

[<- Back to DASHBOARD](#)

Colorado Mountain College: Creating an Environment that Promotes Student Engagement and Success.

PROJECT

UPDATE

REVIEW

REVIEWED



VERSION 2.0

Create a new version
of this Action
Project.

VERSIONS

[VERSION 2.0](#)

[VERSION 1.0](#)

Project Details

Title Creating an Environment that Promotes Student Engagement and Success.		Status REVIEWED
Category 1-Helping Students Learn		Updated 09-29-2011
Timeline		Reviewed 10-16-2011
Planned Project Kickoff 05-01-2010		Created 03-26-2010
Target Completion 06-30-2012		Last Modified 10-16-2011

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The focus on improving the student experience in three dimensions continues to gain momentum at Colorado Mountain College. Over the past year-and-a-half, CMC’s comprehensive assessment design “Assessing the Student Experience in 3-D” has been shared with Faculty Senate, Student Affairs Council, Instructional Leadership Team, College Leadership Team and various other constituencies throughout the district. This model presents the dimension of student engagement within the context of student learning and success. Efforts and initiatives aimed at supporting first year students such as early registration/advising sessions, orientations, early alert and First Year Experience Programs are having a positive impact. A brief examination of key performance indicators on both the Institutional Balanced Scorecard and its accompanying drill down on the Student Progress Report reveals improvements on indicators of student success. Fall-to-fall retention rates for both full-time and part-time students improved by 5%. Average hours attempted increased this past year with a corresponding 6% gain in the ratio of hours attempted to hours completed over the previous year. Successful course completion rates improved from 79.9% to 80.7%.

The Common Reader initiative continues to create college wide opportunities for student engagement in which all campuses participate. This past year’s Common Reader was “Double Take” by M. Connolly and over 46% of those who participated reported having talked with 10 or more people about the book. Another 44% of the participants engaged in a conversation with at least one other person. Seventy-six percent of the faculty surveyed stated that they utilized the book in their course and 40% of the college’s student affairs staff utilized it in their programming.

Recommendations from the first iteration of the learning community

initiative aimed at improving student success in barrier courses were successfully implemented with impressive results. Last year, 76.9% of the students in the College Algebra learning community successfully completed the course compared to a success rate of 41.7% in the first iteration. This is a 13.5% higher success rate than the control group and the second highest passage rate of all sections taught by the lead instructor.

Additional accomplishments from the past year include:

- The results of the 2010-11 College Wide Balanced Score Card and Student Progress Report have been analyzed and used to set targets for the 2011-12 key performance indicators
- The addition of two performance indicators are being defined and considered for inclusion as future KPIs:

a) successful transition to credit courses upon completion of developmental course sequence

b) ratio of hours attempted to hours earned in barrier courses

- The development and implementation of processes for accommodating students in the college's newly approved bachelor's degrees
- The acquisition of additional Trio funding
- The hiring of a Career Services Specialist to help serve students' job related needs

This project has been fully led by the Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT), now in its second year. Based on reviewer input from last year's annual report, our efforts were scaled back a bit to focus on a few assessment projects already underway. The commitment is to see these projects through every phase of the continuous improvement cycle and utilize results in further iterations.

Student data from both the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), conducted bi-annually, were carefully analyzed by SALT in the beginning of the 2010-11 academic year for practical implications to improve programs aimed at promoting student success. One item of particular interest was the disparity between student awareness and practice. For example, students reported high levels of awareness of learning labs but low levels of usage during the first three weeks of class. Alternately, students reported both high levels of awareness and usage of computer labs. This analysis, along with a full program review of orientation, has led to a number of changes that were implemented and currently underway. Assessment plans for orientation have been developed and will be conducted and analyzed soon for the current academic year. The efforts to improve student support and student success were reflected in the overall student satisfaction (based on the CCSSE) which went from 84.3% during 2008-09 to 86.6% during 2009-10 to 88.4% during 2010-11. CCSSE and SENSE data were presented at faculty in-services and to various leadership teams. CMC has shown steady improvement on each of the five benchmarks over the 3 CCSSE administrations. Significant improvements in engagement were noted in CMC's full-time student population compared to that of cohort colleges. Top 10% performance levels were also presented for both measures and ventured as an aspirational goal for our college in order to support the

college's vision to become the "first choice" for education within its communities. The CCSSE will be next administered in spring 2012; the SENSE during fall 2012. We will also add relevant assessment instrument for our bachelor's students as needed e.g. NSSE.

