Action Project

Title: Student Feedback and Complaints
Version: 1
Institution: Illinois Central College
Submitted: 2011-10-27
Status: Completed
Category: 3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2011-01-10
Target completion date: 2013-06-01
Actual completion date: 2013-06-01

Project Detail

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

Illinois Central College has numerous mechanisms to collect student feedback, which includes both satisfaction and dissatisfaction data. A systematic process to collect, analyze and act on the feedback is lacking. This project will be conducted in two phases. The goals for phase 1 are:

1. Gain an understanding of all current channels for feedback and complaints.

2. Determine student needs and requirements for these channels and business needs of the College with respect to data aggregation and analysis to identify improvement opportunities.

3. Identify unmet needs/gaps in student feedback and complaint processes.

The goals for phase 2 are:

1. Improve current feedback channels and mechanisms or develop new ones to better meet student and business needs. These channels and processes are to include consistent service recovery practices across the College.

2. Develop a process to aggregate, analyze and use feedback information for positive improvement and planning.

3. Identify performance measures and establish a review process of the feedback channels and mechanisms.
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

Lack of a systematic process to collect, analyze and act on student feedback may cause the college to miss opportunities for providing an exceptional educational experience to our students. Opportunities or gaps in the process of collecting student feedback include the following:

1. Data is not aggregated college-wide to identify common issues or opportunities for improvement
2. Feedback processes do not all have mechanisms for tracking responses and/or resolution for students
3. Service recovery is limited and not standardized college-wide
4. Data collection/analysis is not standardized college-wide to insure validity and reliability
5. There is a gap of 0.92 between importance and satisfaction on the 2010 SSI for "Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available" (item 67)

Organizational Areas Affected
List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project

Almost every area of the College is affected by this project, as student feedback and complaints is channeled through all service and academic areas. The project will be led by a Six Sigma Black Belt and will include representatives from Student Accounting, Financial Aid, Academic Departments, Marketing, Advising, Web Services, Technology Services, and Institutional Research.

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

A number of processes are already established to gather student feedback. These include web forms on the College website, comment boxes in a number of departments, and opportunities to email questions and comments to specific individuals or departments. These will all be considered in the course of the project, as well as informal processes that are not yet clearly defined (i.e. social media).

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

Data will be collected in September and October of 2011 to understand the current processes and identify additional information that needs to be collected. Phase 2 is scheduled to occur in November and December to collect and analyze the data and identify improvements. Implementation of improvements will likely occur throughout 2012. Performance measures will be established for the improvements, with results expected late in 2012 or in 2013, depending on the nature of the improvements. Consequently, a final assessment of the
project may not be possible until 2013.

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

Progress on Six Sigma/AQIP projects are monitored with a series of gate reviews, which are held at the conclusion of key stages of the DMAIC process. This is typically done at the end of the Define/Measure phase, and then again at the end of Analyze/Improve. A final gate review is sometimes held at the completion of the Control phase to insure that performance goals are met. Gate reviews are public events and open to all college employees. Relevant stakeholders are specifically encouraged to attend and provide input to the team.

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

Although final performance measures for the project will be determined by the team, there are some obvious measures that will be considered. These include:

1. Gap between student importance and satisfaction ratings with feedback channels on the Student Satisfaction Inventory survey (SSI)
2. Time to respond/resolve complaints
3. Quantity and quality of feedback data

Annual Update

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

This project is being conducted in two phases. Phase one concluded in December 2011 and phase two started in January 2012.

Phase One

The team first needed to understand all current sources of informal feedback and complaints. There were 29 feedback channels identified college-wide. The top two ways to receive informal student feedback are through the Technology Services Help Desk and Facebook. Some other examples of channels for students are departments have web forms on ICC’s website, students can go to an academic department or service area, surveys, and some departments have comment boxes available.

Another goal of phase one was to determine student needs and requirements for feedback and complaint channels. The survey was open for three weeks and had a response rate of
19.73%. This response rate is consistent with online survey response rates seen by ICC’s Institutional Research department. The students were randomly selected and the survey was sent to their preferred e-mail address on file. The survey results are:

- 20.0% of students who responded had offered a suggestion or complaint.
- 80.0% of students who responded had not offered a suggestion or complaint.
- 51.7% of students who have not offered a suggestion or complaint indicated they “haven’t had any”.
- 41.4% of students who have not offered a suggestion or complaint indicated they were “not sure where to go or who to talk to”.
- 54.0% students indicated they would like to submit feedback and complaints off-campus.
- 46.0% students indicated they would like to submit feedback and complaints on-campus.
- 83.8% students indicated they would prefer to submit feedback and complaints electronically.
- 16.2% students indicated they would prefer to submit feedback and complaints in writing.

The team also gained information from students via the survey about channels used if the student had voiced complaint and/or suggestion and reason(s) for selecting that channel.

