Project Details

Title	Develop and implement a process to track student progress and achievement.	Status	REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-12-2011
Timeline		Reviewed	09-26-2011
Planned Project Kickoff 05-13-2010		Created	03-10-2010
Target Completion 05-13-2013		Last Modified	09-26-2011

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A:

The committee or sub-committees of this team met at least once per month during the school year. Early in the year, the committee divided into teams to research practices and to evaluate software to aid in our endeavor. Additionally, other colleges around the state were collaborated with regarding software systems, best practices and partnership opportunities to share exiting practices and to develop new practices.

Several software companies presented their product to the team and were evaluated using a rubric. The promising software was called "Learning Outcome Manager" which was a product of our online course platform provider, Pearson-eCollege. It was found that the product was far more detailed than what MPTC was ready for at this time. It could be a very helpful tool in the future as assessment continues to expand into the culture.   However, it was determined after a meeting with eCollege (online provider) that they could set up reports to gather data about student learning using "Enterprise Reporting" potentially at no additional cost. Meetings were also held with other stakeholders at the college including IT and Strategic Advancement to determine the best route to gather assessment data for faculty to analyze. At this time, the college knows that courses that are online and blended/hybrid will have student assessment data available in the Gradebook feature. Enterprise Reporting is able to assist in the data gathering however, it would not be inclusive of all delivery formats of a course because it is not mandatory that all program courses such as traditional delivery method courses use the eCollege Gradebook.   The plan is to develop reports for those that want to review and assess student

learning/program outcomes with various courses using Enterprise Reporting but to also support the program area courses by supplying them with a method/process of gathering student data and analyzing it to make decisions to improve student learning.

Additionally, a subcommittee has also been working on integrating programs that have a completed state Technical Skill Attainment (TSA) which includes new statewide program outcomes and standard summative assessment(s) of the program outcomes. The process of making edits to program outcomes, courses, and existing exit assessments was also reviewed. A draft is ready and is being piloted by the Welding and Criminal Justice-Corrections program. Within the next month, a Phase II document proposal will be submitted to the Educational Director at the state office for both programs for approval. This will start the process for all programs with a completed TSA. Client reporting to the state on student progress and achievement will begin at the end of this school year for these two programs and potentially 5-15 more programs. Data will then be gathered by the state office and disseminated to the college indicating the number of student attempts, passed; number of student attempts, failed; and the number not attempted, per the state guidelines. Once several programs have gone through the process, it will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary. Collaboration with another college that uses Banner (SIS) to program client reporting is in process.

MPTC will continue to review high level assessment data such as TSA but will also seek to review more in-depth program/course level assessment data and seek opportunities for improvement. This will occur as this project continues in the coming months. Another step the committee needs to complete is to review the current Assessment Process document to breakdown the language to promote understanding, usage and promotion of formative and summative assessment.

R:

After about a year of work on this Action Project to develop and implement a process to track student progress and achievement, Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) is making good progress towards its goal. To date the college has been able to follow its projected timeline rather closely; it has formed a cross-functional work team with a number of sub-committees which have met on a regular basis since August, 2010, and which have researched best practices, selected a tool for at least some of the assessments, and worked on integrating programs that have a completed state Technical Skill Attainment (TSA). This important project not only is important to Helping Students Learn (AQIP Category 1), but also will have positive impact on the college's ability to Measure Effectiveness (AQIP Category 7). The work done with other colleges around the state, especially with Banner use, is a great

way to share knowledge and expertise, and represents important steps in Building Collaborative Relationships (AQIP Category 9).

While investigating various software solutions, MPTC has discovered that the best choice for the college, a program which includes the necessary functionality and is also affordable, will be able to track data only for those courses that are delivered entirely online, or as blended/hybrid courses. Traditional face-to-face courses which do not use any online gradebook cannot be tracked, and MPTC plans to develop an alternative reporting method/process for these on-campus only courses. The goal of this Action Project is to develop and implement a method of tracking student progress and achievement so that it can make data-driven decisions concerning student learning. Looking for an electronic solution and appropriate software systems to aid this goal as a first step is completely understandable. However, MPTC might want to take this opportunity to step back and consider the data it wishes to collect (course assessments, program outcomes, TSA data, surveys of student satisfaction, etc.), the desired methods of integrating and distributing data, how it wishes to use these data to affect the college's culture, etc. It may be more logical to make these foundational decisions first, and then focus on the software needed to accomplish the project's goals after.

2: Institution Involvement

A:

The team works in a collaborative environment to include everyone's input, insight and suggestions for the project. Faculty is involved with the statewide TSA process by going to meetings to develop statewide program outcomes and common assessment rubrics. The co-chairs have also met with the two Vice Presidents (Ensalaco, Bullock) to keep them informed of progress as well as the program deans. Updates will be provided at budget managers' meetings and at in-service. Additionally, the college's Program Evaluation/Quality Review Process (QRP) includes consideration for any completed TSA and future TSA. Development of a set of alternative data collections methods and a process will be an area of focus over the next year as well.

R:

MPTC obviously understands the importance of Building Collaborative Relationships (AQIP Category 9) and is following the right course of seeking input, insight, and suggestions for the project. Frequent communication about the team's activities and progress is also very important to the success of this (or any) institution-wide project.

While the 12-person work team includes members from various divisions in the college, the task is a large one and impacts stakeholder groups across the institution and beyond. The current working group structure includes at least seven research teams, which represents considerable time commitment for team members. In order to best handle this work load, and to also garner broad-based input, expertise, and feedback from all affected parties, MPTC may wish to restructure this group. By doing this it can function most effectively and include members from all constituencies. One possible model would be a steering committee comprised of the core group combined with larger research teams with members from identified key stakeholder groups: faculty/staff; students; employers, and; advisory groups. An approach such as this would incorporate the principles of involvement and collaboration and, at the same time, ensure that the committee has the talent and manpower necessary to meet the demands of this large project.

