HLC Quality Initiative Report

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

Minnesota West Community and Technical College’s

Request for Reaccreditation in the Open Pathway

The Quality Initiative: A Communications Improvement Program Between Admitted Students and the College

Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Prepared by:

Insert Date
Part I: Goals and Results

A. Inception and Goals of the Project

Minnesota West Community and Technical College Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Committee met on May 20, 2014. During this meeting topic ideas for our Quality Initiative were shared. Some ideas that were discussed were some existing and ongoing initiatives such as Health Information Technology and the Bremer grant. Other ideas discussed were Finish Line, Quality Matters, Concurrent Enrollment, Nobles County Collaborative, Restructuring Developmental Education, embedding tutoring - remedial education, Adult Basic Education, learning cohorts, and mandatory advising, and retention.

Recognizing the importance of involving faculty and staff in the Quality Initiative, a meeting invitation was extended to all faculty and staff in February, 2015. The meeting was held via video conference with only seven faculty members in attendance. The process was explained and more ideas were shared.

The committee met at the HLC Conference in Chicago in April, 2015. The topic list was narrowed to 16 and all 16 listed and brought to faculty and staff for input and to identify their top three initiatives on our Assessment Day in May 2015. Appendix I

The results were tallied and the committee narrowed the choices down to five. Appendix II Draft initiative proposals were created and the committee ranked each proposal using a scoring sheet that considered the Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative Criteria Sufficiency, Clarity of Purpose, Evidence of Commitment, and Appropriateness of Timeline.

At our annual fall faculty duty day in August, 2015, Survey Monkey was used to elicit feedback from faculty on the remaining five topic options.

The faculty poll showed the faculty were most in favor of the topic “Integrating the marketing strategy to increase enrollment into the college strategic plan. In an effort to narrow down this topic into a manageable project, the committee met in September, 2015 to discuss options. Looking at the enrollment historical data, the committee decided to

1
focus on the number of admitted students that did not register. The project would contribute to the strategic enrollment plan.

During a November, 2015 HLC Committee meeting, Rebecca Weber and Judy Tebben were charged with creating the Quality Initiative Proposal. On June 16, 2016, the proposal was presented to the college president, Dr. Terry Gaalswyk for his signature and then forwarded to the Higher Learning Commission for review. Appendix III

The goals listed in the proposal are:

- Identify reasons applicants do not register
- Decrease the percentage of admitted students that do not register by 5%
- Pilot a new communication procedure for advisors contacting advisees
- Create a procedure that will foster a continued relationship between advisors and advisees throughout the advisees education and support student success

B. Phase I, Pilot Project Implementation and Results

In August, the proposal was approved by the Higher Learning Commission and work began to implement Phase 1 which was the Pilot Project. The Pilot Project was presented to faculty program advisors during a workshop at our fall all faculty administrative day. The committee asked that participants in the Pilot Project contact their admitted advisees to As a result of this workshop seven faculty advisors volunteered to participate. During the next few weeks 9 more faculty advisors and two student services advisors agreed to participate. A script was given to each of the advisors. Appendix IV

During the course of the first three months of the pilot project, participating advisors received a monthly list of their admitted advisees. Advisors were asked to call and/or text the advisees to encourage them to register.

In December, 2016, advisors were asked to report on the calls made and the admitted students who registered.

18 advisors participating in the pilot project
3 months of data provided 106 admitted students with complete files
8 advisors have reported their results
33 students have been contacted
  8 students planned a spring start and have registered
  7 students planned a spring start but have not registered
  10 students are planning a Summer or Fall 17 start
  1 student is working on a suspension appeal with the advisor
  3 students are still unsure if they will attend Minnesota West
2 students were called, a message was left by the advisor, the student did not respond
2 students have decided not to attend Minnesota West, both plan to register at SMSU

Comments offered by advisors:
“After contacting students, I became the go-to person for all questions.”

Due to the low number of reports submitted by the advisors and the confusion apparent in the reports submitted, the Quality Initiative team decided to call a meeting for all pilot project participants. The meeting goals were to clear up confusion regarding reporting results, encourage participation, and gather feedback on the project. The meeting proved to be beneficial as concerns were addressed and participants offered useful feedback.

Appendix V

During the course of the next three months of the pilot project, participating advisors received a monthly list of their admitted advisees. Advisors were again asked to call and/or text the advisees to encourage them to register.

In April, 2017, advisors were asked to report on the calls made and the admitted students who registered.

