
Action Project

Institution:	Lansing Community College	Contact:	Penny A. Denczek
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 10-01-2006

Target completion date: 01-01-2005

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Strategic Alignment Initiative

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The goals of the Strategic Alignment Initiative are: 1. Increase communication and awareness among LCC leadership and other staff and faculty about the importance of, and progress being made on, the College's Strategic Plan 2. Strengthen the sense of teamwork, collaboration, and commitment necessary for successful implementation and updating of the plan 3. Increase opportunities to align Division activities with the plan 4. Increase the College leadership's ability to address barriers to implementing the plan

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Leading and Communicating

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

LCC's Strategic Plan consists of three major themes; success, access, and innovation, for accomplishing the goals, and several approaches or initiatives linked to each theme.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

All divisions of the College, and their respective departments, are affected by this initiative. The College's Executive Leadership Team and the President will be affected by the increased volume of structured information they will receive concerning progress on strategic initiative. Deans and leaders of major non-academic units will collectively create a comprehensive picture of initiatives and their alignment with the College's strategic plan.

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

1. Quality and strategic planning processes will be strengthened by improved alignment between College's strategic priorities and Division objectives. 2. Internal communication process will be more effective by increasing dialogue and understanding of strategic initiatives and Division objectives among College leadership and administrators. 3. Annual resource allocation process will become more transparent by increased understanding of College-wide priorities related to the plan.

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to

target completion):

The Strategic Alignment Initiative will engage the attention and energy of the College's leadership and staff through the following means: 1. At least monthly, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will discuss at one of its weekly meetings the major developments and issues relating to implementation of the Strategic Plan. 2. Division leadership will be asked to provide their staff with strategic plan progress reports and solicit input on that progress during their already established schedule of meetings, such as the Quarterly Division Meeting with Department Chairs, Deans and Administrators and the Fall and Spring "kickoff" meetings. 3. Division leaders will be asked to make strategic plan progress reports and answer questions at the monthly Administrative Leadership Team Meetings chaired by the President.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

The process measures that will be tracked are: 1. The clarity of Division objectives as they relate to the plan 2. Successful progress toward completing the Divisions' measurable objectives 3. An increase in the number of opportunities for dialogue about the Strategic Plan 4. College leadership satisfaction with the Strategic Alignment Initiative

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

The outcome measures will focus on the degree of progress in accomplishing initiatives in the strategic plan. Determining this degree of progress requires tracking the accomplishment of Division objectives that are aligned with the strategic initiatives.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

Quantitative: Increase in percentage of employees who feel they understand the direction in which the College is headed (as measured in the Annual Employee Survey) Qualitative: 1. Division objectives for implementing the Strategic Plan will be more specific, measurable, and aligned with the plan 2. Opportunities for and instances of collaboration on Strategic Plan initiatives will increase. 3. The opportunities for dialogue and feedback on plan progress will increase. Not applicable Not applicable

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2007-09-14

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

The President created a Strategic Planning group that met monthly to create institutional goals, objectives and initial metrics. The group was split into task forces according to the six goals of Accessibility, Community, Employees, Fiscal Responsibility, Quality and Student Success; which met monthly on their respective goals and objectives to review, revise and prioritize. At the July 2007 meeting, this group decided that the importance of quality to each institutional goal made quality not a goal, but an overarching control. An institutional goal matrix was created, which was presented at a meeting 9/14/07, launching the next phase of the plan. This plan will fully integrate the Strategic Goal Matrix as evidence of our institutional commitment to

continuous quality improvement and to the strategic plan.

Review (09-18-07):

The team has structured this effort sensibly, utilizing full group meetings to maintain unity of purpose and coordination of efforts, along with smaller task forces to provide the critical focus needed to ultimately achieve the defined Goals. The team showed agility and foresight (two of the principles of high performance organizations) when it realized that quality was more appropriately an overarching control, rather than one of the individual goals. This recognizes that quality should be designed into the planning of every goal, and is a key to successfully achieving any project. One could also make a case for a number of other facets of project design to be included as 'overarching controls', such as open communication, a collaborative/participative approach, project stewardship, etc, each of which is in evidence in this Project.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

A group of over 50 institutional leaders have been meeting on a monthly basis as well as independent groups in-between regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Highly interactive dialogue, encouraging, safe, collaborative environment was present at all meetings held. We kept this Project on the institutions priority list by frequent communication, responding to their inquiries and providing resources. Conference calls, electronic communication and face-to-face meetings were utilized. Various internal and external stakeholders presented and/or facilitated the regularly-scheduled monthly meetings to provide different perspectives.

Review (09-18-07):

Providing a safe environment for communication has already paid dividends in the form of building collaborative relationships (AQIP Category 9) and understanding the needs of stakeholders (AQIP Category 3), which provide a foundation for developing effective strategies and facilitating the buy-in necessary for successful implementation of those strategies. A more subtle benefit of creating this kind of working environment is conveying the message that each participant's viewpoint is valued, and by extension, that the participant is also valued (AQIP Category 4). The team is to be congratulated for taking the time and effort to make this happen. The communication within the Strategic Planning group appears to have been extensive and well-designed. The team may also want to consider what kinds of external communications might be beneficial, and when they should occur. Members of the college community who are not part of the Strategic Planning group have a vested interest in the strategies that will ultimately emerge from the deliberations, and are more likely to accept those strategies if they have an understanding of how they were developed. However, this transparency comes with a risk of opening up a public debate over strategies that have not yet been finalized.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

The third component consists of creating an operational framework and master plan to implement metrics consisting of, but not limited to; designing and implementing processes, developing plans, data collection and creating evaluations and surveys. We will utilize process documenting and diagramming to solve persistent operational issues, using quality evaluative techniques to acquire measurements of results both qualitative and quantitative. We will be developing a timeline and identifying resource requirements.

Review (09-18-07):

The team's plans are a continuation of the organized, systematic approach they have demonstrated thus far. The focus is shifting to developing metrics to measure effectiveness (AQIP Category 7) which will provide a means of tracking progress towards each of their goals.

The team may want to consider using Policy Deployment (a.k.a. hoshin kanri) in this phase of the project. Policy Deployment is a proven quality tool which helps organizations align priorities (i.e. to deploy the strategic Goals and metrics to each Division). This technique is especially useful when trying to keep the actions of independent groups aligned with institution-wide goals.

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

A direct outcome of this process has been an enhanced and honed culture of strategic decision. Through collaborative decision making in a safe environment that encouraged positive debate, discussion, and out of the box thinking, the end result yielded thoroughly evaluated and embraced goals, objectives and metrics. Of equal value though, was the emergence of a process and model for strategic decision making.

Review (09-18-07):

The efforts of the team thus far have enhanced the organization's ability to develop and deploy long-term strategies, a key element of AQIP Category 5 (Leading and Communicating). Developing a model for making decisions has at least two benefits. First, better decisions can be expected on a more consistent basis. And second, when decisions are made by following a defined process, those involved are more likely to feel that the decisions are arrived at fairly (even when they might not fully agree with the final decision).

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

A challenge we face is competing priorities in relation to limited resources which include time, effort, energy and finance restraints. We plan to address this by developing a timeline and identifying resource requirements.

Review (09-18-07):

Employing a timeline and realistically estimating resource requirements can help maintain the momentum and focus developed thus far, critical to achieving the Goals laid out in this Action Project. The team has appeared to have built a consensus among a large and diverse membership, and is poised to implement important improvements to a fundamental part of any successful organization – setting and achieving long-term strategies. The team has reason to take pride in how far they've come on this journey, and is encouraged to press on aggressively.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Review (09-18-07):