AQIP Student Pathways  
Action Project Charter  

Institution, City, State: Mott Community College, Flint, MI  
Project Title: Student Pathways

Context:  
A variety of “student pathway” themes emerged in employee suggestions gathered as part of our AQIP Discussion Days in February of 2012. An anonymous survey was conducted prior to the 2012 Discussion Days; those survey responses and the table reports from the all-employee events were analyzed using Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) tools such as affinity mapping. 37 survey responses and 6 table reports suggested potential Action Project ideas related to students' progress through programs at Mott Community College (MCC). A number of these mentioned case management or structural guidance to help students navigate programs of study and stay "on track" to complete degrees in a timely fashion. Because an effort such as this is an institution-wide issue that cannot be located in a single department, the Executive Cabinet has created an AQIP Action Project to perform a comprehensive review of student pathways through the institution.

Problem and Opportunity:  
The goal of this project is to study and recommend improved and streamlined pathways for student progression through programs of study. Specifically, this Action Project will focus on student entry and exit points, as well as improved intake and student lifecycle/progress management with an emphasis on timely completion of degrees. A special emphasis will be placed on institution-wide strategies for improving and expediting student progress toward successful completion including simplified or streamlined college processes and systems.

Problem A: Lack of Student Progress Toward Declared Credentials

A.1 Students do not follow, or do not have, course and scheduling pathways that foster successful college experiences.

A.2 Degree-seeking students take courses that do not meet requirements for the completion of an associate’s degree or a certificate.

Opportunities:
- Create and provide suggested course sequence plans for individual students by program
- Offer more academic programs that provide one year or shorter certificate options
- Establish and implement pathway accountability models within Advising
- Place students where they best fit according to needs and abilities
- Prevent students from taking “wrong” courses (i.e., do not add to program/degree completion, are not at their skill level, etc.)
- Extend proper program advising to students before and throughout their program

Problem B: Lack Of Information About Existing Re Sequences/Requirements

B.1 We lack sufficient communication and alignment of information regarding student progression through declared programs.

B.2 Departments and divisions do not universally share the details of various processes, policies, and curricular information (i.e., changes in program requirements).

Opportunities:
- Develop and use a mechanism for providing that information to others who maintain the pathways
- Create degree or program guides that provide recommended semester sequences
• Improve and develop better communication by providing updates on policy and process changes within the institution
• Identify individuals in departments who are responsible for the dissemination of any change-related information
• Provide an opportunity for communication to take place when issues arise, and align work among advisement, teaching and support for any student seeking success at MCC
• Create opportunities to improve students’ understanding of MCC’s organizational processes

**Problem C: New Interventions Needed To Keep Students On Track**

*C.1* We lack sufficient information about what students want or need to be supported and helped through the college processes.

*C.2* We lack sufficient interventions/opportunities to help students remain on a pathway to success.

**Opportunities:**

• Evaluate resource allocations/improve enrollment processes from Admissions, Financial Aid, Placement Testing, etc.
• Encourage eligible degree-seeking students to graduate, especially students new to MCC
• Market clear program guides with specific lists of required courses and when they are offered (i.e., during the initial intake process and throughout the program)
• Provide student academic program orientations based on pathways or careers that coordinate with their skills and goals
• Foster mentoring relationships between students and professionals (faculty, advisors and/or industry professionals)
• Create additional opportunities for input/feedback from students related to the various steps in the degree earning process, not just at graduation. (i.e., at regular intervals, on-line options, etc.)
• Move students out of developmental education classes faster by encouraging options that mitigate the developmental sequence
• Analyze competencies for students who are coming from secondary education to provide support for their successful placement and to help them improve areas of deficiency.

**Key Stakeholders:**
Main stakeholders include Academic and Student Services’ areas, as well as students. Additional stakeholders are likely to be identified during the initial phases of the team’s work.

**Project Vision and Objectives:**
The main objective of the project is to create a clearer pathway for students from the beginning of their academic career until they finish their time at MCC (graduation, transfer, course completion). Another objective would be to optimize MCC’s processes. This would give students a stronger sense of expectation through a “road map” of sorts to help them understand their goals and to accurately track their successes.

The main vision of this project is to simplify a student’s academic progress at MCC, improve the “admissions-to-success” process, minimize student frustration, limit obstacles and increase student success.

**Project Sponsors:**
Dr. Amy Fugate, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Scott Jenkins, Vice President for Student & Administrative Services

**Project Scope:**
This project is designed to deliver a streamlined student pathway, including identifying and maintaining a student’s goals, and retaining that student toward the completion of those goals. To drive our retention efforts, we should look at our methods for tracking student activity, improving existing processes and providing additional resources.