16 advisors participating in the pilot project
3 months of data provided 63 admitted students with complete files
6 advisors have reported their results
10 students have been contacted
   2 students planned a fall start and have registered
   4 students planned a fall start and have registered for orientation
1 student planned a spring start but did not have financial aid in place
2 students have decided not to attend Minnesota West
Reasons why not attending
   Plan to go to SMSU
   Moved to South Dakota
8 students were called, a message was left by the advisor, the students did not respond

Comments offered by advisors:
“After contacting students, I became the go-to person for all questions.”
“I feel like the biggest issue is timing. I am here during the day and not in the evenings when maybe one could get a hold of them.”
**Becky: to determine success of the pilot project (Decrease the percentage of admitted students that do not register by 5%) you will need to fill in the last column of this table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Registrations</td>
<td>1492</td>
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C. Phase II, ??????????
Appendix I

Quality Initiative

Background

The Open Pathway requires the institution to undertake a major Quality Initiative designed to address its present concerns or aspirations. The Quality Initiative takes place between years 5 and 9 of the 10-year Open Pathway Cycle. A Quality Initiative may be designed to begin and be completed during this time or it may continue an initiative already in progress or achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative. The Quality Initiative is intended to encourage institutions to take risks, aim high, and learn from only partial success or even failure. (https://www.ncahlc.org/Pathways/quality-initiative.html)

Our Quality Initiative must support our mission, vision, and values.

Mission

Minnesota West Community & Technical College is dedicated to serving the varied educational needs of our diverse populations in affordable, accessible and supportive settings.

Vision

Minnesota West Community & Technical College provides dynamic, responsive, creative, and quality education to a diverse population in an ever-changing educational, business and cultural environment.

Value

We value excellence in an environment of mutual learning that is respectful, consistent, and dependable.

Action Needed

Your input is needed to help us identify an appropriate quality initiative for Minnesota West. Please rank your top three initiatives from the list on Pages 2 and 3. It is important that we all demonstrate our commitment to the project throughout all stages, from selection to presentation. Once collected, we will review and present the top five to six project ideas to the college and determine our quality initiative.
Please rank your **top three** initiatives from the following list. It is important that we all show our commitment to the project throughout all stages, from the selection to presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brief Summary</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Developmental Education: Restructure the developmental course offerings to improve outcomes for underprepared community college students.</td>
<td>Graduation rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 + 2 Programs: Create models to develop new 2 + 2 programs.</td>
<td>Program Offerings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internal Marketing: Create communication methods to share information other than e-mail. Information regarding marketing, college-wide improvements and initiatives, information technology, faculty development opportunities, etc.</td>
<td>Faculty, staff, and student satisfaction surveys.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industry partnerships: Study current partnerships with industry to measure success and use current models to create new partnerships.</td>
<td>Industry surveys</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Graduate employment statistics</td>
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<td>Enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Integrate the marketing strategy to increase enrollment into the college strategic plan.</td>
<td>Resource allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic plan measurement tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Integrate an increased awareness in cultural diversity into the college strategic plan.</td>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Student satisfaction surveys</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Program Review: Restructure the program review process to include a more collaborative approach with participation from faculty, staff, and advisory board members.</td>
<td>Faculty and advisory board surveys.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program modification</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Orientation: Restructure format to provide enhanced and interactive methods to convey information.</td>
<td>Retention rate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Graduation rate</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Intrusive Advising: Produce a contact and follow-up pattern for advisors to follow using Grades First through a pilot project group.</td>
<td>Retention rate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Graduation rate</td>
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<td>Advisory Boards: Develop a plan to be used by advisory boards to facilitate a more involved and interactive member group.</td>
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<td>Website Refresh: Refresh the Website to enhance usability for both internal and external customers.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Quality Matters: Provide professional development, utilizing a set of rubrics, and a course peer review process that work</td>
<td>Retention rate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Idea surveys</td>
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together to support faculty in improving the quality of online and blended courses.

| Grades First: Encourage use of Grades First features to aid student success. A pilot project group will be formed to determine the effects an increased use of Grades First has on student success. | Retention rate |
| Career Services: Provide a test proctoring center for other colleges and industry certifications. | Revenue generation |
| Plagiarism: Generate awareness of what plagiarism is and the consequences for its practice. | Faculty surveys |
| Course Outlines: Develop a workshop in which division chairs are trained to review course outlines to meet MnSCU and college requirements. | Curriculum development staff surveys Division Chair surveys |

