AQIP Action Project Update & Review:

Retention Project for Late Registrants

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Prepared by:

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Action Project Title:
Retention Project for Late Registrants

Lead: Laura Fedock
Dates: 2004-2007

Overview

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

Goal for project: This project aims to improve the success of a targeted group: "late registrants." We know that likelihood for success declines significantly when students register after a particular date prior to the start of a term. We will implement actions and make policy recommendations based on research about success levels of late registrants. We will also dovetail this research with other research to further identify ways to reach this group (e.g. do late students in developmental education have fewer or greater problems than other students?). Our ultimate goal is to offset the pitfalls created by coming to the college "late."

Reason for project: The Constellation Survey, Conversation Day and strategic planning processed identified student success, particularly in the area of improving retention of students as essential to the long-term success of the College. Institutional research data has identified this group (late registrants) as a high risk group for success. We want to make changes that will positively affect this group's chances for academic success.

Organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:
* Admissions
* Counseling and Advising
* Academic Departments
* Records
* Financial Aid
* Business Office

Key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:
* Marketing to prospective students
* Admissions process
* Advising process
* Orientation process
* Registration

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):
It is the belief of the college leadership (and AQIP Team in particular) that the depth and breadth of the problem is not widely understood among employees of the campus, The committee will strive to keep the attention of the college by widely communicating the "why" behind our efforts as well as the programming and policies we recommend and implement. Success levels that can be attributed to those changes will also be communicated widely. We will use college wide communication vehicles (such as the college's meet and confer processes) to share the information widely.

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:
* The number of late admits students over time
* The demographic data of late admit students over time

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:
*   Retention rates of late admits (term to term, year to year, three years)
*   GPA and satisfactory academic progress of late admits

Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):
Complete research brief to MCTC community outlining the issues and implement at least one strategy to achieve rapid impact in Fall Semester 2004 implementation of at least one advanced solution (programmatic or policy) for Spring 2005; development of a report on findings, activities, and recommendations.Implement at least one advanced solution (programmatic or policy) for Spring 2005; development of a report on findings, activities, and recommendations; further implementation of advanced solutions (programmatic or policy); year-to-year comparison data analysis; development of a report on findings, activities, and recommendations.

Action Project Update: 2006-09-14

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

• Placement testing and New Student Orientations were extended through the first week of each term to accommodate late registrants.

• Revised Counselor and Advisor schedules made staff available in the Testing Center to explain test placements and enroll late registrants in New Student Orientation.

• The course scheduling process has become more responsive, allowing Deans to add course sections late in the enrollment cycle to make seats available for late registrants.

• Staff set up "triage stations" during the last week of the enrollment cycle to enable late registrants to ask questions and take care of last minute business quickly.

• The Bridge to Success program, including student success activities and mentoring, was promoted at New Student Orientation during the last two weeks of the enrollment cycle. In two years, Bridge students were retained at a 65-70% rate; higher than overall College rates. Over 50% of Bridge students were late registrants during the program's first year; over 30% were late registrants the second year.

• "Welcome Day" was hosted the Saturday before each term to allow late registrants to find classrooms, buy books and parking cards, obtain Student IDs and attend to last minute needs. 400-500 students attended.

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

Late registrant enrollment and retention initiatives were developed through teamwork by the admissions, financial aid, registration, customer service, business services and counseling and advising staff, in collaboration with the faculty. Staff hired through the Underrepresented Student Grant and the Pathways to Achieving a College Education (PACE) Grant, awarded by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, were also included in service delivery. Late registrants' needs were also discussed in meetings of the Student Affairs Division, the Academic Deans, the Enrollment Services directors, and the Counseling and Advising staff. In addition, the progress of late registrant service initiatives was shared with all employees in an All-College meeting.

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

• A report on first term late registrants, to include academic progress and retention rates for the past three years, will be provided to the College Cabinet and other appropriate leadership groups in Fall '06.

• A current PACE advisor will shift part of her duties to support late registrants in Spring '07 through the Bridge to Success retention program.

