

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Illinois Central College

Project Details		
Title	Course Delivery and Offerings	Status COMPLETED
Category	3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	Updated 09-25-2011
Timeline		Reviewed 10-10-2011
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-01-2008	Created 11-24-2009
	Actual Completion 01-10-2011	Version 3

1: Project Goal

A: The goal is to assess student course needs and preferences with respect to duration, days/times offered and delivery mode. The team will identify changes that will increase student satisfaction with the course offerings, increase enrollment opportunities for students, and attract new students to pursue their ICC education.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Students ranked "convenient times for classes" with high importance on the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and indicated they were not satisfied with the current schedule. Enrollment trends suggest increased interest in web and hybrid classes. Changes in course delivery and the course schedule will allow ICC students more flexible options when scheduling classes.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic departments, student services, instructional services, and institutional research

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: This project will improve the processes for planning the academic course schedule.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The project must involve multiple semesters because there is a lag time between schedule creation, student enrollment, and enrollment data analysis. These peak periods require an extended project duration.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Specific improvements will be monitored based on enrollment data analysis of delivery mode coupled with scheduled offerings.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Overall outcome measures include student satisfaction with course scheduling and delivery mode choices as measured on the SSI. In addition, enrollment trends and course delivery options will be examined for viability.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The project was chartered in Fall of 2008 and was initially focused on developing a systematic process to review and analyze the course offerings to identify opportunities for improvement. In FY 2009 the process was developed and tested, with the identification

of several focus areas. These included increasing the number of and student knowledge of online and hybrid offerings, increasing the number of 12 week classes with accommodations to increase student success, offering additional summer afternoon classes, establishing uniform hybrid times to help students build an efficient schedule, and to pilot complementary science lab/general education hybrids to fill students' scheduling gaps.

In FY 2010, work was completed to help students better identify and understand online and hybrid offerings and additional summer classes were added to the schedule. The pilot to build complementary classes was not successful, but it was determined that the right classes may not have been identified and students were unaware of the opportunity. No work was done on the addition of 12 week classes or the establishment of uniform hybrid times.

A team was assembled in February of 2011 to replicate the course offering review and identify additional opportunities. As expected, some opportunities re-emerged. For example, the team identified a continued need to increase the online offering (web and hybrid) and to increase the 12 week course offerings. However, the team noted that adding additional 12 week courses should be done deliberately. A review of current course offerings and times, compared to the make-up of students who are taking 12 week courses is needed. If a large number of students are taking 12 week courses because they decided to switch after the semester was underway, the courses need to be scheduled in such a way as to accommodate students who already have a 'standard' schedule. The team determined that the August semester might be an opportunity for improvement. There is relatively low demand for this semester and further review may yield some opportunities to fold these courses into the summer schedule and eliminate the August semester.

In FY 2011 the data for the Course Delivery Review was made available on the intranet site to provide easy and quick access to this information. Schedulers can sort and analyze data by department, program, student segment, etc. to identify enrollment trends and opportunities to change their schedules to better meet student needs. Schedulers have received training on how to use the new system.

This year's project is a follow-up to the initial project, which developed a process to use data to review and analyze the course offering. The project is now completed with the inclusion of the data for the review on the academic organization intranet site which is available to those who build the schedule.

2: Institution Involvement

A: A Six Sigma team was chartered and the process owner was the Director of Institutional Research. The academic departments were represented by both faculty and administration on the team, along with student services representatives including advisors, instructional services representatives, and institutional research members.

3: Next Steps

A: The Action Project is ready to be retired. The initiatives and outcomes of the project will continue. Data generated for a review of the course offering are now available to schedulers on-demand. Going forward, the 'process' will be reviewed at least annually to ensure that the data continues to be valuable and meets schedulers needs. The review will be organized and led by the process owner. Additional needs may include such things as 'time to fill' reports and 'alerts' when a class meets an enrollment threshold. These needs would surface in the annual review of the data available. Error message data was included in the process to review the course offering but is not currently available on demand. This data can be included in the annual review to provide a more complete picture. Finally, the initial review included a student survey to gather information about student needs and requirements. Although the survey is not needed every year, the annual review team may choose to periodically administer such a survey to identify student preferences that are not apparent in the analysis of enrollment data.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The effective practices from this action project entail the use of outcome measures to identify opportunities to make schedule changes that will better meet the needs of students. Overall outcome measures include student satisfaction with course scheduling and delivery mode choices as measured on the SSI, which will be administered again in Fall 2012. These results will be compared to previous SSI results. Another important measure is the ability of stakeholders to use the data to identify options and changes they can make in the course schedule to better meet changing demands.

