
Institution: Red Rocks Community College

Submitted: 2006-05-09

Contact: Joan Smith

Email: joan.smith@rrcc.edu

Telephone: 303-914-6276

Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 08-01-2006

Target completion date: 01-01-2007

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

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

Increase the number of students applying for and receiving associates degrees.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Supporting Institutional Operations

D. 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:

The Strategic Planning Process for the Colorado Community College System has developed three key criteria to measure college performance. Improving graduation rates is one of these criteria.

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

The Student Services division specifically the area under the responsibility of the Registrar is most involved in the current processes of auditing graduation requests and coordinating with instructional administration to determine if a student has met the degree requirements necessary for graduation.

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

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

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

Baseline numbers of graduates will be compared to numbers of graduates as a result of the planned interventions.

I. 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:

A baseline will be established to determine the number of students with 45+ credits that are actually applying for and receiving degrees. These data will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the mail contact and follow up by the general advisors to degree audit requests.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: Marilyn Smith, English Faculty
Email: marilyn.smith@rrcc.edu
Phone: 303-914-6439 Ext.

Annual Update: 2008-09-12

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

Since the last update report filed fall 2007, the Graduation Culture (GC) Action Project has continued to promote the benefits of applying for a degrees and certificates. Dr. Nancy McCallin, the Colorado Community College president, reported that the Colorado community colleges' graduation rate increased from 20.1 percent to 25.9 percent, helping Colorado to rank 8th in the nation among two-year colleges in graduation rates. Red Rocks Community College students that have earned more than 45 credits with a GPA of 2.0 are notified by letter that an online degree audit request is available to assist in determining their progress toward a degree. As the deadline approaches each term to apply for graduation, articles in student publications, posters and table tents in the cafeteria and hallways promote the benefits of earning a degree.

Review (09-30-08):

Saturating the student environment with deadline reminders is a great strategy to encourage students to action. Given the increases in statewide increase in graduation rates, it is important for Red Rock to not only track your own rate of success but also the factors contributing to it. An online graduation exit survey can potentially reveal those factors that most contribute to completion.

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

In an effort to gain an objective perspective of the effectiveness of the action projects, task forces were formed fall, 2007 from faculty and staff that had no previous involvement with the development or implementation of the projects. The make up of the task forces were intentionally designed to include instructors as well as staff from outside of instruction. The task force was unanimous in their recommendation that the GC Action Project should become standard operating procedure of the College. The task force recommended several innovative strategies to continue to market the culture of graduation, which are more fully detailed in the following sections.

Review (09-30-08):

Viewing the project with 'new eyes' clearly contributed to the GC's strategies and the inclusion of instructors and non-instructional staff contributed to the diffusion of the GC. There is one population that may have been included at this point and that is the student. There is evidence of generational differences in learning and marketing that can provide the task force with insights into which communication channels can best deliver your message. Involving the learner in your planning will not only support the AQIP category of "Supporting Institutional Operations" but also "Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs."

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

In an effort to gain an objective perspective of the effectiveness of the action projects, task forces were formed fall, 2007 from faculty and staff that had no previous involvement with the development or implementation of the projects. The make up of the task forces were intentionally designed to include instructors as well as staff from outside of instruction. The task force was unanimous in their recommendation that the GC Action Project should become standard operating procedure of the College. The task force recommended several innovative strategies to continue to market the culture of graduation, which are more fully detailed in the following sections.

Review (09-30-08):

See B above.

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

The development of the online degree audit request has helped to develop a method to track the number of students seeking information about graduation. One of the general advising staff has taken lead responsibility in responding to the audit request.

Review (09-30-08):

Automating request can potentially contribute to your efforts if you capture information from the person requesting the audit, i.e. semester of enrollment, age, reasons for requesting audit, and why requesting online. These items can be easily integrated into a form that would permit easy analysis.

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

Initial data concerning the number of students requesting an audit as a result of the notification has been underwhelming. Efforts are underway to "punch" up the methods used to encourage students with 45+ credits to request a graduation audit. Notifying students via mail is an expensive and time intensive effort. Efforts to automate the notification through electronic means such as email or web notices posted in the online classroom management system are continuing to be explored. More time than was ideal elapsed between the work of the GC Action Project Committee and the formation of the GC evaluation task force. The original committee members were concerned that the evaluation fact-finding process did not adequately follow up with the original members resulting in redundancy as well as oversight in the recommendations for next steps coming from the task force. Lessons learned include the importance of the evaluation task force process ensuring full follow up with members involved in the original design and implementation of the action project.

Review (09-30-08):

With as many instructional delivery modes as offered by Red Rock, it is curious that email is not a viable option for the automated pushing of information to students. Email, instant messaging, and text messaging are all effective strategies to contact the "digital generation" that comprises a majority of college campuses and use of technology to inform and support students; technology use is an indicator of "Leading and Communicating" principle of high performance. Exploring student use of technology, preferences for communication, perceived value of advising and degree audit, degree time line, and post graduation goals may provide greater insight when all factors are considered together. Your project is critically important and should engage the learner as a member of the planning and development process.