

Implement a new faculty advising model for the College.

Annual Update AQIP review: 2009-09-09

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

If Year One was dedicated to research and Year Two was consumed by the planning process, then the term to describe our implementation process during 2008-2009 is “action”. The year started out by reviewing the creation of a mission, philosophy and structure by the NACADA Summer Institute Team. The Academic Advising Task Force took that work and combined it with the positive attributes they found when they visited the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College’s advising program (also using a Shared Advising Model). Our plans fell together fairly easily at that point and we were able to submit the first half of our Academic Advising Model Proposal (Mission, Philosophy, and Structure) for approval by the Title III Steering Committee on October 24th, 2008. The second half of the Proposed Advising Model was submitted at the following Steering Committee meeting and contained the Roles and Responsibilities of the advisors, faculty members, counselors, College and students. In addition, the Task Force included a Communication Plan for introducing the model to the College and recommended that our External Evaluator be assigned to design evaluation of the pilot in their second submission. The Steering Committee accepted the Proposal with thanks and forwarded it to the Administrative Council where it was also approved. The Proposed Academic Advising Model included a document demonstrating that this new model addresses key issues raised through the previous year’s faculty survey and focus groups on advising. Throughout the year, the Title III Academic Advising Task Force continued to meet on a regular basis to finalize the proposal and to prepare to communicate key points of the model to the campus community. Minutes of these Task Force meetings are posted on the Title III website on the college Intranet. Transitioning further into our implementation, we found that we needed communication, communication, communication! By starting with one- to-one meetings with all key stakeholders followed by small group discussions, we were able to agree on a supervisory structure with the Title III Grant Associate in charge of the training and development of the new advisors, for the duration of the piloting stage of our model. It was determined that the new full-time, 12 month employees would be housed in Academic Affairs and would be monitored by one of our Executive Deans in the future. Because MPTC did not have resources to fully fund the model all at one time, we decided to start with a cadre of three advisors. Leveraging available funds from the Title III grant and a newly acquired Community Based Job Training grant, the College was only required to fund one of the three positions. Of course, ensuring that we would meet all of the requirements of the two grant proposals, within the federal regulations which govern those grants and to honor all of Moraine Park’s policies and processes again required hours of planning and communication. It was imperative that these discussions occur before we brought the advisors on board. Finally, we were able to move forward to develop the actual Position Description using the Role and Responsibilities section of the approved Academic Advising model as a starting point. The title for our new advisors was determined to be Academic Support Specialists and the salary level was determined to be at the highest level within our Support Professional employee group. The advisor who would be paid from the CBJT grant was given the responsibility to support the nursing and CNA students as those programs are the target of that grant. The office for that person will be on the West Bend campus. The Academic Support Specialist who is paid from

Title III funds will be assigned to Title III Target AA Programs on the FDL campus as determined by the US Department of Education. Our third Academic Support Specialist will be assigned to provide support to a comparable number of programs currently involved in the Wisconsin Technical College program review process (QRP). Those programs are housed on all three of MPTC's campuses so the third Academic Support Specialist will be required to travel to meet with students. Over the summer of 2009, we conducted 3 Search and Hire processes. All three of the new Academic Support Specialists bring unique skills and are committed to intervening to provide needed support for the students in their assigned programs so that more students will succeed and graduate. Although we only had a short period of time before fall semester began for training, we started a professional development process by reviewing recent retention/advising reports published by NACADA and Noel Levitz, as well as other selected retention literature pieces. As outlined in the Academic Advising Task Force's Communication Plan, we set up short lunch-time "town meetings" during the last 2 weeks of the semester. The meetings were connected by IVC and did draw faculty attendees from more than one campus for each meeting. However, only about 25 faculty members were able to attend to hear about the new Academic Advising model. Primarily the Academic Advising Task Force members attributed this low turn-out to the end of the year crunch of activities and finals. Unfortunately, we were not able to increase the speed needed for the decision making process. We needed each week of those 9 months to move the project through channels. The cost was that we were not able to garner buy-in for the model from a large number of faculty members before they left for the summer. We were able, however, to present and discuss the model at two of the Moraine Park Labor/Management meetings in the spring. As a result of those discussions, previous Faculty Advisors for programs now assigned to the Academic Support Specialists are being invited to act as "Transition Advisors" to get program students connected to their new advisors during Fall Semester, 2009. Just at the end of the summer session, we gathered all of the Moraine Park staff and faculty members who all Service Providers in our Early Alert System to discuss the new Academic Advising System. For some of these employees, the new system could change the focus of their work. Those who had previously spent a lot of time providing general academic student support will now have time to focus on students who require their more specific skills. Even though we had to take a break from sharing information with faculty members over the summer, the activities of our Communication Plan picked up immediately when faculty members returned to campus. At the Faculty In-service, with all full-time faculty members in attendance, we were able to present key aspects of our new Academic Advising model. On the following day, one of Moraine Park's three hour concurrent sessions was dedicated to exploring the value of providing "Just in Time" interventions and support using our new Early Alert system and our pilot Academic Advising model. In addition to describing the services that will be provided by the Academic Support Specialists, we were also able to introduce a new support service for faculty advisors whose programs still have not yet been assigned an Academic Support Specialist. This service, entitled "Advising Newsstand" will be available on Park Place and on our new portal to provide up-to-date information for faculty advisors to keep them apprised of deadlines, changes in any previous processes, Advising FAQs, tips on using our new BANNER system to give them needed information on their students, updated Referral lists, Instructions on how to use Mail Merge to send out student communications and/or to populate the Early Alert referral forms and much more. These services were each selected to meet needs identified through our 2007 Faculty Advising Survey. Hopefully they will serve to help our Faculty Advisors make their advising responsibilities easier

