality Council's Fiscal Stewardship team will be key in this endeavor. The team is comprised of representatives from all employee groups which we believe is important.