5: Project Challenges

A: No challenges remain at this time and the action project is ready to be retired. The data generated from the action project is available for all course schedulers to use as future schedules are built with the needs of the students at the forefront.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Illinois Central College identified a project to develop a systemized process to analyze course offerings as a result of data gathered through the Student Satisfaction Inventory. As a result, they have spent the past three years identifying opportunities for improvement and a process for reviewing course offerings. While the results of specific focus areas has been mixed, the review process that has been created will allow the institution to continue to gather information about course offerings and the effectiveness of new initiatives past the completion of the action project (AQIP Category Eight: Planning Continuous Improvement). It will be important to encourage schedulers to continue to use the data that is now available to improve course availability to meet student needs. It will be interesting to see if the efforts of the College result in improved student satisfaction when the SSI is administered again Fall 2012.

2: Institution Involvement

A: It appears that all identified organizational areas of the College were involved as part of the team in the planning and implementation of the project. This demonstrates Broad-based Involvement and Promoting Collaboration, both principles of high performing organizations.

3: Next Steps

A: As this project draws to an end, the challenge to Illinois Central College will be to continue to utilize the process that has been developed to create schedules that address the changing needs of the students (AQIP Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness). The Director of Institutional Research may need administrative support as the annual review of the process is addressed in future years. Additionally, the College recognizes that not all of the needed information can be gathered through the available data; student surveys may provide valuable additional information to schedulers.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The College has identified two effective practices that have resulted from their work on this Action Project. The first, using outcome measures to identify opportunities to make schedule changes to better meet the needs of the students, has been addressed by the institution, but the effectiveness of these changes will only be known when the SSI is administered again Fall 2012. The second, the ability of stakeholders to use the data to identify options and changes to meet changing demands, seems to have been met with the creation of a system for the review of course offerings.

5: Project Challenges

A: While Illinois Central College identified no remaining challenges for the action project as they prepare to retire it, the real challenge will be to maintain efforts to improve course offerings to meet student needs in the future. This will allow the institution to truly determine if they have been able to create a project that allows them to address AQIP Category Eight: Planning Continuous Improvement. Congratulations on your accomplishments and please be sure to celebrate and communicate these improvements.

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: The project goal of assessing student course needs and preferences with respect to duration, days/times offered and delivery mode has been met. Changes have been identified that could increase student satisfaction with the course offerings, increase enrollment opportunities for students, and attract new students to pursue their education. Much data has been generated regarding course offerings and is available to the course schedulers on-demand. A new data warehouse has been implemented at the college where much of this data is housed. Schedulers have been trained on use of the data warehouse. SSI data will continue to be used to assist

w ith determining student satisfaction w ith the course offerings. An annual review , using the on-demand data and the SSI or other student surveys/complaint data w ill be analyzed for areas of continuous improvement.

2: Success Factors

A: This project made the college sit dow n and focus on information; information regarding the course schedule: how to better meet the needs of students. The acquisition of the data w arehouse has provided schedulers w ith a wealth of information regarding course fill-rates and capacities w hich, along w ith future SSI data, w ill assist w ith future scheduling of courses. In addition, the college's intranet has the review data information for replication purposes in future years.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: It w as difficult at times to get everyone on the same page. Quantitative data does not alw ays tell a person the entire story; many times the qualitative information regarding the difficulties of building the course schedule get minimized. Keeping that in mind, a process w as developed regarding the use of data to assist w ith building the course schedule. This data is now available to all course schedulers to use in future schedule builds.