and more effective. The initial activity for our new Academic Support Specialists was to determine the key points in a semester when it would be most helpful to connect with students. Because we were not able to run advisee reports for each of the program (due to the status of our BANNER start-up), we are unsure of the exact number of students assigned to each of the Academic Support Specialists. We are, however, sure that the numbers will far exceed 300. With that in mind, we recognized that we would need to be creative in making students cognizant of our interest in them as individuals while providing as much information as we could to students in small groups where possible. Clearly we need to explore new social networking technology and the Academic Support Specialists are already involved in determining how we can use our new Luminis portal (going live in January) to help us reach more students and to help build student-to-student connections. We have designed a process for working with each program to create a Student Contact Plan uniquely designed to provide information in relevant ways to the interests of students who tend to enroll in that program. By identifying student needs and programmatic planning requirements combined with the Student Expectations of the new Academic Advising Model, we created a list of the key points that we hoped to include in our "Just in Time" approach. Program Deans and faculty members are working with the assigned Academic Support Specialists to choose from a selection of delivery system options to select the type of contact that will be most effective for their students at each of the key intervention points. Our target is to contact each student at least 4 times during the first semester. Copies of these materials are available upon request. A final and very important piece of our Communication Plan was to bring our adjunct faculty into this culture of success that we're trying to develop at Moraine Park. These part-time instructors want to help their students succeed just as our full-time instructors do but because of their shortened hours on campus, they are often not able to participate in faculty development opportunities where they might learn about the new processes we're developing. This year, Title III provided the MPTC Deans with pamphlets filled with information about all of the student success changes that we have been developing and are now piloting to disseminate among their adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty members have been given information about how to participate in sending an Early Alert System and have more information about how that process can lead to increased student success. Because our Academic Advising model plays such a key role in connecting students with other success initiatives, it is vital that we take care to evaluate the efficacy and effectiveness of our design and delivery. As a result, we have requested that our External Evaluator particularly focus her efforts on helping us design a data collection plan and evaluation instruments which will help us critically analyze the process. Already, she has met with representatives from the Academic Advising Task Force to establish baseline information for future comparisons and to determine what measures are going to tell us whether the process is working and is making a difference in the success of our students.

Review (09-11-09):

This project appears to follow many of the principles of high performance organizations: focusing on stakeholders, broad-based involvement, learning oriented, promoting collaboration, foresight, etc...as well as its obvious role in Category One "Helping Students Learn" and its stated category of "Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives." You are fortunate to have the external evaluator, someone whose primary role is to focus on the data collection and analysis of the project's goals and successes. The timing of the project is unfortunate, although understandable, as it would have been great to have a larger group of faculty participate. However, perhaps offering the sessions at the beginning of the academic year as you have will

build more enthusiasm that has no time to fizzle over the summer away from campus. The infrastructure you have designed into this project (such as the Advising Newsstand) is also commendable and an excellent way to address the feedback you received from faculty in the survey. One thing that is not clearly addressed is the accountability aspect -- how have you guaranteed increased contact by faculty now that you have built this infrastructure for them?

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

Each month the Title III Grant Associate provides the Administrative Council with a report on the activities of the Task Force groups and committees. A summary of the tasks completed as well as an identification of aspects of the work which were not as successful keeps that group informed. The report is also disseminated around the campus to all Steering Committee members as well as other key campus employees. The Academic Advising Task Force membership represents faculty, staff and administrative representatives from all three campuses. Meetings are conducted using IVC so all have the opportunity to attend the meetings without losing time for travel. In addition to the presentations listed previously, Academic Advising Task Force members participated on panels at our Faculty Academy for New Faculty Members. As in previous years, the Title III Grant Associate reported on the progress of this project to the Primary Learning Team the Vice President of Academic Affairs Advisory Group. The Communication Plan for this activity is such a vital part of its implementation that most other examples that meet this request for information were included in the response to #1.

Review (09-11-09):

It appears that all employees are kept informed about the actions of the Title III grant and the advising task force. The technology component (through IVC) is helpful for any institution with multiple campuses, as satellite campus people often seem to spend much of their days on the road; it is nice that you accommodated that. Have these changes been communicated to students? Are they informed that they should be hearing more regularly from their advisors? Is there a "reverse" communication process for them to find out who their advisors are if there is no contact, or perhaps to evaluate the effectiveness of that contact? Just something to think about.

