The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Lake Erie College

Project Details

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1: Project Goal
A: Provide a clear set of definitions of varied data fields used for communications. This would include policy regarding "snapshot" dates, types of data to be included, specific field definition, and access

2: Reasons For Project
A: The desire to present clear and official data that is consistent across all reports and communications

3: Organizational Areas Affected
A: Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Athletics, Student and Academic Affairs

4: Key Organizational Process(es)
A: All reporting by Registrar, outside survey completion / distribution, retention and enrollment data, and increased transparency of data sharing

5: Project Time Frame Rationale
A: The Registrar will lead this project and must work with all other constituent offices across campus. There will be an extensive set of reports to be reviewed and meetings with varied stakeholders

6: Project Success Monitoring
A: Monthly feedback meetings

7: Project Outcome Measures
A: The development of a common set of data fields published and used for all reporting campus-wide

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status
A: A new Institutional Research Specialist has been hired. We have established a set of standard reports, common terminology, and standard reporting dates or snapshots. We now have a new "Fact Sheet" and a set of reports that will serve as a "Fact Book" which can be used by faculty and staff (for planning, program review data collection, PR, etc.). We also have established a set of Benchmark Schools (Peers) based on IPEDS data, Carnegie Classifications, and other common points of comparison. In addition to reporting some of the items noted in the Common Data Set and common "Fact Sheet" facts, our new campus-specific reports include
2: Institution Involvement

A: The Registrar and IR Specialist met with each division to establish a list of reports that were needed in their planning process. Both Cabinet and Director-level meetings addressed common terminology and specific data that would be reported. All reports are also shared with the Academic Deans. Follow up meetings to clarify definitions and specific additions to existing reports were scheduled each semester.

3: Next Steps

A: All reports will now be housed on the IR page (in development as part of a new Action Project) of our WEB site. Some will be password protected. Definitions and manner of pulling the data for all reporting will also be noted.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The development of a "common definition" key appeared to be very helpful. Plans for easier access to reports has also been appreciated. Finally, the combination of the Assessment Action Project and the Common Data Action Project prompted work on a new Action Project designed to guide the development of a new IR/Assessment/Accreditation WEB page to assist in the management of varied forms, reports, and data used for such purposes.

5: Project Challenges

A: Although there has been debate regarding definitions and terminology on campus, use of IPEDS, the Common Data Set, and other standard sources proved helpful in creating our own standards. It was also most useful to create a set of comparison peers for benchmarking purposes.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The College has made strong progress in developing and professionalizing its institutional research capacity. The commitment to better data is evidenced by the hiring of an Institutional Research Specialist. The achievements described will support operations, planning, and continuous improvement (Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations, Category 5, Leading and Communicating, and Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness). The College is also to be congratulated for working to make these data readily and widely available in a timely manner, thereby meeting the needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Appropriate stakeholders were engaged during this process and during follow up meetings in order to establish and refine the system. The College may want to consider if continued follow up meetings could be used to check for changing data needs and to gather feedback on how well the system is meeting data needs. Such a process could ensure that the system remains current. (Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations, and Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness)
### Next Steps

A: The College has effectively engaged stakeholders in defining terms and identifying reports and timelines. Creating a follow-up project (the IR webpage) should consolidate and further develop the gains made by the original action project. Using password protection to limit access to some data will allow the College to use this system to share sensitive data, or data that needs to be understood in a particular context, thus providing "one-stop shopping" for data needs.

### Resulting Effective Practices

A: The College has successfully established its IR function by identifying the organization's data needs and using processes to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders. There has been a strong focus on balancing data needs with data gathering, analyzing, and reporting resources. Continuing to develop and refine the functions of the IR office should result in strong support of continuous improvement, decision-making, and planning processes across the institution.

### Project Challenges

A: The debate described can be healthy—particularly when handled in light of national/outside standards and models—and should result in an IR function that meets the unique needs of the organization. The College may want to consider how they might recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of this project so as to also support next steps (i.e., the development of the IR webpage).

### Project Outcome

#### Reason for completion

A: Most of the items noted in the original goal have been met and we now have both an IR professional assisting with related processes, and a plan to gather, analyse, and manage/share data in a more systematic way.

#### Success Factors

A: Stakeholders now have access to a set of useful reports (based on their identified needs) which are produced and distributed during specific times throughout the year. We are continuing to identify data needs that will help to inform program review, retention and recruitment, and other planning processes in a more systematic and transparent manner.

#### Unsuccessful Factors

A: Although we met with each group of stakeholders to gather specific data needs for improved operation and decision making, we continue to identify additional reporting needs that were missed in the first round of identification activities. The fact that we now have a process in place makes it easier to add items to our priority list. However, in hindsight, we might have benefited from a different "needs assessment" process.