

Action Project #4: Restructuring and Improving Student Advisement

Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The successful completion of this project will involve analysis of current student advising practices, recommend improvements in training new and existing advisors, reconfigure the physical space of the advisement center, improve student retention and transfer success through more accurate advisement, and establish a campus-wide leader for coordination of the process of advising.

Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Supporting Institutional Operations

Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

Mineral Area is committed to the success of its students. MAC administration, faculty, and staff are determined to increase student retention and graduation rates. We believe there is a direct correlation between accurate advising and transfer counseling with student success as evidenced by improved retention/ graduation rates. In addition, all employees selected advising as one of the top three priorities during a fall 2008 campus-wide AQIP planning session.

List the organizational areas - institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

This project will have campus-wide involvement. Administration, faculty, and staff must be committed to evaluating and improving existing practices. In addition, students will benefit from an improved, streamlined process.

Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

Mineral Area College has a successful student orientation process and an equally successful graduation seminar. However, in between student orientation and graduation, some students do not have access to adequate advising. MAC has a student orientation program in place, called C.A.R.D.S. After students complete this orientation program, they are currently assigned to an advisor in their chosen field of study. If they have not chosen a major, they are assigned to one of the general advisors available in Student Services and/or referred for career counseling. Since advisors are pulled from all departments on campus and Student Services, they do not all have the same level of training or commitment. In addition, many evening and off campus students do not have access to the same advisors that traditional day-time students possess. Furthermore, students are currently allowed to web-register and may be self advising without consulting any member of the college staff for assistance. This action project would involve a campus-wide initiative to improve the quality of student advisement between the current points of student orientation and the graduation seminar.

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

This project requires a two-year timetable. An ad hoc committee researched the project and made recommendations to the AQIP team on campus. Currently, a committee is forming to

undertake this action project. The kickoff meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2009. This committee will meet two or three times during the remainder of this academic school year to brainstorm about goals for the project. In addition, due to anticipated faculty/staff retirements, MAC administration is working in concert with this committee to analyze personnel needs for advisement, physical renovations for an advisement center, and fiscal commitments to the project. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the committee will be developing policies for best practices of advising on campus. In addition, the college will be exploring the idea of designating a leader for campus advisement and redesigning space to provide a more efficient process. The college will implement new processes and utilize re-designed space during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

The administration, including the Dean of Students, will evaluate the overall effectiveness of this project. In addition, the newly-appointed advising coordinator will analyze student retention and graduation rates and compare them to previous data. He or she will conduct satisfaction surveys of students who have completed degrees at Mineral Area College after the new processes have been implemented. In addition, advisors will also be surveyed to determine their comfort level with the process. Additional training will offered as needed.

Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

MAC intends to centralize and streamline the process of student advisement, designate an individual to coordinate the process, and provide higher quality advising to all students. The project will be considered successful if student retention and graduation rates improve, faculty and staff indicate satisfaction with a more cohesive advising process, and the college re-designs the physical space currently utilized to create a more centralized location for an advisement center.

Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

This project will be replacing our current project – Action Project #2 Institutional-wide Software package which will be retired in the fall of 2009.

Project leader and contact person:

Ms. Diana Stuart

Professor and Teacher Education Program Coordinator

diana@mineralarea.edu