AQIP Student Pathways  
Action Project Charter

Institution, City, State: Mott Community College, Flint, MI

Project Title: Student Pathways

Context:
- A summary description of the project's origins and purpose,
- What is the origin/history of the project?
- How was this project identified?

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 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 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 EC has created an AQIP Action Project to perform a comprehensive review of student "pathways" through the institution.

Problem and Opportunity: Johanna & Regina

A clear problem statement:
- what problem are we trying to solve?
- what opportunity are we trying to leverage?

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.

************************************************** (Note: Retained for reference.)
Dot prioritization results from 4/18/13 meeting (based on brainstorming from 2/21/13 meeting):
6  Move students out of developmental ed classes faster (changes in placement levels and mandatory placement)
5  Streamlining enrollment process from Admissions, Placement Testing, to Registration.
5  Suggested course plans for programs (e.g., First semester schedule will be ENGL-101, MATH-121, etc.)
4  2/3’s Rule. Revise? Why?
4  Better communication
4  Degree or program guides that provide recommended semester sequences
3  Mitigating the developmental sequence
3  Communication: Updates on policy; Process changes within the institution
3  Class rotation guidelines that indicated when and how often classes will be held: Fall/Winter/Spring/Summer
3  More academic programs that provide 1-year or shorter certificate options – Success Builds Success
2  Advising
2  Are we placing students where they best fit?
2  How do we prevent students from taking “wrong” courses, i.e. do not add to program/degree completion; are not at their skill level; are only selected to help them “be a student” not succeed as a student?
2  Students being in proper program (fits their needs and abilities) and getting proper assistance/guidance/advising once in program
2  Getting those eligible to graduate to graduate
2  Continue to streamline admissions process
2  Program guides with specific list of when courses are offered
1  Communication with students during the initial intake process
1  Getting first time students to graduate
1  Student academic orientations based on pathways or careers
1  Opportunities for choosing the correct on-ramp for a student: *Identification of their skills; *Identification of their goals; *Identification of whether there is a matching path
1  Surveying our students may be a good opportunity to find out why they’re completely withdrawing from our institution
1  An opportunity for communication to take place when “lynch pin” actions are modified so all are synchronous in working, advising, teaching and supporting a student seeking success.
1  Improve students’ understanding of organizational processes
1  Run degree audit every semester

1. Problem: Students spend time and money taking developmental courses and do not succeed in achieving the completion of an associate’s degree or a certificate.
Opportunities:
6 Move students out of developmental ed classes faster (changes in placement levels and mandatory placement)
3 Mitigate the developmental sequence

Analyze competencies for students who are coming from K – 12 districts to provide support for their successful placement and to help them improve areas of deficiency.

2. Problem: Mott’s staff spend time/money/resources and some potential students do not enroll in Mott classes.

5 Streamline enrollment process from Admissions, Financial Aid, Placement Testing, to Registration.
2 Continue to streamline admissions process

Create a process for reaching this specific population who express interest but who do not enroll for classes to secure information and potentially more enrollees.

3. Problem: Students spend time and money taking courses that do not meet course requirements for the completion of an associate’s degree or a certificate.

Opportunities:
5 Create/provide suggested course plans for programs (e.g., First semester schedule will be ENGL-101, MATH-121 (021), etc.)

4 Describe a process for offering or not offering specific courses -2/3’s Rule. Revise? Why?

3 Provide class rotation guidelines that indicated when and how often classes will be held: Fall/Winter/ Spring/Summer
3 Offer more academic programs that provide 1-year or shorter certificate options – Success Builds Success

4. Problem: Departments and Divisions need to share universally the details of various processes, policies, and curricular information i.e. changes in program requirements. All entities need to develop and use a mechanism for providing that information to others who maintain the pathways.

Opportunities:
4 Develop better communication
4 Create degree or program guides that provide recommended semester sequences
3 Improve Communication: Provide updates on policy; Process changes within the institution
Identify individuals in departments who are responsible for the dissemination of any change-related information.