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

Our plans for Year Four of the implementation of this project are to continue to develop relationships and processes which make it easy for students in our target programs to get information that they need to make wise decisions and to gain expertise in using the College processes to be able to self-advise. We will continue to refine the Early Alert system and hope to have that process embedded in the BANNER system by the end of spring semester, 2010. We will be collecting data and information from all key stakeholders involved in the advising model to determine the effectiveness of our new system. As we "go live" with our Luminis portal in January, both students and faculty advisors will find easier access to getting information as it's needed. The new Advising Newsstand will continue to report relevant materials which will promote improved services to students by their faculty advisors. Student engagement opportunities will increase through the use of social networking for advising purposes. That networking could occur through the use of new technologies as well as through the use of small group advising discussions within the targeted programs. The Title III Academic Advising Task Force will continue to meet this year to monitor the use of Academic Support Specialists, the collection of data to measure the effectiveness of the system and to watch the academic progress of students in the targeted programs. In addition, the Task Force will need to address some of the

issues still left unaddressed by the current system such as providing academic advising support for “sampler” students as well as students taking our Adult Basic Education courses. It is also important for us to monitor the usefulness of the model for on-line students as well as for students who plan to transfer to a four-year institution after leaving MPTC.

Review (09-11-09):

You have a very busy year ahead with many technological implementations to survive. However, it looks like the coming year will be one in which you will be able to see the fruits of the past three years of work. It sounds like your plans for social networking are still flexible. Make sure you involve your students in guiding that effort -- let them tell you what technologies they are using or might use for this purpose. It is good that you recognize the importance of addressing your online students -- perhaps the social networking idea will help them feel more a part of the wider institutional community.

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

As previously mentioned we have had numerous opportunities to share information about our new model with campus community members but it might also be important to mention here that a committee of employees from Waukesha Technical College contacted us during spring semester to interview us concerning the process we went through to design our advising model. They are in the beginning stages of reviewing the effectiveness of their current advising model and wanted to hear about the steps we took to address that same task. In addition, our Vice President of Academic Affairs and Economic Development provided a presentation to his peers within the Wisconsin Technical College System at their July meeting. Our Title III Grant Associate and the Vice President of Enrollment Management included a description of our new model in their presentation on Making Campus-wide Changes for Student Success at the Wisconsin Technical College System Annual Conference on Retention in June of this year. In each of these presentations, the audience appeared to be particularly interested because the majority of the technical colleges have all used similar models to provide student advising. Some are providing advising through the use of College Counselors which limits the time for these professionals to provide crisis intervention services. Other technical colleges have moved to a faculty advisor model like Moraine Park's. At those institutions faculty members have reported difficulties in balancing student advising responsibility with their more primary responsibilities in the classroom. We are not the first of the Technical Colleges in Wisconsin to be implementing a shared advising model. We benefited from the experience of the Northeast Technical College Systems' advising system. We were so appreciative of the open discussions that we were able to have with them as we were designing our own model. Because we have the added benefit of having an External Evaluator for the Title III grant and because our Task Force is so dedicated to the collection and analysis of the data we are gathering, we may be able to serve as model for designing an evaluation process for transitioning to a new advising model.

Review (09-11-09):

It is excellent that you have been able to share with other area schools what you have been doing, both for them and for your own institution. Often in explaining what you do to outsiders, you can reveal areas where you might be unaware of opportunities, blind spots, and additional possibilities. The more you present and discuss your approach with others, the more you will see your project as your students and potential students see it. It also appears that sharing your model has made you more appreciative of your grant and the people it has afforded you, appreciation that will help build strong stakeholder relationships.

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

As previously mentioned, we will need to continue to keep the campus community informed about the activities of the Task Force as well as to provide a regular update on the development process of the implementing a Shared Advising model. Specifically, we will need to have faculty members who are working with the Academic Support Specialists talk with other faculty members about the process and what kinds of support the students are getting. Open and honest discussions about the pros and cons of our process will be taken seriously and will provide that important formative evaluation. We still are in the designing stage of the Evaluation and yet, have already started to provide services to students through the new advising model. It will be imperative that the Evaluation plan be finalized soon so that all data will be collected from the beginning of the pilot project to fully reflect the experience of the student. An on-going challenge will be to find additional MPTC funding to continue to “grow” the Advising Model to an adequate number of Academic Support Specialists to meet the needs of all MPTC students. It is vital that the new Advising Newsstand be relevant and up-to-date in order to meet the needs of our Faculty Advisors. Possibly an Advisory Group of current Faculty Advisors would be able to give advice on how that resource can be of most help.

Review (09-11-09):

Considering how seriously you took the initial feedback from faculty, it appears that you have at least set the groundwork for faculty to trust that this will continue. It is also good that you recognize how important addressing and discussing both the strengths and weaknesses of the process is. Remember to keep evaluation as realistic as possible -- good data comes from manageable measurement plans that do not overburden the program with excessive need for data analysis but still show accurate results. You may want to look at how other institutions are doing this by consulting the AQIP project website or consult other Title III institutions involved in AQIP.

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

No thank you.

Review (09-11-09):