Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor   6-21-19
                                                              Date

Terry B. Gaalswyk

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Name of Institution

Worthington, MN

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted by August 31 of Year 9. HLC recommends that institutions with comprehensive evaluations in the first half of Year 10 submit their report at least six months prior to their Assurance System lock date. Submit the report as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: 6/20/19

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Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Quality Initiative: A Communications Improvement Program between Admitted Students and the College.

The goal of our quality initiative was to establish a more successful approach to enrollment management by creating a communications process through which advisors establish pro-active and positive connections with admitted advisees. As a result of this improved communication between the college and its admitted students, our goal was to increase the number of registrations by students who had been admitted to the college.

The first phase of the initiative included a pilot project in which advisors were asked to contact admitted students and report their conversation results semiannually. The pilot period ran two semesters and included 16-18 advisors. The pilot project results provided limited information due to low participation and reporting rates among advisors. There were, however, other opportunities for improvement that were revealed in the pilot that helped identify processes that could enhance communication between admissions and advisors and between admissions and admitted students, ultimately resulting in increased registrations by these students.

An Enrollment Monitoring Team was formed and an enrollment consultant was hired in the Spring of 2017, near the end of the pilot project. A retreat was held and team members from many areas of the college were included. During this retreat, the participants mapped communication activities beginning with prospective students through degree completion. The outline created as a result of this mapping activity acknowledged that there were multiple people involved with student contact and follow-up. The mapping activity also revealed inefficiencies, redundancies, and missed opportunities. Further work by this team directly impacted the implementation of Phase II of the Quality Initiative.

Phase II of the initiative focused on three major areas:
1. Changes in orientation and registration sessions
   In an effort to increase attendance and register students sooner, students were assigned their orientation/registration date as opposed to allowing them to choose a date.
2. Improved communication between admissions, advisors, and students
   To facilitate the initial communication connecting advisors with their recent applicants, a weekly new applicant report was created by admissions staff and sent to advisors with new applicants.
3. Enhancements in student forms
   To streamline submission of forms from prospect to graduation, an effort was made to have more forms moved online for completion and submission.

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The plan for Phase II of the Quality Initiative was to create a survey to measure student satisfaction from registration to degree completion. Since the college already participates in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), it was decided that enough data could be gathered from this survey and a separate survey was not required. The committee will be comparing the key findings and recurring themes from the 2014/2015 academic year which is prior to the implementation of the Quality Initiative, to those in the following years including the 2018/2019 CCSSE when it becomes available in Fall 2019.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

- Identify reasons applicants do not register

The results of the Quality Initiative do not identify with great certainty why admitted students do not register for classes. Advisor attempts to call admitted students who had not registered were unanswered, so little to no evidence was gathered.

- Decrease the percentage of admitted students that do not register by 5%

	Fall 15 (20163)	Fall 16 (20173)	Fall 17 (20183)
Applications	1907	2299	2275
Admissions	1858	1639	1703
Registrations	1521	1223	1407

The measurable goal originally set by the quality initiative project was to increase the number of admitted students who registered by 5%. The Fall16 to the Fall17 comparison indicates the percentage of admitted students who registered increased by 8% or 64 students. This demonstrates that the original goal was achieved and surpassed.

- Pilot a new communication procedure for advisors contacting advisees

This pilot procedure was created and some of the processes in the pilot project have been implemented moving forward. First, all advisors are notified of their recently admitted advisees. Second, advisors are encouraged to contact admitted advisees, and a welcome template was designed and offered to assist the advisors in this effort.

- Create a procedure that will foster a continued relationship between advisors and advisees throughout the advisees' education and support student success

The Enrollment Monitoring committee has uncovered inefficiencies, redundancies, and missed opportunities that may affect the student experience from prospect stage to graduation. The committee remains committed to identifying and addressing areas for continuous improvement in the student experience at Minnesota West.

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3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

The establishment of the Enrollment Monitoring Committee was perhaps the most impactful result of the Quality Initiative. The first meetings involved several areas and departments of the college, both faculty and staff, and provided a clearer understanding of the processes and how they may overlap or where the college might be falling short in all stages of the progression from prospect to completion.

The Quality Initiative proposal suggested, and the Enrollment Monitoring Committee supported, an added step in the admissions process. Effective Fall 2017, the Admissions Processor sends out weekly reports to advisors that lists new applicants as well as current students who are changing or adding an academic program. This gives the advisor an opportunity to reach out to admitted students to welcome them to the college or to a specific program. A welcome template was created and shared with advisors to use to aid in the communication flow.

An issue that was uncovered in the initial Enrollment Monitoring Committee meetings was that there were several inactive applicants remaining on advisor lists. This created time consuming contact with students who no longer planned to attend the college. A new process was implemented in which applicants who were inactive after one year are end-dated. This also end-dates their advisor assignment, which removes them from the list of advisees.