5. **Problem:** Students need to follow course pathways and scheduling pathways that foster successful college experiences

**Opportunities:**
- Establish and implement accountability models within Advising
- Place students where they best fit
- Prevent students from taking “wrong” courses, i.e. do not add to program/degree completion; are not at their skill level; are only selected to help them “be a student” not succeed as a student?
- Support students being in proper program (fits their needs and abilities) and getting proper assistance/guidance/advising once in program

6. **Problem:** Students need timely interventions/opportunities to help remain on a pathway to success

**Opportunities:**
- Get those students who are eligible to graduate to graduate
- Get the first time students to graduate
- Provide Program Guides with specific list of when courses are offered
- Provide communication with students during the initial intake process
- Provide Student Academic Orientations based on pathways or careers
- Provide opportunities for choosing the correct on-ramp for a student: *Identification of their skills; *Identification of their goals; *Identification of whether there is a matching path
- Run degree audit every semester

Students make connections with real people who continue to monitor and foster their success.

7. **Problem:** Mott needs additional information about how students want/need to be supported or helped through the college processes

**Opportunities:**
- Survey Mott’s students; this can provide a good opportunity to find out why they’re completely withdrawing from our institution

Coordinate information collected from student surveys with that collected and maintained through Institutional Research. Use this to make data-driven decisions.
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.)

8. Problem: Overall communication needs to be improved.

Opportunities:

1. Provide an opportunity for communication to take place when “lynch pin” (critical) actions are modified so all are synchronous in working, advising, teaching and supporting any student seeking success at Mott.
2. Create opportunities to improve students’ understanding of Mott’s organizational processes.

Key Stakeholders: Lisa M & Tom

Important groups with an interest (slake) in the project.
- Who is most affected by the project?
- What are the risks/benefits to them?
- Who can most affect the project?

How will students be affected? What are the risks/benefits to them?

A comprehensive review of student pathways toward degrees involves almost every area of the college. For this reason, a broad representation of Academic Affairs and Student Services employees have been invited to serve on the team. The team’s co-chairs are Lisa Murawa, a full-time faculty member in the Business Division, and Thomas Saelens, Site Director of Northern Tier Center. Team members include: 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.

Nearly every Academic Affairs and Student Services process that impacts students is likely to be impacted by the analysis of this Action Project team. In particular, it is expected that the Action Project will examine the "pathway" taken by students from admission through graduation with a specific focus on eliminating barriers or trouble points in the process where students stop or drop out.

Among the areas and units affected by the project are:
- Academic Divisions
- Admissions
- Advising
- Attendance reporting
- Counseling and Student Development
- Degree Audit
● Institutional Research
● Information Technology Services
● Marketing
● Placement
● Program Coordinators and structure
● Records and Registration
● Retention alert

Other impacted areas are likely to be identified during the initial phases of the team's work.

Project Vision and Objectives: Lisa G-G & Philip

A 25-30 word summary of objectives for communicating with stakeholders

● How will we be different when project is completed?
  - We will be retaining more students, streamlining our admissions/registration processes (limiting the amount of students sent to various places, confusion, etc.), and giving students a stronger sense of expectation through a “road map” of sorts to help them understand their goals and to help us more accurately track their successes.

● What are the objectives of the project?
  - The main objective of the project is to create a clearer pathway for students from the beginning of their journey until they finish their journey with MCC (graduation, transfer, course completion). Another objective would be to streamline our processes making it easier for students to attain their goals.

● How do these fit with the institution’s objectives?
  - These objectives fit perfectly with the institution’s objectives because it’s in line with MCC’s Mission Statement.

● What are the project’s benefits?
  - There are many benefits to the project. The main benefit is making the students journey here at MCC more simple for them to accomplish. Another benefit would be in making improvements to the “Admissions-to-Graduation” journey so students won’t get frustrated with the system and want to give up because it’s too difficult or because they feel like there are too many obstacles to overcome. At last, this process will help us attain better data on student success.

