

ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM TO ENHANCE STUDENT GOAL ATTAINMENT

Annual Update: 2006-09-13

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

After an unsuccessful first term of this action project, the College had to reassess what it was doing. The project was moved from one-on-one mentoring to mentoring in the classroom setting. This change has been highly successful. The third year of the project was spent working to expand participation in the project and making classroom mentoring part of every student's experience.

- Continued the project, inviting all developmental English and Math instructors to participate.
- Received widespread recognition across campus that IDEAS+ is a successful project
- Students participating in IDEAS+ sections continue to have higher retention rates than those not in IDEAS+ sections. Students who were enrolled in an IDEAS+ course were retained semester to semester at a higher rate than students in non-IDEAS+ sections of the same course. Retention from Fall to Spring was 14% higher for IDEAS+ sections; retention for Spring to Fall was between 6% and 9% higher in IDEAS+ sections.
- All students in the program took the College Student Inventory (CSI) which gives us continuing data on our students' needs. Number of students who have taken the CSI each term of the project * Development of assignments related to CSI reported student needs (i.e.; career planning assignments in math, post-test review for English), made available to all faculty via IHCC intranet.

Review (09-25-06):

The college has chosen AQIP Criterion Three: Understanding Stakeholders Needs as their primary focus. Since they are working now with classroom instruction, it is probable they are also addressing Criterion One: Helping Students Learn and also Criterion Nine: Building Collaborative Relationships. Moving the project from individual mentors to the classroom seems to be a resource-feasible and successful approach to mentoring students. Fourteen and nine percent is a credible increase in retention for students experiencing this form of mentoring, and the CSI is a credible measuring instrument.

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

The heart of the Action Project has been a counselor who has been given reassigned time to train faculty members in the use of the CSI, to facilitate conversations by instructional faculty who participate, and to serve as a contact person between faculty members and students and the counseling department.

- All Developmental Education English and Math instructors were invited to participate. In all 23 instructors have participated in the project.
- A growing number of students were in courses that featured IDEAS+. In all 1629 students were in IDEAS+ courses.
- Collaboration, understanding and appreciation of the connection between instructional and student services was enhanced, creating closer relationships between counseling and instructional faculty.
- IDEAS+ instructors have agreed to share their assignments with the campus. These assignments are available on the Intranet.

Review (09-25-06):

The college has surpassed their projections in terms of students involved in mentoring. They have achieved this through their collaborative relationships with Developmental English and Math instructors and by assigning a 'standard bearer', a counselor, to guide the Action Project. They also embedded mentoring in classroom instruction and so helping students learn was more easily assured.

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

The College is working to make the mentoring experience of IDEAS+ an integral part of each student's time at Inver Hills.

- There is an interest in expanding this project across campus. For the upcoming year, the CSI will be incorporated into all first semester English courses (developmental through freshman composition) in an effort to reach out to as many students as possible, while avoiding duplication of services. English department faculty members will be trained in the administration and interpretation of the CSI and will meet as a department to discuss ways to address student needs identified on the CSI. Additionally, instructors across campus will be made aware of the student group profile in an effort to create a better understanding of student needs. The goal is to encourage instructors to examine their pedagogy in the context of students' needs, addressing content but also context and process in the classroom. Four Learning Communities are starting on campus, and each of these groups will also be utilizing the CSI as a tool in retention of students.
- Data, including longitudinal data regarding degree completion, will continue to be collected. Research will be ongoing.
- IDEAS+ is being linked to a new Action Project that will focus on helping student identify their "intent," one of the factors identified in the CSI. To provide more up-to-date information and to help the College measure goal completion for both initiatives, a pop-up screen will be developed to appear at each registration juncture for students, requiring them to update their "intent." This action project will be retired following this review cycle. Its activities will be sustained and new and/or expanded activities will be developed, some through grant initiatives, others through new AQIP Action Projects.

Review (09-25-06):

The college has a plan for retiring this Action Project and building on it for the next phase. Their plan to include ALL first semester English classes is an ideal way to reach students. They will expand the number of faculty members engaged in mentoring, and they have the potential to reach ALL incoming students. The college plans to begin monitoring student intent as they enter and as it changes. This is a courageous and challenging Action Project, and the college should be commended for choosing to address it.

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

Several effective practices have been developed during this Project:

- Imbedding mentoring in the classroom activities facilitated fitting this valuable student support into the busy life of students. It also intimately connected mentoring to the learning process.
- Instructors in this program became mentors for their students. Through the results of the CSI, they were able to develop an understanding about what students were concerned about, the hurdles that they faced regarding college success, and also the areas they felt most confident in. This provides a vehicle for discussion and deeper knowledge, connection and understanding between student and teacher.
- The instructors also mentored each other. As new faculty joined the group, those who had participated since the beginning provided resources and feedback about what has worked for them in the past, as well as brainstorming new ideas with the new instructors.
- The faculty development and relationship building components of this project remain keys to its success. Gathering faculty together to discuss teaching strategies, concerns about students'

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personal issues, attendance, and homework and to provide support for each other was extremely valuable for them and also for the counselor leading the discussions.

- Qualitative measures (student and instructor surveys) continued to show that those participating in the program have been and continue to be invested in it, speaking to the project's ability to continue to sustain itself.
- As a result of Inver Hills feedback, Noel-Levitz has developed and tested a new version of the CSI, more appropriate for the community college student population. This new version will be available for use this fall semester.

Review (09-25-06):

IHCC has generated several significant 'best practices' through this project: classroom mentoring, deeper connection among faculty members and between student and teacher, and influencing a nationally normed instrument to name a few.

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

Several challenges still face this initiative:

- Data management continues to be a challenge. Collecting and monitoring intent data is crucial to obtaining valid research, and the College continues to struggle with finding ways to manage this information.
- Defining effective ways to change pedagogy based on CSI data has also presented a challenge. Many instructors have been very willing to add additional assignments or meetings, but it would be interesting to see how change can occur in teaching styles or strategies for delivering content based on this information. The more that use of the CSI can impact the teaching and learning of the course outcomes by being imbedded rather than an add-on, the more integrated the mentoring will be in the life of the classroom.
- Cost continues to be a barrier to project continuation.

Review (09-25-06):

The college is right to see student intent data management as a challenge. They might want to form a network with other community colleges attempting this challenging work. Perhaps the HLC could link together a network. Pima Community College is another college attempting this work.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Not at this time.

Review (09-25-06):