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Improvement Dimension Report

McHenry County College

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship.

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Current Situation:

PI 9.1:Assesment: To what degree does each initiative include systematic assessment?

- **The College Experience - MCC 101**
- **New Student Orientation**
- **Placement Exams - Math, English, and Reading, and Foreign Languages**
- **Advising**
- **Registration**

MCC 101 students are given a pre- and post-test to measure their awareness of college facilities and resources as well as certain topics covered in the course. All students are also required to write a final paper reflecting upon their experience in the course. Another assessment tool used for MCC 101 is an instructor debriefing at the end of each of the two 8 week periods of the semester. The results from these 3 assessment tools are evaluated and are used to improve both the format and the content of the course.

Students are given a survey after their New Student orientation seminar. An additional survey will soon be offered, pending approval by the Advising Department. Another survey is now being created for use after the parent orientation sessions.

Placement exams are reviewed and approved by the English and Math Departments. Additionally, the English and Math Departments continuously evaluate the appropriate placement of students based on their level of competency for the class where they are placed by looking at overall success rates.

Student evaluation of the advising process is ascertained from two different surveys. One is a developmental/proscriptive survey that is not too detailed, and another is an in-depth or 'intrusive' survey. Among other things, the advisors seek to determine whether the students feel that they have been given inadequate, sufficient, or excessive information.

There is currently no assessment utilization for the registration process. Surveys have been utilized in the past. There is an exit survey given to students who withdraw from all of their classes.

PI 9.2:Use of Assesment: To what degree have assesment results been used to improve existing practices across the following initiatives

- **The College Experience - MCC 101**
- **New Student Orientation**
- **Placement Exams - Math, English, and Reading**
- **Advising**
- **Registration**

The results of our pre and post surveys have indicated that the topics covered in MCC 101 are making an impact on our new students. In addition, all of our assessments (pre and post surveys, instructor debriefings, and student

final papers) from the first year resulted in a major transformation of the course. In addition to certain core topics, the students are now given a choice of seminars to fulfill their requirement to complete the course.

Past assessment on proper placement(s) led to creation of new placement exams for Math, English and Reading. Math placements were converted to COMPASS computer testing. ACT exemptions were also established. Future assessment plans will evaluate the new exam's success. An essay portion was added to the English/Reading placement exam as a result of past assessment. The new process appears to more accurately place students.

This is the first year of use for the assessment tools used in Advising. Due to this, assessment data is still being collected; however, no changes have been made.

Registration processes are not currently being assessed.

PI 9.3: Understanding: To what degree have recent assessment activities improved institutional understanding of the following elements of student success?

- **Student allocation of their time**
- **Student/faculty connections**
- **Student use of campus services**
- **Student class attendance patterns**

Recent surveys have been used to assess how students allocate their time. In 2004, MCC conducted the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), which was used to collect data on hundreds of variables of its students. The college plans to administer the survey again in 2007. It appears that a high percentage of MCC students are busy juggling work and school needs. A 2004 survey shows that around 84% of MCC students with less than 30 credit hours work for pay. Many of these students are working more than 30 hours a week (30.8%).

Since the CCSSE survey, Advising (during orientation and in individual meetings) has urged students who are full time (12 credit hours or more) to work less than 20 hours per week. To emphasize the point, Advising suggests that students spend two hours studying outside of class for every hour that they are in class. But, according to the 2004 CCSSE results, almost half (49.1%) of MCC students with less than 30 cumulative credit hours say that they spend less than 5 hours a week studying. Although many students spend little time studying, 59.5% of MCC staff and faculty say their work with new students is never or rarely influenced by the measurement of student time spent studying.

Along with Advising, the new college experience course (MCC101) spends time trying to get students to understand the demands of a busy schedule. Time management is one of the major focuses in the class. One assignment in the class requires that students fill out a time chart to give them a visual representation of the amount of time they will have available to spend studying for each of their courses.

Another focus of the CCSSE survey was student/faculty connections. Many of the questions concerning student/faculty interactions showed significantly lower scores than other community colleges. MCC was significantly lower than other community colleges taking CCSSE on the percentage of students who talked about career plans with an instructor or an advisor, and on the percentage of students who received prompt feedback from instructors on their performance. The staff and faculty survey completed for Foundations of Excellence suggests that prompt feedback is still a problem to students; 64% of those surveyed stated that the college's assessment capabilities to disseminate results in a timely manner were moderate or worse.