● How will we know the project has been accomplished?
  - We will know this project is accomplished once our graduation rates begin to arise, and once we begin receiving better data on graduation and other rates of success. Anecdotally, we will also know this project is accomplished once we hear less complaining from our students, and more success stories instead of “horror” stories from our students, though a more formal survey of students could also give us stronger data of its success.
Project Sponsors:
Dr. Amy Fugate, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scott Jenkins, Vice President for Student & Administrative Services

Project Scope: Erin & Teri
What the project includes - and what it specifically excludes.
- What is the project designed to deliver?
- What is to be included in the project?
- What is excluded? (Boundaries)

AQIP- Student Pathways Project Scope:

Project Scope: Erin & Teri
What the project includes - and what it specifically excludes.
- What is the project designed to deliver?
- What is to be included in the project?
- What is excluded? (Boundaries)

1. What is the project designed to deliver?
   a. Student progression
      i. Student Success (Whatever that may be for individual student)
      ii. Student Persistence
      iii. Student attrition –when & why
      iv. Student Retention
      v. Student Graduation
   b. Analysis of what drives our retention and attrition
   c. Track student activity- where are the glitches?
   d. Answers
      i. How to improve our processes (hone in on those working and fix those that are not)
      ii. Provide the resources our students need—esp. those resources that would improve retention

2. What is to be included in the project?
   a. Review of the entire student credit life cycle process at Mott with areas including:
      i. Recruiting, registration, placement testing, advising, counseling, financial aid, program coordinators, faculty & staff interaction, graduation or transfer process.
      ii. This does not include actual course instruction but overall process.
   1. Recruiting—Review and suggestions for improvement:
      a. How do we get students to Mott
      b. Why are students not coming?
c. What our communication process is

2. Registration—Review and suggestions for improvement
   a. Students in proper program?
   b. MAINTAINING PROGRAM CODES
   c. Making courses available for them to take in a timely manner
   d. Registration for classes
      i. How do we make this easy for students?
   e. Convenient for students
   f. Course planning
   g. PROGRAM CODES
   h. Communication process

3. Placement Testing:
   a. Testing center
   b. Placement advising

4. Advising
   a. Making sure students are in correct program for abilities, etc. (Not setting students up for failure).
   b. Making sure program code reflects program(s) of study
   c. Proper student goal:
      i. Degree
      ii. Transfer
      iii. Fun

5. Counseling
   a. Support system in place for students
   b. Transportation
   c. Child care
   d. A listening ear

6. Financial Aid
   a. Education/understanding the process/ramifications of aid
   b. Applying
   c. Getting $
   d. Pay back
   e. Ramifications of not paying back/deferring
   f. Pell:
      i. Understanding Pell regulations
      ii. After so many course attempts no longer pays
      iii. What it covers/doesn’t

7. Program coordinators
   a. Making sure students have proper program codes on record
b. Keeping programs at an achievable yet challenging level for students
c. Program specific needs
d. Cost
e. Advising
f. Time commitment

8. Faculty Interaction
   a. Active role in getting students to success
   b. Are they in the right class for success?
   c. Right to fail?

9. Staff Interaction
   a. Anyone on campus that is a Mott employee that comes in contact with a student

10. Graduation
    a. Getting students to point of graduation (if that’s their goal)
    b. Actually conferring degree instead of student disappearing before applying for graduation
    c. Why are they not applying for graduation???

11. Transfer process
    a. If student goal, successful transfer
    b. Tracking transfers and transfer goals

    b. Student non-credit life cycle
    c. Cross over between non-credit and credit?

3. Boundaries
   a. Individual course instruction
   b. External factors beyond Mott’s control:
      i. Work schedules
      ii. Student experience

Budget and Timeline:

- How much the project will cost end how long it will take.
- What are the project's financial costs and benefits?
- What is the project's budget?
- What is the project's timeline? (Milestones?)

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 Winter 2013 semester and the following 2013-2014 Academic Year will be sufficient for the completion of the project. Some MCC Action Project teams have met during the Spring and Summer semesters, but this team would likely not meet between May and August in 2013.
Constraints and Assumptions:  Al & Josh

What freedom and restrictions limit the project and team.
- What are limitations placed on the project team’s actions, strategies, and decisions?
- Upon what key assumptions is the project based?

