

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Shawnee State University

Project Details			
Title	Improve Student Advising	Status	REVIEWED
Category	3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	Updated	09-14-2010
Timeline		Reviewed	09-21-2010
Planned Project Kickoff	01-13-2006	Created	11-24-2009
Target Completion	06-01-2008	Version	5 of 5

1: Project Goal

A: This project will address the needs of SSU students, particularly "at-risk" students, through improved advising procedures, structures and training. The student advising action project will build on advising changes and improvements achieved during a Title III grant at Shawnee during the past three years. The work with incoming and current students will expand into an advising system that serves all students and results in improved retention and persistence to graduation. One possible structural change, such as the creation of a University College, has been much discussed on campus. This project will include planning for such a structural change.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Shawnee State University is an open admissions institution that serves an Appalachian region where many students are first-generation college attendees. The recently concluded Title III project addressed the challenge of serving "at-risk" students. Freshman to sophomore retention has improved (need number here), but still remains low when compared with other Ohio public institutions. Improved advising of entering as well as advanced students is seen by faculty and staff as an important element in increasing retention and keeping students on track to graduation. Advising was in the top five opportunity areas that emerged from the Vital Focus Survey and eight action project ideas were put forth from Shawnee's Conversation Day. There is a recognition that there are different student audiences (initial advising, freshman advising, undecided student advising, semester-conversion advising, major advising, etc.) for advising and that coordination can improve among the different staff groups responsible for the different types of advising.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Advising functions are currently housed under both the Vice-President for Academic Affairs (two colleges and academic departments) and the Vice-President for Student Affairs (Student Success Center, TRIO programs, and various student affairs offices). Some student advising related to financial assistance, grants and scholarships is done by the Financial Aid Office under the Vice-President for Business Affairs. Because advising impacts all employee groups at Shawnee, the various governance groups at the institution (University Faculty Senate, University Administrative Assembly, and University Staff Assembly) will be involved in the Action Project. In addition, advising is addressed in the contract with the faculty bargaining unit, so the Shawnee Education Association will be involved in this project. The groups most affected by this project will be the College of Arts and Sciences and its six departments; the College of Professional Studies and its three departments; and the Student Success Center. Other offices on campus such as Admissions and Financial Aid may be indirectly affected by the Advising Action Project.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Advising is a key organizational process that will be changed and improved through this Action Project. Other processes such as registration, new student orientation, and mathematics and English placement may also be affected.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Shawnee State University is transitioning from a quarter calendar to a semester calendar. The semester calendar will begin in the fall of 2007. This project will be in place during the switch to semesters and beyond to assure the implementation of new procedures and structures and the collection and analysis of data regarding the impact of the project.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: An Action Project Team of 6-8 members will be formed to provide the detailed planning, implementation, and assessment of the Advising Action Project. The university's Strategic Planning Committee will provide an oversight and coordination role with the Action Projects. Administrative responsibility for monitoring and assisting the Action Project progress will be with the Associate Provost/Director of Institutional Planning.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: • The overall goal of this project is increased student retention and improved persistence until graduation. Both of these measures will be used to determine the success of this project. • Student satisfaction surveys (Noel-Levitz) and staff surveys (Vital Focus) have given data on perceptions about advising. Future surveys of students and employees will be used to measure changes in satisfaction with advising. • Other possible outcome measures that will be considered are indirect measures of advising success such as fewer course deficiencies or course waivers at graduation, loss of students because of the transition to semesters, increased visits by students to faculty during office hours, etc.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: A reorganization in the Division of Academic Affairs will put into place an Academic Dean for the University College. The University College provides advising to well over 60% of our student population.

Also, the "Shawnee Connect" program which assigns new student to "mentors" has been "institutionalized and expanded" from its original pilot. Nearly 100 new students entering the university in the Fall 2010 semester will be assigned a mentor for the purpose of "connecting" with the university and its resources.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The Enrollment Management Committee met several times during the 2009/10 academic year. Staff members in the Student Success Center have been instrumental in the "institutionalization" of the Shawnee Connect Program.

3: Next Steps

A: We continually work to improve advising on our campus. The university is beginning discussions regarding the implementation of "admission requirements". Should we move in that direction, the number of low ability students will be diminished which should free up some staff time to better serve more able students.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: As this project continues, we realize that it may have been too ambitious as originally submitted. Through the Action Project, we are seeing ways of breaking it down into smaller, more manageable components, that may become new Action Projects on their own.

5: Project Challenges

A: As we continue to grow, our resources continue to be strained in an effort to provide quality advising.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Based on the objectives of this project, along with the strides made over the past 4 years, this project appears to be a great success. Shawnee State University should be commended on the accomplishments of this project. The implementation of a University College and the institutionalizing of the Shawnee Connect program are key accomplishments in the success of this project. The college is encouraged to continue to administer the surveys created in previous years, and to use this as ongoing data to ensure the sustainability of this initiative.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Shawnee State University should be commended for its ability to involve all key stakeholders in this process. By involving multiple departments and stakeholders, the institution appears to have accomplished the majority of the desired outcomes of this project. The university is encouraged to use this project, and the framework it is built around, as a model and training tool for future comparable projects.

3: Next Steps

A: With the success of this project, Shawnee State University may consider retiring this project, or potentially modifying it to work as a platform for the potential admission requirements, and other, projects.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: As multiple objectives of the project appear to be met, it may well serve the college to break this project into multiple components. These very well could become future Action Projects, using this project as the model of success for these future projects.

5: Project Challenges

A: As new projects are identified, based on this project, the college may find opportunities to further improve advising initiatives through the use of the continuous improvement concept.