3: Next Steps

A:

With the research performed over the past year and with information from attendance at the HLC annual meeting focusing on assessment, the team will perform the next steps to complete this project and stay on task:

Task	Completed?
Create a task force with ownership and authority. Cross functional, involving all stakeholders (1 month)	Yes
Define outcomes, data and processes (1 month)	Ongoing
Research best practices, review AQIP action projects in the database/innovation exchange. (9 months)	Yes
Identify the tool (needs to integrate with Banner) (1 month)	Yes, eCollege or other
Identify resources needed to achieve the goal (1 month)	Partially
Obtain needed budget resources according to college budget timeline (2-10 months)	Partially
Develop systems to capture student and employer feedback related to program outcomes and core abilities. (3 months)	No
Develop timelines, data collection plan and key milestones. (1 month)	No
Communicate expectations to all stakeholders (parents, staff, students, employers, community, and new employee orientation). (1 month, ongoing)	No

Approximate Time: 29 months   **Time Left: 17 months**

R:

MPTC is following its projected timeline closely and has been successful in achieving its stated goals at the expected times. The work groups have spent considerable time gathering information and researching best practices. One of the basic quality principles is Information and MPTC seems to appreciate the importance of informed decision-making.

As the college moves forward, it should pay particular attention to communication with all stakeholder groups, as this will be vital to the ultimate success of the project. Communication has been relegated to the final steps in the timeline and the college may want to reevaluate that that decision. Communicating with concerned parties as the process moves forward will allow MPTC to get valuable feedback as it formulates plans and makes decisions. Leading and Communicating (AQIP Category 5) stresses the importance of open and frequent communication. The college would benefit from placing greater focus on this as it moves through this Action Project.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A:

To comply with the statewide TSA process, many MPTC program areas are working with programs statewide to develop common program outcomes and assessment rubrics. Data will start to be reported to the state in the spring of 2012. Reports will soon start to show areas of success and areas for opportunity as programs start reporting. This will allow for benchmarking with other WTCS colleges. A goal would be to benchmark against other colleges around the nation. For example, the college is currently investigating joining networks such as the American Associate of Technical Colleges (AATC). Below is the purpose of a new initiative called Voluntary Framework of Accountability. Below is a brief summary of what this program hopes to accomplish: (link:

http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Pages/default.aspx

What is the VFA?

The Voluntary Framework of Accountability is the first national system of accountability specifically FOR community colleges and BY community colleges. Leadership in the sector is defining the most appropriate metrics for gauging how well our institutions perform in serving a variety of students and purposes.

The VFA is structured as a three-phase initiative and is currently in Phase II, which will end in fall 2011 with the completion of:

- **A technical manual to define and instruct calculation of measures**
- **A framework for guiding colleges in the assessment of student learning outcomes**
- **A blueprint and mock-up of a data collection and display tool**
- **The preliminary results of pilot testing**
- **A strategic plan for college participation and engagement in the VFA**

Phase III--the availability of the VFA to all community colleges--is anticipated to start in 2012.

R:

Working on developing standardized program outcomes and assessment rubrics is a laudable endeavor. Participation in statewide programs will provide benchmarking information, which will help the college better monitor its success areas and identify opportunities for improvement. These efforts will have positive impact on the college's efforts in Helping Students Learn (AQIP Category 1) and the reporting requirements will aid efforts on Measuring Effectiveness (AQIP Category 7). The Voluntary Framework of Accountability is a valuable program for community colleges across the nation, and MPTC would be wise to join in this initiative.

MPTC and its students would certainly benefit from this activity, and this is a great example of the global nature of continuous quality improvement. Developing standardized program outcomes is not directly related to the goal of this Action Project (to develop and implement a process to track student progress and achievement). But, while working toward one goal, participation in this initiative would allow the college to embark on another worthy activity which would add to its effectiveness.

5: Project Challenges

A:

One challenge that was overcome was locating a workable and affordable software to help the college collect and analyze data. It appears the college will be using the eCollege reporting tool for the majority of the program areas, if that particular program uses the Gradebook tool. For other programs that do not use the Gradebook tool, a format of collecting data will be developed over the next year. Other challenges are:

1. Several programs have multiple formative course assessments that would need to be collected to comprise the final TSA/Exit Assessment. If a program uses the eCollege Gradebook tool, this will not be an issue because all of the course data will be able to be mined. Otherwise a program area will need to manually collect the data.
2. Professional Development needs which include the basics of assessment/evaluation, the importance of formative and summative assessment and the connection to overall program continuous improvement efforts. Creating a culture of assessment will take time.
3. Each program Exit Assessment/TSA is an unknown at this time until it is reviewed by college staff and gone through the implementation phase of the statewide project. Many will be fairly simple to implement but others may be more complicated. The college's IT department and other areas that support this process are prepared for changes as needed but we feel the current design plan is a solid one.

R:

As the college has worked through the first steps of the project to develop and implement a process to track student progress and achievement, it has encountered some roadblocks, such as identifying an affordable software package that includes the needed functionality.

The college has focused much of its attention on seeking an appropriate software package with which to track student progress and achievement. The challenges noted here are indicative of other tasks that must be tackled, such as faculty development, creating a culture of assessment, and handling assessments of traditional face-to-face course that do not use an online gradebook. At this juncture, the college would benefit from focusing less on the mechanics of tracking student progress and achievement and, instead, look at the foundational underpinnings -- which data to collect, how to use those data for decision-making and culture-changing, and how to get input and buy-in from all stakeholder groups.