Action Project

Title: Advising Developmental Students
Version: 2

Institution: Illinois Central College
Status: Completed
Submitted: 2010-12-14
Category: 1-Helping Students Learn

Timeline
- Planned project kickoff date: 2009-12-01
- Target completion date: 2012-07-01
- Actual completion date: 2012-06-25

Project Detail

Project Goal
Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer

Students at ICC who have taken at least one developmental class have indicated on successive administrations of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory that they are not satisfied with the degree to which their advisers are knowledgeable about their program requirements. A Six Sigma team assigned to this project will continue to gather and analyze a wide array of advising-related data to develop and monitor recommendations on positively impacting satisfaction with advising among developmental students in order to enhance retention and success levels.

Reasons For Project
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

- The College's annually updated strategic plan, the Blueprint for the Future, designates improvement of academic advising for full- and part-time students as a primary initiative supporting the strategic goal of Student Success.
- Higher rates of student success and retention will lead to higher enrollment in subsequent semesters, resulting in increased tuition revenue. For each student retained, ICC can expect an estimated additional $1,488 in tuition income (assuming 16 ECH per semester).
- In addition to tuition income, ICC receives additional state reimbursement for each student enrolled in developmental courses.
- Good academic advisement will lead to more "word of mouth" referrals by students to their own social networks, increasing positive perceptions of the institution.
Organizational Areas Affected
List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project

Developmental student enrollment and subsequent academic progress has implications for each of ICC's eight academic departments. The project team is led by a Six Sigma Black Belt, and includes faculty members and advisors from a cross-section of the academic departments. The Dean of Student Services - who oversees general advising and counseling, registration, and testing & placement - is a team member, along with the Director of Enrollment Management, the College's New World (Student Support Services) program manager, and a Testing Center Specialist. The student voice is heard via focus groups and surveys.

Key Organizational Process(es)
Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve

The project focuses on the advisement of the developmental student group from the point at which they enroll at ICC until matriculation or transfer.

Project Time Frame Rationale
Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion)

Data was gathered and analyzed during September, October, and November of 2009. Improvement recommendations were made in December of 2009. Improvements implemented for fall 2010 course enrollments included two advisor training retreats, an advisement newsletter, and real-time feedback pilot study assessing student satisfaction with the enrollment process. Case management advisement (Student Success grant funds) will begin in spring 2011 with the hiring of two additional advisors. At-risk developmental learners in PSY 104 classes (n=150) will be included in the case management pilot project. Measures to determine success of the pilot project will be determined by the project team during spring 2011. The action project is targeted for completion in December 2011.

Project Success Monitoring
Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing

Six Sigma projects at ICC routinely report their progress at Gate Reviews at the conclusion of the major phases of the DMAIC process - Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control. Invitations are sent to the entire campus to attend, with pointed invitations given to key process stakeholders. In addition, advisor surveys to measure effectiveness of the advisor retreats and the newsletter content, along with retention/course success rates of participants in the advisement case management pilot group will occur. Lastly, a college-wide feedback mechanism to assess student satisfaction with advisement will occur beginning spring 2011.

Project Outcome Measures
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

This project shall use the following as primary outcome measures:
SSI data regarding needs and requirements of students
- Student satisfaction with advisement survey feedback
- Success rates of case management pilot project of developmental and comparative student groups
- Retention rates of case management pilot project of developmental and comparative student groups

Annual Update

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

In FY 2010(Fall 2009) the action project was chartered as a Six Sigma project. Through the student and stakeholder voicing process, one of the emergent concerns was a lack of understanding among developmental students about the sequence of courses needed to complete their programs of study and the need to have more frequent contact with their advisors. It was also noted that additional advisor training would be beneficial.

Implementation of the following improvements in FY 11 continued to address the needs identified by the team. Progress on improvements in FY 11 include:

