
Action Project

Title: Faculty Advising Pilot

Version: 2

Institution: Red Rocks Community College

Status: Completed

Submitted: 2009-11-24

Category: 3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2006-08-01

Target completion date: 2007-08-01

Actual completion date:

Project Detail

Project Goal

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

Increase the number of students accessing academic advising. Engage faculty as part of the general advising team during peak times for the first two to three weeks around a semester start. Develop training for faculty to help ensure consistency in how the advising services are delivered.

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

The Vital Focus which included the Constellation Survey and Conversation Day indicated a strong shared sense that general advising continues to be an area of weakness. Current processes have resulted in the general advising area being understaffed to meet the need effectively. An efficient process to ensure the general advising staff have accurate and current information has not been established resulting in students receiving outdated information on program or transfer requirements. Three years of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement Survey indicated that 60% of the students responding believed that advising is VERY important, yet less than 40% of students sometimes sought advising with only 11% regularly seeking advising.

Organizational Areas Affected

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

General advising is under the direct supervision of the Registrar which is part of the Student Services Division. The key leader for the action project is Cindy Somers, chair of the Science Department. Faculty will be integral as they participate in professional development to help them carry out in a consistent manner the functions of a student advisor.

Key Organizational Process(es)

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

Two full time advisors and 2 or 3 part time advisors contracted for peak times currently comprise the general advising staff for a campus with a total student head count that averages 6,000 each term. A full time employee has advising responsibilities along with career and other student administrative functions at the north campus with a student head count that averages more than 1,000 per term.

Project Time Frame Rationale

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

An initial pilot of faculty providing advising services in the general advising offices was conducted prior the

start of the fall 2005 semester. A survey was conducted of participating faculty and the general advisors. The results of this survey and subsequent follow up meetings have been used to refine the processes that will be used in the implementation during the start up of the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters.

Project Success Monitoring

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

Surveys of participating faculty, advisors and students will be used to measure effectiveness in meeting these stakeholders' needs for student advising.

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 primary objective of improving the percent of students accessing advising services will require monitoring over several semesters. These trend data will be analyzed along with faculty input concerning an improvement in the accuracy of the information being given to students. A representative sample follow up with students accessing advising may also be used to determine if the advising services impacted the placement of students in appropriate classes based on their goals and academic preparation evidenced by placement scores, and the students' success in the completing their educational goals while at Red Rocks Community College.

Annual Update

Project Accomplishments and Status

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

The Faculty Advising Project has gained tremendous support from both general advising staff and the faculty that participate. This progress is significant given the challenges the project overcame from its original inception. Challenges included difficulty in providing the level of comprehensive training needed for faculty to work in the student information system, Banner. Expecting faculty to complete the training and then enter advising notes into Banner diminished the value of the faculty involvement to respond directly to students with discipline specific questions. A creative strategy was implemented in the opening of a physical "Triage Area" immediately adjacent to the general advising and admissions offices of the Student Welcome Center. The Triage Area provides a walk up service staffed by faculty for four weeks during peak enrollment periods at the start of each semester. Participating faculty are trained by the general advising staff to offer immediate assistance to students seeking information about course registration, placement testing, and other enrollment and registration processes.

Institution Involvement

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 staff from outside of instruction. The task force reviewing the Faculty Advising Project (FAP) found that the project has been extremely successful for students, faculty, and advisors, according to surveys and other research the committee conducted. The benefits of the (FAP) include the following: • Effectively helping students when they most need it, during peak times. • Fostering collaboration between Student Services and Instruction—faculty who have participated have expressed a high level of enthusiasm for the project. • Involving faculty in advising creates and improves alliances between Instruction and Advising and assists all involved with conveying accurate and timely information to students. The Faculty Advising Project (FAP) has bridged the communication gap that can grow between two different areas of the College such as instruction and advising. Participating faculty complete training offered by the general advising staff to include shadowing the advisors and role-playing so that the faculty members may respond to the wide range of questions students may have as well as enrollment and registration questions. Faculty are also supported in being able to provide information across multiple disciplines using information guides and web pages provided by instructional departments to the advisors. Participating faculty have reported positively that involvement with the FAP has increased their knowledge of programs and departments. Faculty participating in the FAP may be compensated to staff the Triage Area at the non-instruction rate of \$20 per hour. General advisors have reported positively that their interchange with faculty have become much more frequent as a

result of the close working relationship between faculty and general advising staff as a result of the FAP implementation. The general advisors meet monthly and invite faculty from each department to provide updates and discuss information that would be helpful for students as part of the advising process

Next Steps

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

The general advisors have requested an advance schedule of faculty assigned to the Triage Area that identified the disciplines represented. It has also been recommended that posters be placed in the Triage Area so that students would know when faculty from specific disciplines would be available to answer questions in the Triage Area. Refresher training needs to be developed for faculty that may be coming back to the Triage Area after more than one semester. The Institutional Research Office will be consulted to provide real time updates several times during the day of class closures as enrollments fill. This timely information will help the Triage Area be able to help students enroll in open sections. A larger conversation is continuing concerning if advising for new first time students should be required. The task force that completed the evaluation of the Faculty Advising Project (FAP) conducted a survey of students that visited the Triage Area. Overwhelmingly the students positively responded that the assistance they received from the Triage Area was helpful. Eighty percent of the students respondents also indicated that students should be required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes. The task force evaluating the FAP found compelling reasons to consider mandatory advising for first time students as a result of their interviews with faculty and students. The task force recommended group advising sessions to help with the impact on the advising area of increased student traffic.

Resulting Effective Practices

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

Students benefit from the immediate access to discipline specific faculty as part of the initial advising experience during the enrollment process. The Triage Area has greatly reduced the time students may wait in line to see an advisor. General Advisors "sweep" the line and students with general enrollment or registration questions are directed to immediate assistance in the Triage Area. Participating faculty have reported the connection made with students in the Triage Area has lead to students being much more likely to follow up with the faculty member if they should need additional support during the semester. The general advising staff has also appreciated the direct access to faculty in the Triage Area with questions about adding students as classes fill, or responding to students' questions concerning pre-requisites and other discipline specific information. The Triage Area has freed the general advising staff to concentrate on one-on-one appointments with students needing assistance with degree planning and credit transfer. Currently a faculty member is being compensated at the non -instruction hourly rate to coordinating the schedule of participating faculty in the Triage Area. Surveys of the thirteen faculty involved in the project this last fall was overwhelming positive with each member reporting his or her intent to participate again next term.

Project Challenges

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

Both advisors and faculty are supportive of transitioning the Faculty Advising Project to become a standard operating practice of the College. In order to complete this transition decisions need to be made concerning the identification of the faculty member(s) that will coordinate the recruitment and scheduling of the faculty to work the Triage Area. Efforts to recruit more faculty participating to work in the Triage Area are ongoing with the goal of ensuring representative coverage of a range of disciplines throughout the high peak enrollment times.