What are limitations placed on the project team’s actions, strategies, and decisions?
1. Finite Financial Resources – Clearly, many of the most effective ideas that could increase the efficiency of the student pathways would take significant capital investment. For example, if every student was giving a personal laptop the institution may have a significantly higher success rate. Or if the student to teacher ratio was 1:1, nearly every student could pass every class. However, everyone realizes that these are highly improbable solutions to the problem, given the extreme cost.
2. Finite Manpower – Many of the potential actions, strategies and decisions that could be implemented may include the hiring of additional personnel, or may simply increase the workload for the current employees. The augmentation of workloads is another limitation that the project group must face.
3. The Resistance to Change – Another limitation that will have to be faced is the resistance to change from faculty and staff. If the action plan developed calls for significant alterations to the current way we do business, then assuredly we can assume that there would be significant resistance to implementation. Institutional buy-in is critical for any action, strategy, or decision to work. The resistance to change can also come in the form of students’ reluctance to comply. Much like anyone else, students can become frustrated by changes to their routines.
4. Extraneous Circumstances – No matter how efficient and effective we make the enrollment to graduation process, there are an infinite amount of variables that we cannot control as an institution that may cause students to drop out, i.e. pregnancies, deaths, injuries, etc.
5. Legitimate Matriculation – The goal is to insure that through the process we do not lose any students; however, from time to time there are going to be a handful of students who lack the ability to succeed in higher education. Unlike four year institutions’ student pathway committees, our open enrollment policy will always permit a portion of students that will be failures to launch.
6. The Complexity of the Bureaucratic Structure – For better or worse, higher education is a highly stratified institution. And due to this complexity, there are significant amounts of collaboration and information sharing that must take place to insure that any of the strategies implemented are successful.

Upon what key assumptions is the project based?
1. A more educated population leads to better outcomes and a brighter future for the entire community.
2. The actions involved with attaining higher education and career experience lead to a better future for an individual.
3. Mott provides pathways that can improve the education or career potential of individuals, and therefore, the future of students and the community at large.
4. There exist students that are not able to find the desired amount of educational/career success by going through Mott’s pathways.
5. Among the students who do not find the desired success exist students who could have found their success if the pathways were somehow structured differently.
6. 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 Action Taskforce recognize and embrace this assumption, but also that the entire institution buy into this assumption. Though many will balk at the ability to improve the processes given the aforementioned limitations, this team needs to become engulfed with the notion that regardless of the circumstances that are out of our control there are many variables that we can experiment with and more importantly should experiment with to increase the efficiency of the student pathways.

Critical Success Factors and Risks: Tammy & Jason

Necessary conditions and pitfalls.

- What needs to be in place for this project to succeed?
- What could go wrong to threaten success of this project?

To ensure success of this AQIP project, resources from multiple areas of the college must be available and willing to invest 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 solutions(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 solutions(s)
- Reinforcement of student plan during each interaction with faculty and support services
- Cross-discipline teams, comprised of stakeholders, 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 if the solution(s) being implemented is effective
· Incorporate a “lessons learned” process to dynamically modify the solution based on feedback from stakeholders

Threatening the success of this project are a number of issues. 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:

· A lack of acceptance by the stakeholders that there is an issue with student pathways
· A lack of understanding or buy-in to the proposed solution
· Insufficient time to gauge the success of the project
· 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: Gail & Bob**

The how-to ingredients needed to carry out the project.

- What strategy, tools, and techniques will the team employ?
- What roles and responsibilities have been assigned?

The Student Pathways 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.

This team is expected to begin at Step 2 of the 7-Step CQI process to describe the current pathways MCC students take toward completion of degrees. A great many quality tools are designed to be helpful with the kind of analysis required for changing and improving the process flow under consideration by the Action Project team.

AQIP
Approach and Organization: Gail and Bob
The how-to ingredients needed to carry out the project:

Step 2 of The CQI process: Define the current situation.

1. What strategy, tools and techniques will the team employ?

The team should employ the strategy(s) of: regular meeting times, and locations, utilize technology and electronic communication to insure 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 the co-chairs, the administrative structure and the current committee members.

2. What roles and responsibilities have been assigned?

Project Sponsors: Amy Fugate, Scott Jenkins
The AQIP Liaison: Kathy Irwin
The project Co-chairs: Lisa Murawa, 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.

The project team has met, and the project goal has been established.
The project team is currently investigating step two of the 7 step CQI Process.