Project Details

Title	Purchasing New Administrative Software to Improve Institutional Decision-Making	Status	COMPLETED
Category 6-Supporting Institutional Operations		Updated	09-10-2009
Timeline		Reviewed	09-11-2009
Planned Project Kickoff 05-12-2006		Created	11-24-2009
Actual Completion 03-15-2010		Last Modified	03-19-2010

- 1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**
- A: This is the final year of our 3 year project, during which we have replaced one institutional software system with another. The first year was spent in discovering and planning, the second was spent programming and implementing, and this final year has been spent evaluating our efforts and making those changes driven by the new program. Our three major areas--Student Services, administrative and financial systems, and classroom management--have had to change some their practices as a result. For example, Student Service personnel have had to alter the way they have input student information, especially student financial information; the administrative area has had to create a new format for records of earnings; the faculty has had to learn how to set up electronic grade books, how to submit online grades, and how to manage rosters and reports. Many of these changes have resulted in far less complicated record keeping and in less involved paper work than before. This system has proven to be a vast improvement over our previous one.
- R: Excellent report on meeting your Action Plan. Although three years is a long time to drive an initiative, it has allowed you to further refine and discover your needs. You have successfully met AQIP Categories: 1) Helping Students Learn 6) Supporting Institutional Operations 8) Planning Continuous Improvement and 9) Building Collaborative Relationships. This plan really involved all facets of the business and needed collaboration from every department. The hard work has paid off as your processes will allow for better organizational communication and increased productivity. Furthermore, it demonstrates that collaborative efforts can produce end results. Of course, there will be be adjustments and additional trainings that need to be developed for the workforce. The challenges are currently being met as you have identified what standards and practices are changing as a result of the new software system. New software is an exciting time for any organization and the results of the updated technology should be communicated throughout the institution as successes are attained.

- 2: **Institution Involvement**
- A: Virtually everyone on campus--and at our outreach centers--has been affected by this new system. Module managers still meet on a regular basis to iron out problems that occur, and we have set up training and mentoring for all new employees and those who want to refresh their skills. In addition, we have been able to identify key personnel

throughout the institution who are especially adept at computer skills and who are willing to teach them to others.

- R: Outstanding work in this area involving all employees. You have demonstrated the Principles of High Performance Organizations of Collaboration, Involvement, Leadership, Foresight, Learning, and Information. These are highly desired traits of successful organizations and you should be commended for your accomplishments. The identification and "buy in" of key personnel that will help with the training is a critical aspect of your plan and a task well accomplished! Developing a training model may be your next step to help with future employee training.

- 3: **Next Steps**
- A: This is the formal end of this project, and we are ready to retire it. We have actually met the goals set at the beginning: To improve the process and ease of manipulating available information. However, because of the scope and importance of this project, training and learning will always be a part of this institutional program.
- R: Congratulations on attaining your Action Plan completion. The recognition of success is an event that should be noteworthy to all parties involved. The awareness that training and learning is an ongoing and continuous process can create more opportunities for collaboration. The actions and involvement of employees can definitely make future projects more attainable. The lessons learned from this plan should be utilized in future planning and offer potential benchmarking metrics for the institution.

- 4: **Resulting Effective Practices**
- A: We would like to impress on any institution looking to undertake a major software change such as this, that this is an extremely time consuming and labor intensive project. The key to its successful implementation lies in setting a goal and then developing a detailed plan and time line. We recommend that interested institutions realistically estimate taking at least three years from beginning to end to fully integrate such a project.
- R: Thank you for offering words of advice for institutions that are and will be in the process of changing software platforms. The needs of each institution vary and the time line is a good recommendation. There are definite metrics that can aid an organization when undertaking such a project as a software change. Challenges are still ahead for your organization as issues will arise with the new program and hopefully these issues will create more learning opportunities.

- 5: **Project Challenges**
- A: The challenges that we are now facing have more to do with the product than the process, and we are learning, by experience, what the system allows or doesn't allow us to do. In that light, we either have to work around the system, or we have to change the way we've always done things. This latter part is a challenge in itself as some personnel do not like to change what has always worked for them before. The other challenge is that some personnel, particularly our older personnel, are having some difficulty adapting to this new technology. Our solution is to continuously and patiently work with and mentor these people until their comfort level rises and they start to make the system work for them, not the other way around. Our third challenge is to continue exploring what our system can do for us. We feel we are still so new to this system that we have not

completely explored all the things it can do for us. We are continually in touch with the software company and we are sending our people to conferences and seminars to try to close those gaps.

- R: Unfortunately, with every software program there will be limits that can create barriers; however you will find that they usually allow for learning opportunities and can create streamlining possibilities. Your challenge of change management for some of the employees is an occurrence that happens and it sounds like you have a process that will allow them to succeed. In some instances, remedial training will allow them to transition into this new system. The mentorship program should help to ease the burden of change for these employees. You should also create a baseline learning curve and hold the employee accountable. Weekly reviews can potentially shrink the learning curve for all employees. Make sure to utilize the software company for training opportunities and see what changes they can make for your needs. Many times you will find that slight modifications can make the software more user-friendly for your needs. Remember that the large investment of time and resources should pay off and partnering with the software provider should be a mutually beneficial relationship.

- 6: **AQIP Involvement**
- A: No help needed, thank you.
- R: 9933 the institution is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture. The software system has been installed and is currently being utilized within the institution.