

Assessment and Placement Action Project Update

September 11, 2009

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project:

The Assessment and Placement Action Team met regularly during 2008-09. Subcommittees continued to focus on specific areas, reporting back to the team for revisions and approval.

Accomplishments include:

- Worked with Admissions to implement enforcement of COMPASS testing by the 13th credit hour
- Revised COMPASS cut scores based on state standards
- Notified students of changes in college policy via multiple e-mails and various campus media including the credit schedule, catalog, and campus-wide posters
- Implemented a plan for group COMPASS testing with an opportunity for students to receive immediate feedback from counseling
- Refined a suggested course schedule for students with low scores in reading and writing
- Reviewed additional technology assessment tools
- Established a charge and membership for a Technology Assessment Task Force to explore the issues related to and the best options for assessment of basic technology skills expected for matriculation
- Held a faculty forum during Reading Days to obtain feedback on the team's recommendations related to proposed policy changes for the developmental reading program, changing the requirement related to when students must take the COMPASS test, and issues related to technology assessment
- Math faculty reviewed and evaluated various national math tests

The action team carefully considered the feedback from the 2008 action team update. The feedback suggested that the team had undertaken a massive project and should consider dividing the work into smaller initiatives. The group agreed that this approach would be helpful, resulting in creation of the Technology Assessment Task Force. This group will convene in fall 2009.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action project:

Faculty are appointed to committees through the collective bargaining unit. The majority of faculty on the action team remained the same. The action team provided the opportunity for full faculty involvement through the forum that was held during Reading Days. The discussion was quite active. Faculty openly discussed the issues, and, in general, strongly supported the recommendations.

The Technology Assessment Task Force also involves additional faculty. Although the task force includes individuals who have participated in the Assessment and Placement or Technology Action Teams, there are also new members from various disciplines.

The group COMPASS testing involved staff from Admissions/Registration, Enrollment Services and Campus Life, the Learning Center, and Counseling. The staff proctored the test and the counselors advised students about test results.

The English faculty provided extensive consultation regarding the reading and writing schedule and the reading placement policy. The faculty wrote the recommendation which was approved by the action team and AQIP Steering Committee.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project:

The President and Board of Trustees approved a position to coordinate assessment and placement activities but due to the economic climate this position has not been filled. The action team has discussed alternative interim approaches. The action team will continue until a plan is finalized that institutionalizes ongoing assessment and placement activities.

The action team identified the need to obtain some baseline data about student status, as well as system changes that would help support tracking related to assessment and placement. A subcommittee met in spring 2009 to identify specific areas and will present their recommendations to the action team in fall 2009.

The action team will also make a recommendation related to the timing of COMPASS testing. There has been extensive discussion related to this, including when students matriculate and prior to the 8th credit hour. To date, the action team has worked to enforce the current policy of the 13th credit hour.

D. Describe any effective practices that have resulted from your work on this Action Project:

An effective practice continues to be inclusiveness and communication. The action team provides regular updates to the campus community, maintains open meetings, and collaborates with campus employees impacted by the recommendations.

The action team's work to ensure implementation and communication of the existing policy related to the COMPASS test was an effective practice. The process went smoothly without major disruption to students or the college.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project:

At present, the biggest challenge is determining a way to institutionalize assessment and placement activities so that continuous improvement in student learning can occur. The action team will continue to work on this during fall 2009. Space issues on campus are another major constraint.

The action project is complex in nature, with multiple facets. The members of the team have many time constraints and other work-related duties so that progress is slow.

An additional challenge is the scheduling of a sufficient number of English, math and “Skills for College Success” sections. With the changes in COMPASS cutoff scores and the increased college enrollment due to the economy there were insufficient sections available.

Although the action team agreed that advising is a key component of COMPASS testing, resources are not available to hire additional personnel. There was disagreement as to who should advise students and how that would be accomplished. Ultimately a decision was made that a counselor should be present to advise students after COMPASS testing, but this occurred inconsistently.

It is clear that the exploration of IT assessment testing was a complex process. There was disagreement about the value of an internally-created assessment versus a standardized assessment. There was also disagreement about which technology skills should be assessed and how deficient skills should be remediated. Consequently, the decision was made to form a task force and bring a fresh perspective and timeline to this issue.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your needs(s) and tell us who to contact.

The action team appreciates any feedback on this project. Team members are highly committed to student success and believe a stronger assessment and placement policy is critical.