R: The CMC Action Project on student engagement and student success is clearly reflective of Category 1 (Helping Students Learn), but also reflective of Category 7 (Measuring Effectiveness); and Category 8 (Continuous Improvement). The plan is comprehensive, realistic, appropriate, measurable, reflective, and iterative. The information gathered is implemented back into the overall process and plan and clear benchmarks toward progress are provided. Since this type of work is always continuous, it might be helpful to set a target goal for the measures of success identified in this plan. Progress is measured from point-to-point in time, but the actual target that CMC is trying to "hit" is not as evident.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The Student Affairs Leadership Team with representation from each campus serves as the hub and accountability center for student affairs programs college wide. Various teams are assembled by SALT to address planning for improvement for specific programs (i.e. orientation, first year seminar, residence hall programming, early alert/intervention, etc.) These teams are trained in both continuous improvement and assessment. Teams are assembled regularly to design and/or improve and implement program assessments. The goal is to ensure that ultimately all programs have relevant assessment plans that occur at regular cycles. Additionally, faculty members teaching in the learning community format are now serving as trainers for other faculty to help expand the learning community/barrier course initiative to additional campus locations.

R: This Action Project clearly reflects broad-based inclusion of CMC which is recognized in the literature as critical to student success. Although the primary group working on this project is SALT, it is not clear if other units that are critical to student success are involved in the project (i.e., financial aid, registrar, academic advising, and career management). Also, it is great to see faculty serving as trainers of other faculty-- especially since faculty culture is predicated and sustained via a peer-review/peer-respected process. It might be helpful to identify (or at least demonstrate consideration of) what faculty are helping each other learn, how are their efforts rewarded in the promotion & tenure process, and how is their "effectiveness" measured as faculty trainers. This may be secondary to the overall work that is proposed, but could certainly strength the "lessons learned" section and/or serve as a marketing tool to enlist more faculty if needed.

3: Next Steps

A: First:

- Complete an inventory of all co-curricular programs college wide

- Determine the status of assessment activities associated with each program
- Map each program to relevant SLOs, engagement benchmarks and performance indicators i.e. make even better use of CCSSE & SENSE data to engraft improvements in student services
- Create a timeline for all programs not currently doing assessment to initiate plans
- Create master schedule for regularly assessing all programs and services
- Expand the learning communities initiative
- Participate in seeking grants funding such as Title III that would help further strengthen student support services

Second:

- Launch an initiative specifically aimed at improving the engagement levels of residential students and help improve residence hall return rates

Third:

- Design an “early connections” campaign to capitalize on high benchmark score on SENSE in this area. This campaign will be deployed for fall 2012 prior to next the SENSE administration.

R: The next steps for the project appear to be on target, appropriate, and reflective of a comprehensive continuous improvement assessment plan that informs action and focused strategy. To strengthen or ensure an enhanced focus of the work would be to set timelines as part of the benchmarks already indicated. For example, "create a master schedule for regularly assessing all programs and services" would include a timeline as to when this will be done, who will ensure it's done, and how will it be communicated, accepted, and followed. These details may already exist in CMC's plan, but are worth mentioning at this progressive stage of the project.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:**
- Establishing a comprehensive inventory of all student programs and assessment status of each
 - Staying with any student success project through its third iteration
 - Utilizing college wide teams to develop and implement assessments of engagement and student success
 - Keeping common data sets in front of student affairs leaders to

create vision and focus

R: These effective practices reflect timeliness, realistic expectations, and focused strategy resultant of the data/information from SENSE and CCSSE. One additional suggestion would be to include the faculty in the last bullet "keeping common data sets in front of 'faculty' to support vision and create shared-focus." Given that CMC has successfully included faculty in the project (which is highly commended), there would be a need to keep them engaged in the findings to continuously and consistently receive their support.

5: Project Challenges

A:

In April, 2011, CMC received approval from HLC to offer bachelor's degrees. Compiling documentation for that change request, preparing for the team visit and developing the necessary infrastructure to offer four year degrees for the first time was an immense undertaking. These four-year degrees were offered during fall semester 2011. Consequently, progress on this AQIP project was somewhat impacted because of the human resources needed to develop the framework and processes for this new cohort of students. The project will, however, regain its momentum this year and incorporate the engagement of this new student population. A limited administration of NSSE is under consideration to address the engagement level of bachelor degree seekers. Furthermore, a new AQIP project dedicated to a bachelor degree post- implementation review will be added to our assessment efforts as we move forward for the coming year.

R: This challenge is common and typical when Colleges are truly committed to their students, and it is commendable that CMC recognizes how the resources and focus shifted from the AQIP Action Project to the pressing issue of obtaining the approval for a bachelor's degree program. For future considerations, it might be helpful to have sub-teams/groups that work on various projects led by one member of the larger student engagement and student success "team." In addition, including students in the work could allow for flexibility and release of certain work for SALT and other staff/administrators/faculty involved in the efforts. Finally, this information can also help CMC to determine priorities, redistribute human resources, and include others in a way that would have been helpful in being able to host HLC for the bachelor's degree program and continue focused small steps in progressing through the Action Project.