Many student service areas of the college are tracking student usage and satisfaction. MCC 101 (McHenry County College's first year experience class) assesses first year student's change in knowledge of student services before and after taking the class. Many students have a greater understanding of student service areas after completing MCC101.

Student Life is another student services area that tracks student satisfaction of their services; looking for student feedback on events put on by the area. After each event, Student Life hands out a small survey (which they refer to as the 30 second survey) to students in attendance. The data is then put into a small report by the Office of Institutional Research & Planning, and sent back to the Student Life office.

The college's learning center (Sage Learning Center), also tracks students' usage of the facility. New users to the learning center place basic demographic information into a computer system, as well as information on the service they are seeking. The data is later used for cost analysis, activity reports, and by the office of institutional research to track success of students using the learning center.

Currently, student class attendance patterns are not collected at the institutional level. Some faculty members individually decide to maintain attendance records, and use the data to encourage student participation.

PI 9.4:Strategies: To what degree have the following strategies been used by your institution to improve the experiences of new students?

- **Attendance at higher education meetings**
- **Participation in multi-institutional initiatives focused on new students**
- **Institution-wide exposure to external experts**
- **Broad exposure to institution-based knowledge and expertise about the new student experience**

Attendance at higher education meetings: The Director of Student Development attended a National First Year Experience conference and NACADA conference two years ago. The advisors have all attended state conferences for the National Academic Advising Assoc., and many of the topics are related to first year students. The counselors continually read journals, attend workshops, and attended the ILCCCA conference. Many of the first year issues are related to career planning, i.e. students who "know what they want to be" are more focused and persistent in their education. This past year, the Coordinator of Student Life has participated in two conferences: the National Association for Student Activities, and the National Conference of Race and Ethnicity. Marilyn Zopp has attended National and International First Year conferences for the past four years. While some areas of the college have opportunities to attend such meetings, 63% of the respondents to the Faculty/Staff survey indicated slight or no involvement in these activities.

Participation in multi-institutional initiatives focused on new students: Marilyn Zopp and other representatives involved with the College Experience (MCC101) have participated in the FOE conference and First Year Experience conferences with the Policy Center. No other areas indicated involvement. 65% of respondents to the Faculty/Staff survey indicated moderate to no activity in this area.

Institution-wide exposure to external experts: The Counseling/Advising areas are members of ACA, ACCA, NACADA, NODA, and other listservs. The Student Life and Campus Activities area has relationships with the Skyway Conference and the Illinois Community College Student Activity Association to garner external advice with regard to first year students. The College Experience (MCC101) area has access to the Policy Center. To expand our college wide exposure to external experts, MCC is hosting an assesment fair on March 2nd, 2007. The fair will include experts from many local institutions. Faculty and staff have been encouraged to attend a preconference and workshop on curriculum mapping.

Broad exposure to institution-based knowledge and expertise about the new student experience: The Counseling/Advising area reports a high level of involvement with MCC101. The Faculty/Staff survey included questions regarding this topic. Below are the findings:

Question: To what degree has an institutional philosophy for working with new students at this institution been communicated to you? 61% of respondents indicated moderate to no communication regarding an institutional philosophy.

Question: To What degree has this institution effectively organized itself to develop an integrated first college year that supports: Routine communications among discrete units/functions? 65% of respondents indicated moderate to no communication among units/functions.

50% of respondents indicated moderate to no understanding of the institution's intended education goals for new students.

Select comments taken from survey:

"The value of the first year needs to be communicated from the top down to get employees to buy into the whole idea." "Several important initiatives are on campus, but they are not cohesive." "I am a staff member and have no idea what is done. Maybe this information should be shared amongst the student service area at a minimum to align needs and goals." "No specific guidelines set." "As an adjunct, I really am not aware of the support available to new students." "I understand that the new student experience is a new program, but the constant changes to the course make it difficult for faculty to feel confident in the program--especially if those changes aren't clearly explained and defended."

Opportunities and Challenges:

PI 9.1:Assesment

An opportunity is having data in a central location giving everyone in the college an opportunity to use and access

data from different departments. Also, it could be helpful for orientation to administer a longitudinal survey, that can check on students outcomes a year or two down the road. Institute a survey specific to the Registration process. There are a couple of logistic challenges. Time to analyze data. Survey fatigue (students and faculty resist providing information because of the large amount of recent surveys).

PI 9.2: Use of Assessment

An opportunity is to share data collected from MCC101 with staff and faculty who work with first year students. Challenges include time constraints; have data available to those interested while it is still relevant.

