

“FINISH WHAT YOU START”
Annual Update 2008

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

During 2007-2008 the Finish What You Start campaign accomplished the following:

1. The College continued to embed the “Finish What You Start” phrase within the campus culture with the president using it at every opportunity; faculty and staff wearing FWYS t-shirts on important days, like Kick-Off, Student Success Day, Fruit Give-Away, etc.; “Finish What You Start” wrist bands given to students at orientation; and faculty and staff keeping the motto alive on campus.
2. Fifteen sections of On Course, a first-year experience course, were offered in Fall 2007 and nine sections in Spring. Nearly all sections filled. Retention of students from Fall '07 to Spring '08 was higher for students who took On Course than those that did not:

DATA: Almost 400 students took On Course in Fall 2007. Fall to Spring retention for students in the general population who did not take On Course – 63%; Fall to Spring retention for students, who took On course – 81%. There are 26 sections of On Course being offered Fall 2008.

All On Course students completed a two-year course plan, a career development plan, and a financial management plan to help them focus on completing their degree. The Noel-Levitz College Success Inventory (CSI) was given to On Course students to assess possible barriers to their college success and to introduce them to strategies for overcoming those barriers (Use of the CSI and attendant classroom strategies were imbedded in courses during the 2003-06 AQIP Action Project, Establish a mentoring program to enhance student goal attainment).

3. A method to collect academic intent regularly from students was developed. A window will pop up during the registration process asking the student to update their information. This will help us track student intent and focus success strategies and program information to specific students. This data collection will begin during fall 2008.
4. Even though e-mail reminders were sent to faculty to use the Early Warning system many did not, or at least they did not save their information, so we do not know they sent the warning. Therefore, we have decided to encourage all faculty members to use the D2L grading book and to encourage their students to refer to it often. In this way, students will continually see their grades and can easily see how well they are doing in each course. Currently all courses are uploaded into D2L and all students and faculty members have access to them. Faculty will be offered training sessions in the use of the D2L grade book during the Fall Professional Development Days.
5. The Finish What You Start team continued the Fruit/water give-away to show student appreciation at the end of each semester and to encourage students to register for the next semester. Enrollment has increased each year of the project: DATA: FYE has increased 10.8% between FY2006 and FY2008; Headcount has increased 9.6% between FY2006 and FY2008.

Review: Inver Hills Community College has embarked on a very worthwhile Action Project. The steps and celebrations along the way suggest that this project will result in success for the institution and its students. The steps accomplished during the past year reflect a continued pattern of progress as well as growth over time. This project, while focused on AQIP Category I: Helping Students Learn, also reflects a number of other AQIP categories, including Planning Continuous Improvement (Category 8) and Valuing People (Category 4). The approaches undertaken to date reflect a desire by the institution to find

out more about the students, and utilize this information to plan services to enhance their retention and success. This institution has a baseline for many of the key measures that they will be tracking. Some of this information can be used to benchmark against other post-secondary institutions. The success of On Course is also dramatic.

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

The two faculty leaders for this action project, a counselor and a physical education instructor, met as necessary to discuss outcomes and make plans. They reported regularly to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, which provides leadership for AQIP. At every professional day the Finish What You Start team spoke on at least one aspect of the initiative and tried to keep the motto on everyone's mind. The president used the phrase very consistently throughout the year, both on and off campus. Several staff and faculty members manned the tables during the end of the semester student appreciation fruit/water give-away sponsored by Finish What You Start. They encouraged students to enroll for next semester and handed out cards with counseling information.

Review: The involvement of people at all levels of the institution from the president down is obvious in this Action Project. Faculty involvement is seen in the leadership of the project, in professional activities days, and in what they provide to encourage students to continue to enroll in subsequent semesters.

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

The changes implemented by the action project have been embedded within the college and will continue. However, the action project can now be retired. The collection of academic intent will need to be monitored and reviewed and the use of the D2L grade book will need to be expanded.

Review: The success of this project has been recognized. The majority of work that was to be done has been completed. It is anticipated that the Institutional Effectiveness Committee will continue to monitor the elements of student retention and success that were outlined in the plan, and that a number of the components introduced so far in this project will continue. The foundation has been established for continued tracking and presumably, further success for the institution.

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

Finish What You Start has several initiatives which could be adopted by other colleges, specifically, a first-year experience course with academic/career planning as the focus, academic intent data collection, the student appreciation give-away, and a motto that focuses attention on completion as a goal.

Review: Given the success realized through this project, and because many other institutions are also struggling with the very same issues that Inver Hills Community College wrestled with along the way, it is suggested that "lessons learned" be shared with other institutions also working to enhance student success in academia. This sharing could involve writing up best practices for publication or presenting at an upcoming AQIP forum.

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

The early warning system is still a challenge. We hope that encouraging faculty to use the D2L grade book and offering training will help faculty members give students early and consistent feedback. The

faculty secretaries have been trained to enter information in D2L to save the faculty time. Faculty should seriously consider using their support staff for this task.

Review: Ensuring faculty use of the early warning system has presented a challenge for this institution. Change in processes may take a while to become accepted and commonplace for the faculty. Continue to move forward with efforts planned or implemented to date. Please persevere in your efforts.

Final Reviewer Comments: Congratulations on an Action Project that was conceived and implemented in response to an identified need that was detracting from student success. Data gathered to date reflects the accomplishments that Inver Hills Community College has recognized. The global judgment regarding this action project is that the institution has initiated a number of significant steps towards attainment of their objectives over a three year span. Quantitative data reported, along with a clear description of the elements accomplished to date indicates that the institution has made reasonable, if not exceptional progress towards completion of this project. The additional elements (D2L grading system and further use of the Early Warning System) should also contribute to the foundation that is already in place for this project.