**HLC Committee Members**

Jeff Williamson  
Dan Roos  
Rebecca Weber  
Kip Thorson  
Judy Tebben  
Barbara McDonald  
Lori Voss  
Kayla Westra  
David Mills  
Mike Wesselink  
Ann Mills

*Interested in serving on the HLC committee? Please contact Dr. Jeff Williamson at jeff.williamson@mnwest.edu.*
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<thead>
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<td>Integrate an increased awareness in cultural diversity into the college strategic plan.</td>
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<td>to review course outlines to meet MnSCU and college requirements.</td>
<td>Division Chair surveys</td>
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Appendix III

Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Institutional Proposal

The enclosed Quality Initiative proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor          Date
Terry Gaalswyk

Printed/Typed Name and Title
Minnesota West Community and Technical College
Name of Institution
Worthington, Minnesota
City and State

Enrollment

Overview of the Quality Initiative

Minnesota West Community and Technical College is focused on serving the higher education needs of southwest Minnesota. It is our mission to serve the varied educational needs of our diverse populations in affordable, accessible, and supportive settings. Minnesota West Community & Technical College has made concerted efforts since the merger of the technical colleges and the community college in 1997 to determine the factors in attrition, retention and student matriculation to graduation.

As shown in the table below, in 2012 the college admitted 2081 students. Unfortunately, only 1,676 students registered for classes, only 80 percent of those that were admitted. The Fall 13 data indicates an even greater loss of admitted students with only 66 percent registering. The number of admitted in students who registered in 2014 and 2015 reached the 80 percent mark again. Although over the last four years this percentage has remained fairly static, as the number of applicants declines, the number of students that actually register becomes even more important.

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<td>1605</td>
<td>1457</td>
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This quality initiative will attempt to improve communication between the college and its admitted students in order to increase the number of registrations and capture students who have been admitted to the college but failed to register. In an effort to improve this, our Quality Initiative is an attempt to determine a different approach to enrollment management by creating a communications process in which advisors would establish a connection with an admitted advisee.

Phase 1 will include but not be limited to:

- Outline current practices used to communicate with admitted students
- Create a Pilot Project
  - Pinpoint programs that have a high percentage of admitted students who do not register.
  - Identify advisors who will fully participate in the pilot project.
  - Determine a start and end date to collect the pilot project data
  - Formulate an enrollment communication plan that would include:
    - Admissions staff alerting advisors of new advisees admitted
    - Advisor contacting admitted student
    - Advisors obtaining permission from admitted student to contact them via text message
    - Advisor scheduling a placement testing date with the admitted student
    - Advisor scheduling an advising appointment with the admitted student
    - Advisor scheduling registration appointment with the admitted student
    - Advisor determines if admitted student does not plan to register
    - Advisor recording reasons admitted student do not register
- Gather data over two semesters
- Review outcomes

Phase 2 will include but not be limited to:

- Create a student survey to measure student satisfaction from registration to degree completion
- Based on results of pilot project
  - If the pilot project results showed an increase in the number of admitted students who registered:
    - Create an advisor training session for the new enrollment management plan
  - If the pilot project results did not show an increase in the number of admitted students who registered:
    - Review data
    - Revise plan
  - Implement plan, with revisions if necessary, with all college advisors
  - Continue to collect data over the next two semesters

Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

1. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

   Mission: Minnesota West Community & Technical College is dedicated to serving the varied educational needs of our diverse populations in affordable, accessible and supportive settings.

   Southwest Minnesota is currently experiencing an upward economic trend. The unemployment rate is low which in turn adversely affects enrollment in our institution. This initiative would help the fiscal viability of the college through an increase in credits sold resulting in an improved revenue stream.

   The initiative supports our mission as it would create better relationships between the advisor and the student, resulting in additional support for students, and an improved communication process to ensure students have access to resources that they need.

   Vision: Minnesota West Community & Technical College provides dynamic, responsive, creative, and quality education to a diverse population in an ever-changing educational, business and cultural environment.
• Access: To provide students with access to learning and information through electronic education and technology in addition to traditional methods of instruction.
• Position Students: To provide students with transferable credit, employment skills, and the ability to access lifelong learning.
• Regional Needs: To be a partner with agencies, other educational institutions, businesses and industries in regional economic development.
• Continuing Evaluation: To continue evaluating all College activities, programs, and functions with regard to service to students, performance outcomes, fiscal accountability, and cost effectiveness to insure future College growth and success.
• MnSCU Goals: To support goals of Academic Accountability, Skill-based Transfer, Career Education, Electronic Education, Program Alignment, and MnSCU/K-12 Partnership.

