The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Bay de Noc Community College

Project Details

Title	Scheduling Management	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	6-Supporting Institutional Operations	**Updated**	09-11-2008
Timeline		**Reviewed**	10-02-2008
Planned Project Kickoff	07-01-2006	**Created**	11-24-2009
Actual Completion		**Version**	2

1: Project Goal

A: The purpose of this project is to examine course scheduling processes and implement methods to improve efficiencies while continuing to maintain a balance with our institutional mission of serving the diverse educational needs of our region. Upon completion of this project, the institution will have in place an efficiency-based, systematic process to create each semester's class schedule. The underlying methodology for this process will rely on historical enrollment data to identify the optimal number of sections to offer and the days and times at which to offer them. Course offerings will be based upon percent of historical capacity across a division, allowing for some lower enrollment classes to be offered if offset by other higher enrollment classes. An electronic data retrieval system will be developed to view past and current enrollment data for use in scheduling decisions. Student satisfaction will improve as students have earlier access to scheduling information and experience fewer class cancellations.

2: Reasons For Project

A: This project was originally one aspect of a much larger Fiscal Stability AQIP Action Project, submitted in 2004. Needing a more manageable project, the institution narrowed the fiscal stability project to focus on one of its "sub-projects," scheduling management. The results of this project will improve operational efficiencies, contributing to greater fiscal stability of the college – a priority for all colleges facing budget challenges. The college established Scheduling Management as one of its 2005-2007 Institutional Initiatives. Currently, Bay College courses are filled to an average 70% of capacity – with lows of 52% at the West Campus and highs of 93% in online courses. It is anticipated that using historical data to develop a course schedule reflecting students' preferred days and times will increase percent of capacity, reduce the number of cancelled courses, and increase student satisfaction.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The organizational areas most directly impacted by this project will be the instructional divisions (faculty and deans) and the Student Services Division. Consequently, the project is being co-led by the Vice President of Instruction and Student Learning and the Vice President of Student Services. A team of 17 individuals has been created to provide input into the project's direction and to share information within their respective divisions. Final decision-making responsibility will reside with the team leaders and with endorsement from the institution's Executive Management Team. The project team consists of instructional division chairs; instructional deans; the Vice President of Information & Technology Services; the full-time faculty association president; a part-time faculty representative; the West Campus coordinator; the Executive Director for Workforce Development; the administrative assistant responsible for assigning classes to classrooms; and two members of the original AQIP Fiscal Stability project team – the Vice President for Administrative Services and a full-time faculty member. Although not a member of the team, the Director of Institutional Research and Planning will attend meetings and serve as the AQIP liaison. The CI Steering Committee will receive regular project updates and provide process assistance when needed. Team leaders will keep the Board of Trustees abreast via their monthly reports to the board.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The institutional processes most effected by this project will be 1) the process to determine which classes to offer and at what times [future class schedules will be developed using historical data rather than divisional preferences]; 2) the process of developing the course schedule booklet [the institution hopes to permanently move to a full-year schedule booklet rather than a semester booklet]; and 3) the "go/no-go decision" for low enrollment classes [the current "go/no-go" number is 13 for Delta County lecture-type classes and 8 for out of county courses.] The new system will not replace the current "go/no-go" number system; those decisions will continue to