This project should include a review of the entire student academic credit and non-credit processes. Credit processes at MCC to be examined should include the areas of recruiting, admissions, registration, placement testing, advising, counseling, financial aid, program coordinators, faculty & staff interaction, and graduation and/or transfer processes. Non-credit processes should include recruiting, admissions, registration, financial aid, and non-credit to credit transition.

This project will not include curriculum or individual course instruction.

**Budget and Timeline:**
While the proposed completion date may change once the Action Project team begins working on its Charter and Business Case plan, it is anticipated that the 2013-2014 Academic Year will be sufficient for the completion of the project.

At this point, no budget is recommended, though possible funding might be requested for travel, as examining the retention and pathway efforts of other colleges or universities could be useful to this project.

**Constraints and Assumptions:**
This project will be constrained by finite financial resources and facilities, finite human resources, a natural resistance to change, a complexity of bureaucratic structures, and extraneous circumstances on the part of students.

We assume that a more educated population leads to better outcomes and a brighter future for the entire community. The actions involved with attaining higher education and career experience lead to a better future for an individual. We also acknowledge that MCC provides pathways that can improve the education or career potential of individuals, and therefore, the future of students and the community at large. Unfortunately, we must also acknowledge that there exist students who may not be able to successfully navigate MCC’s pathways. Therefore, the key assumption that this project is based on is that the current student pathways are imperfect and can be improved upon. It is paramount that not only the AQIP Team and the Executive Cabinet recognizes this assumption, but also the entire institution.

**Critical Success Factors and Risks:**
To ensure success of this AQIP project, resources from multiple areas of the college must be available and willing to be invested into the goal of improving student pathways throughout the institution. Student completion rates affect all areas of the college, and improving them is critical for our continued success. Success of this project will require the following to be in place:

- Consistent campus-wide communication to staff, students, and faculty regarding the current problem and the proposed solution(s)
- Campus-wide commitment of staff, students, and faculty to assemble and assess progress and plan of action regarding proposed solution(s)
- A clear and concise plan to systematically implement proposed solution(s)
- A institutional plan to provide students with pathway success tracks resulting from proposed solution(s)
- Reinforcement of student plan during each interaction with faculty and support services
- Cross-discipline teams, comprised of stakeholders, and empowered to implement the solution(s)
- Buy-in from students recognizing that they are active participants in the creation and completion of their pathway
- Buy-in from staff, faculty, program coordinators, advising, etc. that the solution(s) proposed will improve successful navigation and completion of a given student’s pathway
- Allocation of reasonable budgetary funds, if necessary, to implement solution(s)
• Partnerships between the administration and the union due to potential changes in an employee’s job description and duties
• Data collection and an associated measurable metric to determine the effectiveness of the implemented solution(s)
• Incorporate a “lessons learned” process to dynamically modify the solution(s) based on feedback from stakeholders

There are obvious pitfalls that can befuddle any project; however, there are some concerns specific to this issue that must be monitored and addressed if necessary. These concerns include:
• Lack of acceptance by the stakeholders that there is an issue with student pathways
• Lack of understanding or buy-in to the proposed solution(s)
• Lack of budgetary funds to implement proposed solution(s)
• Inconclusive data to help support proposed solution(s)

Implementing, communicating, and monitoring the process will help ensure the success of this project.

**Approach and Organization:**
The Student Pathways Action Team will meet once a month during the fall and winter semesters with assignments over the summer semester. At team meetings, a variety of continuous improvement tools will be used to explore the topic.

The team should employ the following strategies:
• Hold regular meeting times and locations
• Utilize technology and electronic communication to ensure accurate information distribution
• Continue to define/reinforce the roles of both the committee and the individuals on the committee
• Allow sufficient meeting time to accomplish the task(s) of each meeting
• Allow sub groups/committee’s to meet outside the main group and then report their progress/findings
• Publish agenda prior to the meeting
• Maintain co-chairs, administrative structure, and current committee members

**Team roles and responsibilities:**
• Project Sponsors: Amy Fugate, Scott Jenkins
• The AQIP Liaison: Steve Robinson and Sherry Rosenberger
• The project Co-chairs: Lisa Novak, Tom Saelens
• The Project team members: Gail Bowman, Regina Broomfield, Johanna Brown, Tammy Cummings, Lisa Gonzalez-Gronauer, Philip Greenfield, Teri Hill, Josh Illian, Al Perry, Bob Rentschler, Erin Shirey, and Jason Slade.