
Action Project

Institution: University of Saint Mary

Submitted: 2008-06-20

Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 2008-07-01

Target completion date: 2009-09-30

Actual completion date:

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Enhancing Academic Advising for Greater Student Success

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The goal for this project is to design a system for advising and mentoring that will enhance student learning and retention. This system will: 1) ensure that all new students (including transfers), especially the undeclared, are immediately linked with a team of well-trained faculty and student services advisors for optimum academic and career advising; 2) support all students in investigating academic and career options while allowing early effective contact with programs of choice, and 3) assure strong mentoring relationships for all students throughout their course of study.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

This project originated through a convergence of three issues: 1) decreasing accessibility to students because of changing student profiles, especially the significant increase in transfer students and other students who live and work off campus and do not avail themselves of current advising opportunities; 2) campus satisfaction surveys that indicated inadequate communication of information leading students to feel overlooked and uninformed; 3) an increase in the number of students on academic probation requiring creative ways to use existing resources to address their academic, advising and mentoring needs with more immediacy. Addressing these issues is central to our strategic plan, particularly the initiatives for growing enrollment and improving retention.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or

units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Academics (Faculty Advisors, Registrar, Academic Resource Center, Academic Departments/Programs, Academic Leadership Council)
Student Life (INTRO, Career Services, Counseling, Student Governance)
Admissions Department
Coordination with Integrated Information Systems Office

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

This Action Project will improve overall academic advising, academic support, and course registration processes. This will improve beginning of year programming (INTRO, which introduces and orients new students to USM), strengthen advising and mentoring skills among faculty, foster more creative and effective ways of insuring full student participation and responsibility in the advising process and reduce the number of students on academic probation.

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

Study: Led by the Action Project Coordinator, our new AVP, and this committee, research in best practices and consultation with the key faculty advisors and constituencies listed in "F" above will render ideas and focus for improvement. July 2008 through October 2008.

Plan: Design a plan based on information and data. November, 2008 1- February 2008

Check: Gather feedback from all key constituencies on design of plan and modify as necessary. March, 2008

Do: Train faculty and staff. April, 2008.

Implement: August 2009

Follow up: After Action with Fall to Spring retention data, January 2010.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

Given the timeline in "G", the plan will be monitored by the AQIP Project Coordinator and Student Success Committee from weekly to bi-monthly. Regular meetings will provide updates on progress toward meeting objectives and provide a vehicle to problem-solve emerging issues. Updates and recommendations will be discussed at least twice each semester with the faculty and staff at Faculty Senates and University Assemblies. The Academic Leadership Council will hear updates at each meeting during the fall semester. The Action Project Coordinator will also meet quarterly with the key organizational areas to ensure follow-through..

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this

Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

- 1) 95% of students will have met or communicated with an advisor for key advising meetings, either individually or in a group, or via electronics, as the plan requires each semester;
- 2) 95% of new students will complete curricular graduation plans with their advisors (4-year plans for freshman, 3, 2 year plans for transfers);
- 3) Retention percentages for freshman to sophomore year and sophomore to junior year will increase 5%
- 4) All faculty advisors will receive special training in advising and mentoring, with emphasis on first year and transfer students;
- 5) After two semesters of implementation, semester data on academic probation numbers, including correlation on individual students, will indicate a decrease in probationary students, the percentage to be determined by the study group;
- 6) Student satisfaction surveys will indicate an improvement in advising;

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

Last Action Project Update:

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

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

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

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

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

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?