be made according to the contract requirements. The new process will, however, focus on making more accurate projections on the front end of the schedule development. As we develop the optimum schedule – a schedule that offers courses during days and times most requested by students – there will be fewer low-enrollment classes, resulting in fewer cancellation decisions. In order to fulfill the college's mission of serving students needs, we will continue to run an occasional class with less than 50% enrollment. In order to capture adequate documentation of those classes, we will develop a database for tracking both low enrollment and cancelled course data.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Meetings with the entire team will be held once a semester to provide progress reports and obtain feedback. Annually when the team meets during the Fall semester, data will be presented to allow evaluation of the previous year, identifying areas of improvement and reconfirming the annual targets and benchmarks. Other project task meetings will be held with the individuals directly involved with associated tasks. The primary steps to complete this project include: • Obtain student scheduling preferences via surveys and historical scheduling data • Complete a state-wide community college survey to identify current "best practices" in data-based scheduling • Develop the data access system for instructional divisions to view historical data • Develop a database in which to track Course Exception data • Establish benchmarks and annual targets for improvements • Provide training to Deans and Division Chairs on how to utilize the data retrieval system for schedule development. • Compile a written procedure for divisions to use when developing class schedules.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Entire project team meetings will occur each semester at which minutes will be taken. Copies will be distributed to all team members and to CI Steering Committee members. Progress will be monitored by both groups at their respective team meetings. Verbal updates will be given at cabinet and executive team meetings, and monthly reports to the Board of Trustees will include project updates. As part of the project, the project co-leaders will compile a written procedure for divisions to use when developing class schedules. Upon completion of the project, the project leaders will present both a written and verbal report to the CI Steering Committee and the president's cabinet. The written report will be available on the college intranet for all employees. In addition, annual reports will be sent to AQIP for review as part of our re-accreditation requirements.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Several indicators will be used to measure effectiveness: • Class enrollment, measured as a percent of institutional capacity, will increase. • Classes with enrollments of 50% or less will decrease. • Adjunct instruction and overload budgets will decrease as fewer lower enrollments classes are held. • Student satisfaction will increase as fewer classes are cancelled; as classes are offered on preferred days and times; and as course schedules are published a year in advance. With assistance from the Director of Institutional Research, the project leaders will use historical data to identify benchmarks and develop annual improvement targets.

8: Other Information

A: There are no direct costs anticipated for this project. Consulting with other colleges will continue to occur via telephone, conferences and statewide meetings. AQIP reviewers will provide feedback in response to our annual reports; consulting is also available upon request. The Information & Technology Division will provide the needed software for development of the data retrieval system. The institution's data analyst will develop the system to summarize and display historical scheduling data on the college's web portal; she will also provide any needed training

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The Scheduling Management project was initiated in July 2006 as an offshoot of a larger Action Project on "Fiscal Stability." The plan was to develop and use an electronic data system to store and retrieve historical enrollment data that could be used to project optimal numbers of sections and scheduling times for courses. For a variety of reasons, including personnel, IT infrastructure, and financial, however, the IT component of this project never materialized. Progress has been made, within the limitations of the current system. In

the past year, the minimum "go" number (the number of enrollees required to run the class) issue was addressed and is now reflected in the faculty contract. The minimum number of enrollments increased for West Campus classes and was established (for the first time) for online courses. Also during 2007-08, the process for Scheduling Management was implemented as it was piloted in 2006-07. Faculty division chairs and the academic deans were provided hard copy data reports from the previous year's offerings, including Division Course cancellations lists, Exception Reports and the previous year's schedules. In addition, Division chairs and Deans received enrollment reports for the previous 5 years for both campuses and online offerings. These reports provided specific head count, credits, contacts, average class size, number of sections offered and percentage of seat capacity filled by students. Although using hard copy data was time consuming, Division Chairs and Deans were able to create course schedules based on historical data rather than divisional preferences. Improvement in scheduling management, evidenced by increased seat capacity filled by students, fewer low enrollment courses and fewer course cancellations has been observed over the period of the project. Fall capacity averages (percent capacity enrolled in all course offerings) increased from 70.6% to 74.4% over the project span, while winter capacity averages increased from 68.8% to 70.8% overall. The electronic exception report, created in 2006-07 continues to serve an important role in deans' decision making and is used to track and justify the running of some courses with enrollments less then 50%. Although the number of cancelled classes was similar in 2007-08 as in the previous year (approximately 100 total for fall and winter semesters), Winter 08 semester cancellations were much improved over Winter 07 (down from 42 to 31).

2: Institution Involvement

A: The Instructional Leaders Team (ILT) addresses all cross-divisional issues that relate to instruction and learning. Members of this Team include: the VP for Instruction and Student Learning, The VP for Student Services, the academic Deans, the West Campus Executive Dean, Faculty Division Chairs representing all 6 academic divisions, the President of the Full-time Faculty Association and the President of the Part-time Faculty Association. In 2007-08, the VP for Information Technology was added as a member of the ILT, in an effort to ensure continuing dialogue between the divisions regarding the use of technology to support improved teaching and learning and decision making. From the ILT, a subgroup led the scheduling management project. The team followed the previous year's process of providing members of the ILT hard copy data and information (as listed under Question #1), and leading a review and discussion of the data and how it could be used to create an efficient schedule. Division chairs took the information and guidelines back to their divisions and used the data, in collaboration with faculty, to draft a course schedules for the upcoming academic year. Schedule drafts were then presented to the Instructional Leaders Team where they were reviewed and finalized.

