

## Action Project Update

Action Project: Establish a mentoring program to enhance student goal attainment

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

The second year continued the revised project from the previous year: IDEAS+, a grant-funded mentoring initiative that targets developmental students in selected developmental courses. In the second year of the plan, a counselor continued to provide professional development for instructors on how to administer and interpret the College Student Inventory (CSI) and on mentoring. The instructors started each semester by administering the instrument to students and providing them with help in interpreting the results. The Counseling Department provided additional services to students in IDEAS+ classes, including individual appointments and workshops focusing on learner needs as identified by the CSI. Instructors continued to integrate student success strategies into their course syllabi and assignments. They mentored students through relationship building with the students they see every day. Instructors continued to meet outside the classroom as a group where they shared strategies and brainstormed ideas/ways to help students be more successful and connected. Follow-up surveys with faculty members and students continued to affirm the effectiveness of this expanded initiative: 95% of students "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "I feel that my instructor cares about my success in college." In 2004-05, fifteen instructors and 711 student/mentees (far surpassing the target of 200) participated in IDEAS+.

The College has begun to look at retention of IDEAS+ students. In Spring term 2004, there were 205 students in IDEAS+ sections and 368 students in the corresponding non-IDEAS+ sections. For those who were in an IDEAS+ section, 62% took another course Summer 04, Fall 04, or Spring 05. Only 32% of non-IDEAS+ students took another course during the same period. 15% of IDEAS+ students took courses each of those terms compared to 1% of non-IDEAS+ students. 28% of IDEAS+ students took courses Fall 04 and Spring 05 compared to 4% of non-IDEAS+ students. The Director of Institutional Research did the analysis for the Fall term 2004 cohort as well. There were 277 IDEAS+ students and 730 non-IDEAS+ students Fall 2004. For those in the IDEAS+ group, 77% took courses in Spring 2005. For the non-IDEAS+ group, 27% took courses in Spring 2005. These numbers don't take into account whether students successfully completed their courses in any of the recorded terms. However, preliminary retention data indicate that IDEAS+ students persist at a greater rate than students in non-IDEAS+ sections.

IDEAS+ was highlighted during a Starlink Video Cast on retention and transfer, and was the focus of a presentation at the League of Innovation Conference and at the Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting.

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

In Fall semester 2004, a pilot of IDEAS+ was run in introductory courses in career programs. This gave career program faculty the opportunity to try some of the IDEAS+ strategies in their courses. Because of the difficulties this pilot has generated with duplicative exposure of students to the CSI, "Career IDEAS+" was not run in the Spring 2005. However, what was learned in this pilot is being adapted for inclusion in the English for Academic Purposes grant that is being developed.

In Spring semester 2005, the use of the CSI was focused in developmental courses. All instructors of developmental reading, writing, and mathematics were invited to participate. The developmental focus maximized the instructors' common knowledge and understanding of the issues developmental students face as well as the sharing of expertise in the content material and methods for teaching the material. The lead counselor continued to provide coordination for the project while all of the Counseling Department provided appointment times and workshops focusing on learner needs. The newly hired Director of Institutional Research helped identify appropriate measures and various trained people helped with data pulling. The Dean of Students and Instructional Deans provided administrative support. The English, Mathematics, and Reading Departments participated in identifying new ways that the basic design of IDEAS+ might be expanded to help other students.

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

The grant funding that supported the development and implementation of IDEAS+ ended in June '05. One of the big steps for FY06 was to identify sources of funding within the College's FY06 budget to cover the cost of reassigned time for the counselor/coordinator, stipends for new instructors joining the initiative, and administration of the CSI. In addition, the program was integrated into the College structure by assigning administrative supervision to the Dean of Students and by identifying staff support. One of the challenges of the project has been the CSI (see E). The College will work with Noel-Levitz to pilot a new version of the CSI that will address some of the College's concerns with the instrument. The first college level writing course will be used for the pilot. Another challenge of the project has been data identification and analysis. A faculty member and the new Director of Institutional Research are working together to identify meaningful ways of using the data.

The College is looking at ways that all developmental students will be able to take the CSI. In addition, all developmental instructors are being encouraged to make use of the information from the CSI in planning their classes. Instructors are also encouraged to use the IDEAS+ project as the basis for their Student Academic Achievement Plan.

Since not having clear goals is one of the risk factors identified by the CSI, the College would like to develop a process for increasing the number of students who 1) identify their educational goal 2) keep the College updated when they change plans.

D. Describe any “effective practices” that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

The IDEAS+ faculty development component has raised instructor awareness of the risk factors common to developmental students. It has also provided instructors with data thus countering a tendency to rely on anecdotal evidence in classroom research. The CSI also provided instructors with a natural entrée for getting to know students better. One result of this has been an increase in referrals to Counseling and to the Learning Center. In addition, the project has led to a closer connection between instruction and student success, one that is both streamlined and personal.

In addition to hiring a Director of Institutional Research for the campus, IHCC collaborated with two Metro-area peer colleges to hire an Institutional Researcher, who is housed at the Office of the Chancellor. This researcher will use the system data management system to pull relevant data for retention for all three colleges. This will guarantee that all three colleges have common data that can be used for benchmarking and trending.

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

The program has faced several challenges with the CSI. While helpful in identifying student risk factors, the CSI contains many questions that are not appropriate for community college students, either traditional or returning adult. In addition, the CSI is very time-consuming for classroom administration. Using the online version has helped somewhat with the time factor.

The project has had to deal with how to handle students who are in more than one IDEAS+ course and preventing duplicative testing. The College is planning to look at success data for students in more than one IDEAS+ course.

Most instructors have focused on add-on assignments. One of the challenges is to identify methods for teaching content that will work with identified student risk factors.

The project challenges the College to identify useful data. For example, would knowing a class’s dominant risk factor(s) be helpful in designing the delivery of content as well as other strategies for the class? What other measures of success might we identify for analysis? So far, we have focused on qualitative measures and have done only preliminary work with analysis of retention data.

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 whom to contact and when?

Not at this time.

G. Who should be able to see this annual update?

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Anyone

Only people from other AQIP Institutions

No one