PI 9.3: Understanding

Because a large percentage of MCC's students are working, some students may find it difficult to spend an ideal amount of time on their class work. Although the college should not limit the student's decision on the number of hours they can take, it would benefit the student and the college if a strong emphasis was placed on the challenges that will face students who do not have adequate time to spend studying.

Recent surveys indicate that student satisfaction could increase with better student/faculty connections. The F.O.E. survey as well as the CCSSE survey both suggest that prompt feedback is a problem at the college. The majority of respondents to the F.O.E. faculty and staff survey stated there were barriers to being able to disseminate information in a timely manner. It may be worth exploring the nature and cause of these barriers.

A lot of data is collected in specific student service areas on student usage and satisfaction of the services. The college could learn more about their students if the areas share their data with other areas of the college.

If attendance data is not collected in a systematic way at the college or departmental level, it is difficult to assess attendance at the institutional level.

PI 9.4: Strategies

Broaden opportunities for more personnel to participate in higher education meetings relating to first year students to include representation from all areas exposed to such students. Challenges include financial concerns.

Open up opportunities for participation in college-wide initiatives to all employees. Challenges: Getting employees to have a strong "buy-in" and incentive to participate.

Identify existing available support, research other potential avenues, and then communicate this information college-wide. Challenge: Some external support arenas, such as Policy Center, restrict expanded or unlimited access. In cases such as this, contact areas need to be clearly defined and publicized.

An institution philosophy of new student experience needs to be formally defined, written, and communicated college-wide. Information regarding specifics of existing programs need to be presented to all areas of the college. Many people are aware of "names", but not necessarily what the programs entail. Only those directly involved have knowledge. The knowledge needs to be communicated to all. Challenge: Finding the proper platform and incentive for presentation.

Sources of Evidence:

PI 9.1: Assessment

Sources: Marilyn Weniger, Director of Advising; Sharon Archacki, Coordinator of Advising; Vicki Brennan, Coordinator of Registration; Joann Scholtes, English Department Chair; Diane Terlep, Math Department Chair; Marilyn Zopp, Instructor Mathematics

PI 9.2: Use of Assessment

Personal interviews with the following employees; Marilyn Zopp, Department Chair (The College Experience); Marilyn Weniger, Director of Advising; Sharon Archacki, Coordinator of Advising; Vicki Brennan, Coordinator of Registration; Joann Scholtes, English Department Chair; Diane Terlep, Math Department Chair

PI 9.3: Understanding

CCSSE survey feedback, MCC101 student feedback

PI 9.4: Strategies

Personal interviews with the following employees: Marilyn Weniger, Director Student Development; Ralph Gardner, Coordinator Student Life; Patty Domin, Athletics Program Assistant; Beverly Albright, Coordinator Special Needs; Deborah Skozek, Coordinator Sage Learning Center; Faculty/Staff Survey, Marilyn Zopp, Department Chair (The College Experience)

Recommended Grade: C-**Recommended Action Items:**

- Have data in a central location giving everyone in the college an opportunity to access the data. (*High priority*)

Data relevant to first year students (MCC 101 data etc.) should be in a location where everyone dealing with first year students can easily access it (such as the inside mcc website).

- Have faculty put suggested studying time requirements in syllabus and on schedule. (*High priority*)

Ideally, out-of-class time requirements for each class would be in a database, and the total time out of class would end up on the class schedule mailed to student. This could help students balance work and school schedules.

- Explore the college's current attendance record keeping, and possibilities to expand record keeping. (*High priority*)

- Have a "College Experience Coordinator" who encourages a institutional philosophy for new students. (*Medium priority*)

An institutional philosophy for new students needs to be defined, written, and communicated college-wide. Information needs to be presented to all areas of the college. Employees at the college do not currently feel a broad exposure to institution-based knowledge and expertise about the new student experience. It is our hope that a college experience coordinator would help this situation.

- Have orientation follow students with a longitudinal survey. (*Medium priority*)

This would help the college get a measure of long term student satisfaction, and be a measure if the student still thinks the orientation was successful after spending a longer amount of time at MCC.

- Encourage increased use of Angel for more prompt feedback to students. (*Medium priority*)

Some students do not feel as if they are getting prompt feedback. We feel the more students and teacher use the Angel system, the quicker they could receive feedback from the instructors. We also feel this could have a positive impact on faculty/students connections.