**Phase Two**

The team is working on:

- developing a systematic process to collect and aggregate student informal feedback
- ensuring awareness of feedback channels
- designing a process to respond to feedback
- establishing a Feedback and Complaint process owner to ensure processes are reviewed for effectiveness, improvement, and data is aggregated
- identifying criteria/standards for service recovery and options

**Institution Involvement**

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

Almost every area of the College is affected by this project, as student feedback and complaints is channeled through all service and academic areas. The project is led by a Six Sigma Black Belt and the team composition is cross-functional individuals from the college. The following departments are represented: Agricultural and Industrial
Technology, Business Services, Dean of Student Services, Enrollment Services, Financial Aid, Institutional Research, Marketing – Web Services, Marketing, Math/Science/Engineering, and Student Accounting. The Dean of Student Services oversees Access Services, Advising and Counseling, Athletics, College Transition Program, Enrollment Services, QUEST, Student Activities, Testing, and Transfer Center. The Director of Business Services supervises the Bookstore, Child Care Center, Fitness Center, and Food Services.

Next Steps
Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

Once phase two is completed, the team will hold its second gate review. Gate reviews are public events and open to all college employees. This is where the team reports its progress, recommended improvements, timeline, and measures to know if the improvements are successful. The Feedback and Complaint process owner is responsible for guaranteeing that the improvements are implemented as recommended by the team. Currently, this role is fulfilled by the Dean of Student Services. The team plans on concluding around January 2013 with implementation of improvements likely occurring in mid 2013 (calendar year 2013).

The proposed process for collecting informal student feedback consists of student feedback (suggestion, improvement, and/or complaint) being inputted by ICC employees into a centralized place. Each department will have identified a person responsible for managing the feedback with the student and updating the feedback record. If service recovery is needed, the departmental representative works with a Feedback and Complaint coordinator to determine the appropriate level of service recovery. The Feedback and Complaint coordinator is responsible for aggregating, analyzing, and communicating to department representatives and other stakeholders. Themes and patterns will be identified, root causes will be identified and validated, and improvements will be identified and monitored during data analysis phase. The proposed process is planned to be evaluated annually for improvements.

A pilot of collecting complaints is currently in progress. The pilot results for the first 30 days only produced 12 feedback comments (low volume). With this low volume response rate, the team is exploring implementing another systematic approach to collecting, analyzing and responding to complaint feedback. If this alternative approach is used, the goal is to have the approach in place by the end of the fall 2012 semester.

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

The use of Facebook is valuable for students to communicate and beneficial for the college as a listening method. The institution has found that many students are comfortable sharing feedback, whether complaints, compliments or general suggestions, in a forum where other students have an opportunity to agree (or disagree). As the development of this project continues, ICC will hold the use of Facebook as a major source of feedback collection for
all of its stakeholders.

Additionally, the results of the survey indicated that students preferred communicating with faculty members or other staff when sharing feedback. ICC will continue to encourage all employees to be receptive to feedback from students and stakeholders.

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.

Phase one team began to categorize feedback and complaints by type, validity, and severity. However, due to volume of comments it was a daunting task. For example, Technology Services Help Desk had over 22,000 individual feedback comments to review for a year (2009 data). Further, after attempting to categorize some of the comments it became apparent that most of the comments received were specific to that department.

Phase two team is working to propose a systematic process for feedback and complaints. The team decided to work with academic and service departments by conducting a pilot for the fall 2012 term. The Bookstore, Dean of Student Services, Enrollment Services, Financial Aid, and Math/Science/Engineering departments are participating in the pilot. The team will meet at the mid-point and at the end of the pilot with participants. This will allow the team to gain an understanding of what worked, did not work, and having baseline data to build a better systematic process. Since much of the data to date has been specific to individual departments, the team has found it to be challenging to develop a systematic process that can be used throughout the institution.

Another challenge is having technology services available based on current institutional projects being managed. With goal of implementation in mid 2013 (calendar year 2013), it is the intent to secure adequate resources to move the team forward with the proposed systematic process.

Annual Update

Reason for completion

What is the primary reason for closing this project?

This project has been passed to the process owner for maintenance control. During the spring 2013 semester, a pilot project was completed to determine key factors related to feedback and complaint data. Although the number of submissions was very limited, common themes were identified. Additionally, service recovery processes were also a part of the pilot project; however, there was only one instance where service recovery methods were employed. With the conclusion of the pilot project, the process owner will be able to
make necessary adjustments to the communication methods (ie. identifying “theme buckets” for feedback) while still evaluating the need for a focus on service recovery as instances present themselves.

Success Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

This project has provided the College with the opportunity to take one further step toward giving focus to the customer. It is expected that an easier means to provide ICC with various feedback comments will strengthen the engagement of our students and stakeholders while give the College the information to continually improve processes and its product to meet the needs and expectations of our students and stakeholders.

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

One area of concern that still exists is the number of feedback opportunities during the pilot process. The team must make the assumption that this small number of offerings is representative of the type of feedback that will be received on an ongoing basis. If the process owner determines that this is not the case, it will be incumbent on the process owner to consult with team members to determine if further study is necessary. Additionally, the pilot process did not provide opportunity to generate levels of complaints that warrant service recovery so that an adequate budget line could be developed to monitor the distribution of service recovery items.