In an attempt to make the connection between students and advisors earlier in the admissions process, advisor names are now listed on the student acceptance letter. This gives the student an opportunity to reach out to his/her advisor with college or program specific questions.

To make it more convenient for students and to expedite the turnaround time on several student forms, a suggestion was made to eliminate paper forms used in all processes from application to graduation.

Another issue was revealed in the conversations in the Enrollment Monitoring Committee meetings regarding our graduation rate. Advisors were concerned that there may be a discrepancy in our graduation rate data due to the fact that students were not applying for graduation due to the $25 graduation fee, although they had successfully completed their program requirements. The registrar confirmed this issue and the committee proposed waiving the graduation fee ; the change was approved by administration. Effective Fall 2018, students no longer have to pay a graduation fee.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

A new admitted student report is generated weekly and shared with advisors who have new advisees.

Many paper forms have been eliminated and students can now complete and submit forms online.

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Prior to the Quality Initiative, the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) report was not reviewed or used. It now is used as a source for prospect contact information. Using the data provided in this report, we can identify prospects who were contemplating Minnesota West Community and Technical College as their college of choice when they completed their application for financial aid. This allows us to follow up with these prospects with marketing and admissions materials.

The GradesFirst software application continues to be used as a form of communication with our students who are at-risk as well as a tool to remind students about registration, appointments, events, etc. The text message capability in the tool is limited and does not include sensitive information, but the text draws the student's attention to check their college email account for related matters. We continue to encourage faculty to use this useful tool as it can be very effective in our retention efforts.

Call blast reminders are made to students who have registered for an Advising/Registration Event. When students are signed up and do not show, the Student Services Advisor notifies the respective faculty advisor/advisor to reach out to their program student. Applicants who RSVP are sent a reminder prior to the Advising/Registration date.

Call blasts have also been added during mid-June, mid-July, mid-August encouraging prospects, applicants, and registered students to contact the college with any questions that they have and to remind them of the fall start date and to register for classes.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

Challenges:

Faculty advisors were apprehensive when asked to participate in the pilot project. Many felt they were already overextended in their work at the college.

Advisors found it difficult to connect with admitted applicant advisees because messages left in voicemail were not answered. Some advisors reported encountering voicemail boxes that were full when attempting to leave a message. Contact during normal work hours was not possible as many applicants were still in high school. These factors made it difficult to collect reasons why the admitted students decided not to attend Minnesota West.

Gathering and reporting the results of the communication by participating advisors had made proved difficult as well. It added another task to advisors' schedules. Some advisors who did agree to participate did not submit any data regarding contact with their admitted advisees.

Opportunities:

Advisors who were able to connect with students were able to develop relationships with their admitted advisees. They commented they were then the *"go-to person"* for all questions students had regarding their approaching college experience.

As stated earlier in this report, the establishment of the Enrollment Monitoring Committee provided the most significant opportunity. It brought many people and components of the

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prospect to completion processes together to work on more efficient and effective enrollment procedures.

The Enrollment Monitoring committee identified certain sectors of our student population that could benefit from an early registration night. Each campus now hosts an Early Registration Night in March as well as an informational (orientation/registration) night dedicated to Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) students. Students committing earlier to the fall semester helps administration plan for adjustments that may need to be made to the fall schedule.

Waiving the graduation fee did not significantly affect the graduation rate in the first two years. The process for awarding the degrees has been streamlined for the college registration staff. More importantly, however, this change greatly benefitted our students who were able to have their degrees awarded and participate in commencement without added expense.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

All faculty and staff were surveyed to determine the focus of the initiative. Student services advisors and faculty advisors were asked to participate in the pilot project. Their responses to Phase I of the pilot project were mixed, but most appreciated the information provided on their admitted advisees so they could contact them if/when they had time.

The Enrollment Monitoring Committee participants reported the following comments near the end of Phase II of the initiative on the projects that were executed:

Project	Comments
Summer 2017 Assigned orientations	- Assigning orientations didn't work very well. - Did not work- most assigned students did not show up. Spent a lot of money on food, etc. for the day. Works better when students get to pick their own date. Also tracking this was difficult, from 2 different spreadsheets. - This was not a great success. A great deal of work for very minimal increases. - Emailed students assigned a time after the student submitted the day they wanted to attend. Assigned day/times for the students who did not respond. - For financial aid it was good to meet with students and assist to get tracking items completed and turned in, or help getting the FAFSA completed