3: Next Steps

A: We are agreed that we have made as much progress on this Action Project as is possible without computer enhancements that would make electronic retrieval of enrollment data available for decision making. The original goals of the project have been reached and processes that have improved overall efficiency have been institutionalized. Therefore, we will be formally retiring the Scheduling Management project this fall as we bring on new AQIP projects. Two contextual pieces also influenced the decision to retire this project. First is a stronger focus on providing a wide array of scheduling options. When this project began, efficiency was the focus and the priority. In the past 2 years, with a new president and a renewed focus on the community college mission, meeting our diverse student population's needs for scheduling options has become more important in the process of making "go/ no go" decisions about courses. Secondly, our West Campus (new in Fall 2007), has experienced exceptional growth, beyond the anticipated enrollment increases. Because this market is one that we want to continue to grow, we are committed to offering programs and classes that will attract future students to the campus and have continued to allow classes to "go" with lower enrollments to build the community college identity and experience.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Two effective practices have resulted from this project: (1) The philosophy and process for Scheduling Management has become explicit. Prior to this project, courses were scheduled based on past practice and previous schedules. Courses were cancelled based solely on "go/no-go" numbers. The new approach to scheduling is a more proactive approach that uses data to determine which classes historically fill first and offering those courses. Additional courses are added to accommodate students' course needs once the first-offered courses are filled. The result is that fewer courses need to be cancelled. This new approach has been widely accepted and incorporated into the practices of all divisions. (2) Teamwork and cross-department communications has been enhanced. The academic Deans, faculty members and ILT have established procedures through dialogue and discussion. This has resulted in the ability of the college to respond to the nuances of Scheduling Management in positive ways—and has set the groundwork for our next steps of improvement.

5: **Project Challenges**

A: The largest remaining challenge is to establish an electronic data retrieval system up and running for data-support decision making. When this data system becomes a reality, the need to develop a new Action Project for Scheduling Management will be considered.

6: **AQIP Involvement**

A:

Update Review

1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**

A: This project has been "completed," in the sense that the timeline has been completed and the project is being retired. The institution made reasonable progress on the initial goals of reducing class cancellations and improving the percentage of seat capacity filled. The attainments appear relatively modest for the amount of work committed to the project over the two year period, the project itself has contributed to a broader continuous improvement culture by creating new working combinations and by encouraging faculty and staff to use data more effectively and to ask different questions of it than had been the practice. It is evident that there has been considerable learning related to Criterion 6 – Supporting Institutional Operations and Criterion 7 – Measuring Effectiveness – that will inform future development of data systems to support decision making. An assessment by participants to document how each office used or needed data and in what format that data could be most useful should be recorded to inform any future IT developments related to scheduling improvements.

2: **Institution Involvement**

A: The broad-based participation across traditional administrative and academic lines over the two-year project period indicates a commitment to project-based team building (Criterion 5 – Leading and Communicating). It is not possible from the update to determine if the gains achieved on seating capacity improvement were spread evenly across the college or were experienced in only a small group of instructional units. This should be examined to determine the effectiveness of assessment-based decision making by the unit heads.

3: **Next Steps**

A: The creation of new leadership directions for the college, partly from new leadership and partly in response to changing environment, has made further development of this particular project less important. (The new directions align with Criterion 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.) Within the new paradigm of thinking about enrollment management, it will remain important to develop the data support mechanisms that will help guide efficiency and student satisfaction with scheduling issues. Growth and the accompanying possibilities should not overshadow the continuing need for improvement or efficiency that originally guided this project's development.

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

A: This project has led to the college assessing its methods and readiness for continuous improvement and provided experience in creating new processes to accomplish that improvmenet (Criterion 7, Measuring Effectiveness; Criterion 8, Planning Continuous Improvement). It is also evident that the college's leadership has made decisions, perhaps influenced by examining the focus of this and other specific projects, that make the college's goals more overarching and aware of the college's role in the local economy and the regional educational system (Criterion 9, Building Collaborative Relationships).

5: **Project Challenges**

A: This project will better inform data system development that may support scheduling practices in the future. That should remain a priority for the sake of efficiency and student satisfaction. This project, retired because of decisions to provide more options in scheduling in order to grow enrollment, will remain valuable if it contributes to thinking

6:	**AQIP Involvement**
A:	The institution has made reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture. The project has been retired has incorporated into an ongoing effort. 9814