This initiative compliments Minnesota West’s vision as it creates relationships between advisors and students which will provide students with a contact person who can assist the students in gaining access information and assistance with the hurdles they may experience while attempting to navigate the process of registration. It will help position students to prepare to be equipped with the tools necessary for the next steps in becoming a successful student.

Perhaps the main connection we will realize in relation to our vision is continuing to evaluate the current practices involved in evaluating the college activities, programs, and functions with regard to service to students, performance outcomes, fiscal accountability, and cost effectiveness to ensure future College growth and success.

Specifically, this enrollment management communication plan aligns with other initiatives within the college and MnSCU system such as:

President Gaalswyk’s FY16 Work Plan

Goal 1: Develop a college strategic plan.

Key tenets: Enrollment, Teaching and Learning, Workforce Development, Resource Development and Financial Stability

Opportunities and risks addressed:

Enrollment, completion, student voice, college growth, financial stability, and accountability dashboard.

Minnesota West Community and Technical College Marketing Plan

Strategic Direction Six: Develop and implement a coordinated integrated communications methodology that ensures student success from prospect to admissions to graduation.

• Bring together a team with: Admissions, Call Center, Prospect Coordinator, Financial Aid, One-Stop representation, and Registrar to collaborate on ONE shared calendar of communications, improving time management and student success.

• Convene campus-based advising work group and supporting subcommittee within Student Affairs Council (11/15/15)

Charting the Future Work Plan

1.1.2 Research advising best practices and develop specific recommendations for strengthening advising (which may include pre-college and current students)

• Identify and distribute campus-based best practices

• Identify training and professional development needs and programming for faculty and staff advisors

• Compile campus-level descriptions of advising process, staffing, and early alert process and report to Leadership Council (6/1/16)

Minnesota West’s “Leading With Purpose” Alignment Workplan for FY15
Coordinate academic planning that results in enrollment growth and retention.

2010 – 2015 Strategic Plan

Strategic Direction One:

Minnesota West Community and Technical College will increase access, learning opportunities and success for the citizens of southwest Minnesota.

2. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

Students will have the opportunity to form connections and relationships that will support them throughout their time at Minnesota West. The initiative will improve the college’s ability to contribute to a plan that will help students learn in a supportive environment. Success will benefit the student, the college, and the communities we serve by providing qualified graduates for the workforce in the communities we serve. It will also identify opportunities to improve the college activities by collecting and examining reasons students decide not to attend and providing further information regarding what motivates students.

Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose

3. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

- Identify reasons applicants do not register
- Decrease the percentage of admitted students that do not register by 5%
- Pilot a new communication procedure for advisors contacting advisees
- Create a procedure that will foster a continued relationship between advisors and advisees throughout the advisees education and support student success

4. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.

Bimonthly for two years: Compare percentage of registered students with previous year’s data

Quarterly for two years: Gather and compile data collected by advisors and report to leadership

Quarterly first year (pilot project): Gather feedback from advisors regarding suggestions for modifications

Semiannually first year (pilot project): Adjust communication process based on pilot project advisor feedback

May 2017: Report enrollment data for pilot project programs to college community

May 2017: Report compiled feedback from pilot project advisors to college community

Annually for three years: Report enrollment data to college community

Annually for two years after the pilot project: Report reasons for not registering to college community

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

5. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

Minnesota West faculty, staff, and administrators have been involved in selecting and refining this project the beginning. The college sent six faculty and two administrators to the 2014 HLC Annual Meeting in Chicago, primarily to learn about the Quality Initiative aspect of Open Pathways. When the group returned to their campuses they met with other interested faculty and administrators to discuss how to select a project. At the next all-campus administration day in August 2014, all college employees were asked to offer ideas for the initiative, and several ideas were offered. The QI committee met and reviewed the ideas and combined those that were closely related. Four faculty and one administrator attended the 2015 HLC Annual meeting to determine whether these ideas fit the criteria. At the next all-campus meeting in August 2015, a second survey was taken to narrow the list of about 20 ideas to five. The ideas selected were:

A. Integrate the marketing strategy to increase enrollment into the college strategic plan – measured by resource allocation, strategic plan, and measurement tools.
B. Restructure the developmental course offerings to improve outcomes for underprepared students – measured by graduation rate.