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Summer 2018 Unassigned Orientations/Registration Days	• Worked well. • This worked much better- students get to pick their own day rather than have one assigned. For the future, we need to discuss how this information will be sent out to students, how soon we will schedule these dates, etc. (new subcommittee formed on this) • Emailed and registered students as the RSVP's were received. One week before each session, Micha sends a list of students to Val to send out a call blast reminder. • For financial aid it was good to meet with students and assist to get tracking items completed and turned in, or help getting the FAFSA completed
Weekly Advisee List	• Sent weekly as new Advisors are assigned. May be a new applicant or individuals changing their major • I appreciate this greatly as my advisee list is so long. • This is nice for advisors to have- however, I would like an automatic email to be generated, "from" advisors to welcome new students. I would still want to see the list but honestly rarely to I have time to sit down and contact them all. This gets put on my back burner • Not directly involved in advising, but it is helpful to see the list, to help gauge potential student enrollment.
Prospecting those that used FAFSA code on ISIR	• Have prospected 175 to date –11 enrolled 20183 - 29 are currently enrolled (20193)
Prospecting those with random transcripts that have no ISRS recorded	• Have prospected 38 to date – 2 of those are currently enrolled (20193)
More forms available for online completion and submission	• This is good. I'm not sure how many students didn't have a complete DARS because that is something the advisors always checked before they would sign. • This is great- easier for students to apply, the only thing is an advisor isn't double-checking a DARS before they submit (there's a box that students need to check that they have viewed your DARS, but no way of knowing if they actually did) • Completed and active. I feel that grad apps were received more efficiently and

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	with more success in past years but don't have concrete data to support that. • I would ask the processors how this is working and if students fill the forms out correctly. • Good- another form online. Would be nice to notify advisors though if a student is switching from one program to another (more-so for program advisors) • This is completed and active. It is extremely helpful that students can sign off on the gainful employment disclosure, right as they submit the form.
Graduation Application Fee eliminated	• Love this!! • This is also great- less fees for students! Makes it easier for them to apply • Great thing – helps remove that barrier for students. Now the campaign is on to remove the app fee as well. A battle for another day.
Early Registration Events	• Worked well. • Worked very well- biggest turnouts yet. Need to continue doing this

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

The initiative led to the development of the Enrollment Monitoring Committee.

The Enrollment Monitoring Committee brought an awareness of the processes and steps involved in all communication between the college and the student from prospect to completion.

Assigning an orientation date to students did not help increase attendance in early summer orientation sessions.

A new group of prospects was identified and are now being contacted using the ISIR data.

Early Registration Nights and PSEO Orientation/Registration allow students to commit earlier in the year, which allowed for better scheduling and planning opportunities for the college and the students.

Communication to students in the enrollment process has improved. We have incorporated more personalized communication in working with students from prospect to registered. An increase in general understanding of communication strategies across various departments internally has also seen significant improvement.

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Allowing students to apply for graduation without a fee enabled the college registrar the ability to apply awards to transcripts in a more timely manner and students now receive their awards faster and without additional cost.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

Human:

- The involvement of admissions, marketing and communications, financial aid, administration, and faculty in enrollment monitoring committee meetings and activities

Financial:

- The cost of the Enrollment Monitoring retreat which included travel time and lodging for some participants
- Hiring the consultant to assist the committee in reviewing procedures and identifying inefficiencies and/or opportunities for improvement.
- Reasonable Credit Equivalency (release time) for faculty co-coordinating the initiative with a member of administration.
- As a result of the committee findings, more hours have been allocated for admissions staff.

Physical and Technological:

- Early registration and PSEO registration nights
- Using existing technology in a more efficient manner such as new reports, GradesFirst, new online forms, etc.
- Fewer overlaps in admissions processes

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

The Enrollment Monitoring Committee continues to meet to discuss current processes and what changes need to made or new ideas for improvement.

The Enrollment Monitoring Committee will meet with the consultant again in June 2019 to review our progress and discuss the potential for specific future projects that were identified at our last meeting of the academic year.

Enrollment Monitoring Future Projects to be considered include but are not limited to:

- Orientation revamp
- Campus Visitor processes and procedures
- Special Program Admissions
- New student on boarding with success tools

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- Issues with current student contact information
- Additional training to faculty on advising practices
- Recruitment strategies for non-traditional students
- Development of a Communications Calendar
- Streamline applicant communication to be more specific by type of student

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

Developing an Enrollment Monitoring Committee to review the processes and steps involved in all communication between the college and the student from prospect to registration. This helped us identify inefficiencies as well as opportunities.

Contacting prospects using the ISIR data.

Early Registration Nights and PSEO Orientation/Registration allow students to commit earlier in the year which allowed for better scheduling and planning opportunities for the college and our students.

Allowing students to apply for graduation without a fee has enabled our college registrar the ability to apply awards to transcripts in a more timely manner and students now receive awards faster and without additional cost.

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