

Orientation Action Project Update

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project. Lakeland formed an Orientation Action Project Team in April 2007. Approximately 20 faculty, staff, and administrators volunteered to work on this action project, meeting 10 times between April 2007 and April 2008. The action team invited additional counseling faculty to join the action team to draft an orientation course.

Although the action project focused on orientation, the team broke down into subcommittees to focus on specific aspects. The subcommittees included:

- A group that focused on enhancing the current orientation session
- A group that determined the information students need to increase college success
- A group that researched "best orientation practices" among community colleges

The following data was gathered and analyzed for this action project:

- Current orientation practices and programs at Lakeland Community College
- Admission and pre-matriculation materials sent to students

The following plans have been made or implemented as part of this action project:

- Developed and implemented a revised new student orientation session for January 2008. The marketing and incentives for the sessions resulted in 57% increased student participation. The sessions were interactive with students accessing myLakeland (intranet) and campus e-mail. Lakeland employees teamed with students to lead the sessions which provided students with multiple perspectives. Each student was asked to complete an evaluation of the orientation session, and over 90% of those completing the survey rated the experience as very good to excellent.
- An invitation/postcard was mailed to more than 1,500 students. Students registered for the orientation session online. As an incentive to participate, participants were entered in a raffle to win a \$100 gas card.
- Enhanced orientation sessions were offered for fall 2008. A total of 17 sessions were held with 544 students and 336 guests attending. Two sessions were designated for men and women over the age of 25, and six sessions were designated for Post Secondary Enrollment Option students.
- Determined that a modular approach to orientation was the best initial approach.
- Developed several orientation modules using Camtasia software that are housed on the Lakeland intranet. The menu is easy to access so that a student can watch an overview module that offers a good introduction to the college and its programs. Examples of other modules include admissions and registration procedures, a guide to applying for financial assistance, a guide to taking online classes, an orientation to the Lakeland library and related resources, and several modules that offer valuable information about strategies for student success.
- Two sections of COUN 1001 (Orientation to College) will be offered during the first eight weeks of fall 2008, one section during the day and one during the evening. This course is the current orientation course.
- Faculty work on a revised orientation course is underway.

Measured results for this action project include an increase in the number of students participating in orientation.

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

College President, Morris Beverage, attended the Strategy Forum and was very enthused about the AQIP process. A decision was made that the college's strategic goals for the 2007-2008 year would be the three AQIP action projects. At the State of the Campus address in fall 2007, Dr. Beverage discussed the importance of this initiative.

The President attended a Steering Committee meeting to hear the recommendations from the three action teams in spring 2008. This gave him an opportunity to discuss implications of the proposals.

The President is currently encouraging discussion that would formalize AQIP being used as a key component of the strategic planning process. He presented this idea at the spring 2008 Steering Committee meeting. There has been some initial discussion that this could be a productive action project. Further discussion will occur this fall.

General awareness of the importance and progress of the action project was maintained in the following ways:

- In February 2008, an update was presented to the Board of Trustees. The group was very interested with a lively discussion of the process and progress.
- Action team meetings were open with the meeting dates and minutes posted on the intranet.
- The Steering Committee sent out quarterly campus updates related to the progress of each action team. This was sent out from the AQIP e-mail address. The most recent update is also posted on Lakeland's AQIP webpage (www.lakelandcc.edu/AQIP). Each action team wrote a progress summary that was included in each of the four updates.
- An AQIP update was presented at "January Reading Days" in a session held for faculty, staff, and administrators.
- The President holds a monthly employee coffee forum. Presentations related to AQIP were held in the fall and spring. As part of this, the President promotes recognition of "everyday heroes." Noted participation by various action team members was publicly acknowledged.
- The Provost's summer faculty update included a feature on AQIP, including next steps.
- AQIP updates were regularly included in the ePost employee newsletter.

Various efforts were used to keep members of the action team active and motivated. The Orientation Action Team was comprised of 20 administrators, faculty, and staff. The AQIP Steering Committee identified employees with expertise and interest in this area and invited them to become members. People responded very positively to this personal invitation. In addition, volunteers were invited to participate. The action team began by coming to a consensus about what students need to know in order to be successful as college students and then proceeded to develop delivery systems that would effectively relay that information.

Names of the action team members are listed on the Lakeland AQIP webpage and are periodically updated to reflect active involvement. In addition, the names of action team members were listed on the spring 2008 progress update that went out to the campus community.

The Steering Committee agreed to begin the 2007-08 action team meetings with a team-

building activity. A visioning exercise, modeled on the AQIP Strategy Forum process, was used. Teams wrote a futuristic newspaper article that cited accomplishments related to orientation, including data demonstrating student success and a student perspective on how orientation improved their experience.

At the first spring meeting in 2008, the Executive Vice President and Provost provided refreshments at each of the action team meetings to thank members for their efforts. In addition, the President's Planning Advisory Council gave a Lakeland pin to every team member to recognize their efforts.

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

During the fall semester, we will develop additional online modules such as helping students determine a course of study and options for transfer to four-year institutions. We will also monitor how many web page hits each module gets to determine which have been viewed most often. We would like to develop a methodology to determine when students have viewed modules so that we can survey them to find out how effective each has been. From there, we can make modifications and adjustments to the modules to improve them.

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

- Bringing together a large group of faculty, staff, and administrators to discuss the need for improved student orientation was a good way to foster effective communication and to launch a collaborative project that has institution-wide impact.
- Because the modules are housed on Lakeland's portal, students can view relevant sections of orientation material when they need access to that data. The information can also be updated quickly and easily.

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

- The need for orientation of students was one of the highest rated items during our Conversation Day in October 2006. Faculty and staff readily acknowledged that the absence of a coherent orientation program has negatively impacted students as they lack crucial information that could help them succeed. While the AQIP Steering Committee was delighted with the response of volunteers to work on the action project, attendance at meetings waned over the course of two semesters.
- Moving from initial interest to buy-in and active participation remain challenges to be addressed.
- The orientation sessions during fall 2008 were very well received by those who participated, but it is impossible to deliver all of the information that students need during an orientation session. We remained concerned that the students who need orientation the most are least likely to take the time to view the modules. Lakeland is considering a review of its General Education curriculum. At that time, the college's faculty must discuss making orientation or a First-Year Experience course mandatory. That has not been possible to date because many of our programs are at their credit limits.
- Typical orientation courses have been taught by faculty counselors. If we develop a mandatory course, we may need to include other faculty in teaching these sessions. This would increase awareness of students' needs across the campus.
- It is also imperative that we find a way to involve more faculty and staff in orientation activities. The Student Development staff has historically been responsible for orientation, and this group took the lead again this fall. However, given the student population at Lakeland, it is impossible for one small segment of the staff to be solely responsible for orientation of all new students. One of the reasons faculty do not participate is that orientation occurs during winter and summer break, when faculty are not on campus.

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?

The action team seems to be making progress, but feedback is always welcome.