
Action Project

Title: Develop a Master Course Schedule That Supports Sequential Learning.
Version: 4

Institution: Midstate College **Status:** Completed
Submitted: 2009-11-24 **Category:** 1-Helping Students Learn

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2004-08-30

Target completion date:

Actual completion date:

Project Detail

Project Goal

Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer

The purpose of this Action Project is to provide a tool for academic advising of students that will assist students, faculty, staff, and administration to plan strategies for optimum student learning, as well as student support services.

Reasons For Project

Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities

Midstate College is experiencing a period of growth in enrollments and expansion of curricula that requires a strategic plan to effectively utilize space and resources to support the current culture of providing individual attention to its students. The results of the *Examiner* self-assessment tool indicate a need to place students in courses for which they are appropriately prepared, a need to listen to the specific needs and requirements of the groups served, and a need to communicate to internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, the development of a master schedule that supports sequential learning is very important, at this time, to support a plan for students to complete their programs in a timely manner with optimum academic achievement.

Organizational Areas Affected

List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project

The organizational areas most affected include the following: academic advising, student services, faculty preparation and staffing, marketing, admissions, retention, and assessment of student achievement.

Key Organizational Process(es)

Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve

The critical processes most affected by this action project include sequential scheduling of departmental courses; coordination of departmental students' and faculty scheduling needs; timely publication of schedule for advance planning and pre-registration for new students; registration for current students; campaign planning for marketing initiatives; and resource planning for textbooks, space, and labs.

Project Time Frame Rationale

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion)

An all-school in-service was held in September 2004 to introduce AQIP and the Action Projects. The attendees suggested in the comments section of the In-service Feedback Survey that follow-up meetings with the administration, faculty, and staff should be held about every 3-4 months to keep everyone informed and involved. It was also suggested that newsletters for each Action Project could be sent via e-mail to provide periodic updates and opportunities for input for all staff. Each action project's leader has chosen a committee to continue the analysis and evaluation of the processes as developed. These committee members will be trained to assist in the development of the process and communicate and assist others in meeting the input needs of the Action Project.

Project Success Monitoring

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing

The process measures that will be tracked include annual student opinion survey responses; statistics documenting number of courses, number of enrollments (per department, per quarter); academic advisors' feedback; student services feedback; student feedback, and systematic collection and analysis of complaints received in order to improve the scheduling process.

Project Outcome Measures

Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals

The outcome measures that will be tracked for this Action Project include retention statistics; graduation rates; number of arranged courses, class sizes, timely sequential course completion plan for students in place during their first quarter; a master plan, including timetable, for ongoing scheduling process.

Annual Update

Project Accomplishments and Status

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

The scheduling process at Midstate College is steadily progressing toward an extended master schedule that will serve the students' need to plan ahead. Several of the departments have one- to two-year plans in effect now. The students were surveyed this year to determine their shift needs, such as day, night, web, and weekend preferences to assist the program directors in planning the departments' schedules of course offerings. A meeting of the administration and the academic advisors, in response to proposed schedule changes in the local public school district, was held to discuss alternative ideas to meet the needs of our nontraditional students who are parents of school-age children. While the administration is hesitant to move totally toward one-day block scheduling, the Allied Health Departments have been successful in providing at least two days of one-day block scheduling for their

major core courses. The evening courses are already scheduled on one night a week for each course, so it's possible for the students to be full-time with a single trip to campus per week. This has been a positive alternative for the students. The committee plans to continue exploring other possibilities, such as blended courses.

Institution Involvement

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

The institution continues its collaborative approach to course scheduling by involving representatives from admissions, marketing, eLearning, registrar, bookstore, academic advisors, and students in the scheduling process. The Chief Academic Dean is responsible for the master schedule and seeks the input of all concerned stakeholders

Next Steps

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

Having completed our first Systems Portfolio in November 2007 and having received the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report earlier this year, we plan to focus on assessment of the College's processes. A Director of Assessment been hired to help set up appropriate electronic tools to assess the progress and effectiveness of our institutional processes, including the scheduling process. Therefore, results will be more readily accessible for review and documentation. We also plan to provide a more extended schedule of courses; this will address the opportunity for improvement listed in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, which suggested that "the schedule of course offerings may need to change as enrollment growth occurs and as students require more time in planning their schedule of courses." The purpose of this action project was to establish processes and define the roles departments will play in our scheduling process. Now that this project has concluded, we will continue to refine our processes and evaluate results on an ongoing basis.

Resulting Effective Practices

Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project

Block scheduling has been effective in helping the students save money on gas, babysitters, and a variety of work options. The Allied Health Department, who has the majority of daytime students, has arranged its schedules so that students can enroll in three courses on one day: two day courses plus one night course, or mix their registrations with online courses. Approximately 65% of our total enrollment takes, at least, one eLearning course per term. Retention rates have increased approximately 10% from Fall 2006 to Spring 2008; however, direct correlation to this project has not been identified. The committee plans to track the results of this process in the Systems Portfolio.

Project Challenges

What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project

While an extended schedule that will outline the availability of courses over a four-year period is on the horizon, we face the challenge of meeting the needs of students who enroll at four different times of the year with unequal academic credits. A large percentage of our students enroll with, at least, some academic transfer credit which places them at various positions in the sequence of their courses.