C. Produce a contract and follow-up pattern for advisors to follow using Grades First through a pilot project group – measured by retention and graduation.

D. Refresh the website to enhance usability for both internal and external customers – measured by faculty, staff, and student survey

E. Study current partnerships with industry to measure success and use current models to create new partnerships – measured by industry surveys, graduate employment statistics, and enrollment.

A Survey Monkey poll of all college faculty, staff, and administrators in the fall of 2015 asked college personnel to rank these five ideas. All of the ideas received significant popular support, so the committee applied the QI criteria to each project. That exercise led them to combine some aspects of the other ideas with Idea C to produce and adopt the current initiative.

6. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

A subset of the college’s HLC steering committee call the QI committee has taken the lead on this initiative. The QI committee members have participated in webinars and HLC pre-conference workshops to prepare for the initiative. The QI committee is made up of two administrators and six faculty members.

7. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

Release time will be provided to a member of the committee to lead the committee and initiative. In addition, the college’s enrollment management director has been a part of the development and will work collaboratively with the QI committee to advance the initiative.

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative (The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

1. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

   Summer 2016: Outline current practices used to communicate with admitted students

   Create a work group comprised of marketing staff, admissions staff, and advisors to determine current practices. This work group will inventory processes and procedures and identify what works well as well as areas needing improvement. A report will be submitted to the Quality Initiative Committee.

   Fall 2016: Create the Pilot Project

   September 2016:
   - Identify programs that have a high percentage of admitted students who do not register.
   - Identify advisors who will fully participate in the pilot project.
   - Determine a start and end date to collect the pilot project data

   October 2016: Formulate an enrollment communication plan
   - Admissions staff begins to alert advisors of new advisees admitted biweekly
   - Advisors begin contacting admitted students
     - See script example attached
   - Advisor determines if admitted student does not plan to register
   - Advisor records reasons admitted student do not register

   May 2017: Quality Initiative committee will collect and compile data collected by advisors

   June 2017: Quality Initiative committee will review outcomes

   September 2017: Based on results of pilot project
   - If the pilot project results showed an increase in the number of admitted students who registered:
Create an advisor training session for the new enrollment management plan
  o If the pilot project results did not show an increase in the number of admitted students who registered:
    ▪ Review data
    ▪ Revise plan

April 2018: Create a student survey to measure student satisfaction from registration to degree completion

May 2018: Collect student satisfaction survey, review enrollment data, revise plan for implementation

**Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal**

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

________________________________________________________
Name and Title

________________________________________________________
Phone

________________________________________________________
Email

________________________________________________________
Institution
Appendix IV

Advisor Script Example

Introduce yourself

Tell the student that you will be his/her advisor.

Explain what an advisor is.

- Explain you will be there to assist the student from this moment until they graduate (or longer if you so choose)
- Explain you may not be able to answer all of their questions, but you can help connect them with the right people, i.e. financial aid

Ask the student if they have questions regarding the college or program.

Together choose an Accuplacer/Registration date that works for both the student and advisor.

Ask the student if it is okay if you text them a reminder of the above date and other important dates and information.

- This will help retain the connection and/or relationship
- This will also provide an opportunity for the student to respond to a text letting the advisor know if he/she will not be attending OR if they have changed their plans and will not be attending Minnesota West.

IMPORTANT: If the advisor hears that the student will not be registering at Minnesota West. FIND OUT WHY!!! Record this information!
## Appendix V

Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Quality Initiative Pilot Project Participants

January 19, 2017

12 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Elaina Nichols, Laine Rieger, Leslie Bauman, Lisa Smith, Rita Miller Laurel Christianson, Genevieve Velde, Rebecca Weber, Judy Tebben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Review of Project Purpose | To improve communication between the college and its admitted students  
- To increase the number of registrations and capture students who have been admitted to the college but failed to register.  
- Determine a different approach to enrollment management by creating a communications process in which advisors would establish a connection with an admitted advisee.  
- Record reasons admitted students do not register |
| What We Have Learned So Far | Down to 16 participants  
Advisor response rate 50%  
Students who switch programs are showing up as applicants  
108 admitted students did not have an advisor assigned |
| Discussion/Feedback | Advisors didn’t feel equipped to answer applicants’ questions  
Advisors don’t realize that the forms are for their own notes regarding calls  
Advisors didn’t understand the difference between prospects and admitted applicants  
Use of Grades First for texting applicants  
Form changes required for reporting calls |

Minutes recorded and submitted by Judy Tebben