• Late registrant academic progress will be monitored through two Early Warning System alerts during the students' first term of enrollment.

• Directors of the Multicultural Student Success, Student Life and New Student Transition departments will work together on joint retention initiatives to help first term students, including late registrants, feel more connected and persist at the College.

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

THE TRIAGE APPROACH TO LATE REGISTRANTS:
By extending placement testing, post-testing advising and New Student Orientations, more late registrants were able to receive test placements and appropriate advisement into first term courses—a high percentage of which were developmental courses that were opened as needed. Results of an FY'05 Developmental Education Progress Study showed that students who completed prescribed developmental coursework at MCTC perform as well as college-ready students in course enrollment, persistence and graduation outcomes.

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

Our biggest challenge continues to be staffing support services sufficiently--and having enough courses available--to serve late enrollees at the end of each busy enrollment cycle. We hope that the additional assistance of a PACE advisor in the Bridge to Success retention program will help to address this issue.

Action Project Update: 2007-09-14

Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.
•Placement testing was extended through the first week of each term to accommodate late registrants.
•Academic advisors met with late registrants after testing to explain test placements and provide next steps assistance.
•Deans added sections late in the enrollment cycle to accommodate late registrants. Additional "late start" classes, including a "Strategies for College Success" section, were offered.
•Late registrants who met program eligibility requirements were invited to participate in the "Bridge to Success" program (multiple advising/mentoring contacts during the term) during New Student Orientation.
•Welcome Day" enabled late registrants to find classrooms, buy books and parking cards, and obtain Student IDs the week before each term began.
•"Triage stations" in front of student services offices enabled late registrants to receive last minute advice and assistance during the final week of registration.
•Counselors and advisors staffed computer lab "help" sessions the week after New Student Orientation closed, to help late registrants select courses.
•Instructors provided late registrants with mid-semester academic progress checks through MCTC's computerized Early Warning System.

•Counselors and advisors launched the Academic Success Action Program, providing multiple contacts to students on probation, which included late registrants.

Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.
Late registrant enrollment and retention support was provided through teamwork by an "army" of student services staff (admissions, financial aid, testing, registration, customer service/call center, business services, bookstore, counseling and advising, disability services, and multicultural student services)in collaboration with faculty and academic deans. Staff hired through the Pathways to Achieving a College Education (PACE) Grant, awarded by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, were also included in service delivery to late registrants. Scheduling for each phase of our late registrant support system is coordinated between departments before each enrollment cycle begins. The Dean of Enrollment Services plays a central role in coordinating services and facilitating communication between departments. Debriefing sessions are held at the end of each enrollment cycle to enable Student Affairs Division staff and faculty to discuss improvements needed before the next cycle.

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.
•A new retention support services model will be implemented to provide additional tutoring, career development and community resource support to at-risk students, including many late registrants, who are facing academic and personal challenges.
•An additional advisor will be hired to expand the "Bridge to Success" retention program.
•Late registrant academic progress will be monitored through a midterm Early Warning System alert during students' first term of enrollment.
•Directors of the Multicultural Student Success, Student Life and New Student Transition programs will continue to work together on joint retention initiatives to help late registrants feel more connected and persist at the college.
•A report on first term late registrants, to include academic progress and retention rates, will be provided to the Cabinet and other key leadership groups.
•This action project will extend to provide more proactive retention support to all first-term students. One example: the college's Student Life program will expand to provide more new students with early connections to clubs, organizations, peers, faculty and staff at the college.

Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.
Providing multiple opportunities for late registrants to work with academic advisors late in the enrollment cycle (at placement testing, New Student Orientation, student services triage, computer registration "help" sessions, Welcome Day) is critical. Late registrants must have academic advising support to enroll in appropriate coursework, and must make early connections with staff for continued help during the term.
What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?
Staffing to take care of the needs of late registrants is, and will continue to be, a challenge. Late registrants often require extensive help from staff during the busiest period in each enrollment cycle. With the college experiencing high enrollment increases for the last two years (and for Fall Term '07), it is likely that new deadlines and requirements will be implemented to help staff effectively serve and retain late registrants.