- In addition to the continuation of monthly meetings, an advisor training retreat was held in the Fall of 2010 with 42 attendees. A summary report from the monthly advisor meetings is now sent to all advisors to insure advisor access to important information.
- The student survey mechanism developed in FY 10 was transitioned from a phone survey to an email survey to make better use of college resources. The phone survey for Spring 2011 registration provided information that 80% of students were able to achieve their goal in the advising session and 73% responded positively about recommending ICC to others. 78% were satisfied with their overall advisement experience. After the registration period ended, the questions were reviewed and modified to be able to separate students advised in departments from those served in the Career Center. The additional information will help identify good practice areas and begin to share that knowledge with other areas. The survey was administered during the registration period for Fall 2011 and received 39 responses. Due to the low response rate the administration process will again be evaluated. The low number of responses makes it difficult to further analyze the data to drive improvements.
- An advisement newsletter, ‘Counselor Corner and Advisement News,’ continues to be distributed each semester. The newsletter gives advisors updated registration information and deans have also begun distributing the newsletter to all faculty. This allows for better college-wide access to advising information for all students. The newsletter is evaluated based on feedback received from faculty and advisors and content is adjusted to better meet needs.
- The pilot study was initiated to test the effectiveness of an ‘intrusive’ case management advisement model for the most at-risk developmental students. The
intrusive models assigns students to a specific advisor who is actively involved in bi-weekly or monthly meetings with students. The advisor checks on their progress, requests progress reports from all of their course instructors, and develops a program of study for the student. The advisor helps the student build a schedule, identifies problems and challenges, and refers the student to a counselor and/or other resources as needed. The College secured grant funding from the Illinois Community College Board to support the initiative, which allowed ICC to hire two advisors in the summer of 2011 to work with the pilot group. The two advisors began working with the pilot group, which includes 97 students enrolled in ‘Academic Strategies,’ a course designed to give students skills needed for student success. A part-time counselor was also hired to assist students in dealing with personal barriers that may hinder their academic success. Two part time tutors were hired to assist students in areas of reading and math. Students who had low Compass scores are being given additional tutoring sessions to improve their test scores and potentially place into college-level courses. Other key elements of the intrusive advisement program include:

- Assigning a specific advisor to the student
- In-class visits by advisors
- Advisors monitor attendance and student progress
- Some communication with each student every 2 weeks
- Communication with the instructor so that they have knowledge of the student’s advisor

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

College staff involved in the project in the past year included faculty and advisors, particularly new advisors and counselors hired to administer the intrusive advisement model. Developmental instructors, as well as all instructors for the student cohort, have been engaged with the additional contact between advisors and instructor. Institutional research staff have been engaged to assist with the analysis of the pilot.

Next Steps
Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

- Institutional Research and Advising staff will develop the measures and process for evaluation of the pilot.
- Complete the pilot case management advisement plan for most at-risk developmental students, complete an analysis of its effectiveness, and make recommendations for future steps. If the College receives Title III grant funding, develop a plan for a case management pilot for other developmental students (those at a lower level of risk than the previous target group). The plan will include: target pilot group, advisement
protocols and how success will be tracked.

- Establish control measures and mechanisms for all of the changes to determine if they have been effective:

  - Advisor Retreat (Administer a survey at end of each retreat to gather feedback)
  - Counselor Corner and Advisement News (email survey to distribution list to assess effectiveness and identify additional information needed)
  - Advisement Case Management Pilot (retention/course success rates of participants as compared to valid comparison group)
  - College-wide feedback mechanism

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

The control measures and mechanisms described above (next steps) will help determine if the following new practices are effective and helping the College to achieve its goals.

- Advisor retreats and advisor newsletter
- College-wide feedback mechanism to assess student satisfaction with advisement
- Case management advisement systems
- Advisement tutoring and counseling

Project Challenges
What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project? This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback and advice from our review process. Use this question to specify where your blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems are. If you have already fashioned strategies to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help beyond the review process, explain your need(s) and tell us whom to contact and when.

- Funding uncertainty for an ‘intrusive’ advisement process if it is determined to be effective
- Increasing number of developmental students and ability to deliver effective advisement with resource constraints
- Course availability for developmental students

Annual Update

Reason for completion
What is the primary reason for closing this project?

Illinois Central College had received a grant to serve developmental students who were enrolled in PSY 104 - Academic Strategies. The grant is scheduled to end at the end of June; the PSY 104 course is no longer being offered at the college (replaced by a new study skills course). Information/data was gleaned from the project to support going forward with an intrusive-type of advisement for developmental students (and possibly others) as funding is available.
Success Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

- Having a part-time counselor assigned to work with these students was very beneficial in assisting them with personal issues that might have led them to withdrawing from the class.
- Two workshops were offered to students who had low scores on the reading placement tests. Results were as follows: 17 out of 18 participants had significant increases in scores. Workshops are now being offered to other students who are planning to retest and to high school students prior to taking placement tests.
- Advisors met with each class to help students gain a better understanding of placement test scores, program requirements, programs of study, and planning for future semesters.
- Instructors in the classes had additional contacts (advisors and counselors) to intervene with students who were having difficulties.
- Success rates increased and withdrawals decreased:

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Unsuccessful Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?

- Even with intrusive advising and the extra services, student attendance was a problem.
- Advisors attempted to monitor student progress in other courses, but often did not get responses from the instructors.
- Students did not utilize the extra support services even when advisors/instructors recommended and encouraged them to do so.