

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Des Moines Area Community College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Stage 2- Honors Program Viability and Assessment	<b>Status</b> DRAFT
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b> 10-07-2013
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 10-15-2013
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 10-01-2011	<b>Created</b> 10-07-2013
	<b>Target Completion</b> 08-30-2014	<b>Version</b> 1

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** The development phase of Honors Program has been completed. The program became active in the fall semester 2012. The next phase of this will be to identify program needs/obstacles, develop procedures to monitor and assess the program, and ensure that the initial project becomes a viable and sustainable resource for helping students learn. This project references version 1 Honors Program Development #4268. There was a technical problem with the version 2 from 08-25-2012 and its update and so this project is being re-entered as of 10-01-2013 with a mid-project update as of 10-07-13 and target completion of 08-30-2014.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** While the Honors Program was launched this fall 2012, it must be monitored and tested to ensure that the program is viable. Data needs to be collected on Honors students over the next two years in the areas of applications, acceptances, academic programming resource availability, as well as student retention, success and graduation. The Honors Advisory Council will monitor the data each year to identify needs and gauge the success of the program. The Office of Institutional Research will be involved in the next phase of the Action Project.

Challenges already identified include:

- An effective method of identifying students in the College data base needs to be established.
- Communication between campus Honors Advisors and the Director of Honors, concerning course needs for students. High school graduates' readiness for the Honors program,
- Tweaks in the marketing for the Program, and
- Working one-on-one with individual faculty to offer Honors-Option Contract acceptance in all courses the Honors students will need in the spring semester.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** The organizational area affected are student support services, IT and the College banner database, deans and provosts, faculty and academic disciplines, and the marketing department as well as enrollment management. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will also be involved.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** Key organizational processes affected by this project include recruiting, advising, registration, and faculty development.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** This action project is projected to start in August 2012 (FY13) and continue on through May 2014 (FY14). The time frame will provide two full fall and spring semesters of program offerings. This will allow two fall/spring semesters for roll out and benchmarking and then two fall/spring semesters for implementation of modifications and comparative analysis as well as provide persistence and completion analysis.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

- A:
- Program applications and acceptances will be tracked by term.
  - The expansion of Honors level courses and faculty participation will be tracked.
  - Term-to-term persistence and graduation will also be tracked.
  - In addition, the needs will be identified and process of uniform communication between Honors advisors, campuses and the program director will be established.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

- A:
- There will be a positive growth in all measurable benchmarks listed in the Project Success Monitoring with the exception of graduation.
  - There will be an established procedure for efficient advisory communications and Honors course availability.

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The Honors Program is progressing from manual tracking to imbedded identifiers within the College Banner system; providing the ability to identify and track students by demographics, campus, programs of study, courses taken, academic standing, and withdrawal. This development has provided DMAACC more uniform data tracking ability that enables longitudinal studies to be conducted as well as point in time. This ability will enable the Director and Administration to focus enhanced marketing, resources, and services for Honors Students going forward.

The Program has been enhanced with scholarship funding. Foundation funds are now designated for Honors Students who apply on time and maintain good standing status are eligible to receive \$1000 for Fall Term, \$1000 for Spring Term and \$400 for Summer Term. Students can re-apply for a second year. A strategic goal is in place to fund the scholarship through recruited donors in 5 years.

It is too early in the program to effectively offer specific courses at Honors outside of the four required Honors Seminars. Initially instructors were recruited to provide Honors designated classes, but over the past year student needs/interests have changed the way Honors programming is offered. Students now contract with faculty to earn Honors credit for specific classes they are taking. The contract provides Honors Credit if the student earns a minimum of a B in the course as well as the identified Honors project required. While there is still interest on the part of both faculty and students for specific courses, the program base needs to become more established first.

Data:

Term Fall 2012: Census=50 Stdnt Withdrawals=11 Admin Withdrawals=7 Good Standing >=3.5gpa=32 Honors Probation=18 Programs of Study=12 Aprvd Faculty=33 Awards Earned=22

Term Spring 2013: Census=14 Stdnt Withdrawals=0 Admin Withdrawals=0 Good Standing >=3.5gpa=14 Honors Probation=0 Programs of Study=15 Aprvd Faculty=NA Awards Earned=4

Term Summer 2013: Census=0

Term Fall 2013: Census=32 Stdnt Withdrawals=NA Admin Withdrawals=NA Good Standing>=3.5gpa=22 Honors Probation=10 Programs of Study=20 Aprvd Faculty=90 Awards Earned=NA

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: Overall, the Honors Program continues to receive strong support from Sr. Administration and all departments/programs within the College. Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at DMAACC continues to work closely with the Honors Program to share potential recruiting lists for a mail campaign. A dual marketing piece for the Society and Honors Program is under development in the Marketing department. Students work with Advisors in Honors Seminar courses to plan their studies as well as contract with faculty to earn Honors credit for specific classes in their degree plan. Faculty members apply and are approved to provide Honors curriculum by their Dean or Provost. Institutional Effectiveness and Systems Integration is working with the Program to establish data collection processes that are sustainable and provide actionable information. This continues to be a whole college initiative.

### 3: Next Steps

**A:** DMACC will continue to collect data on the program until 8/25/2014 to complete the two year cycle and provide the college with actionable data.

The Admissions Committee (four district-wide raters) and the Honors Advisory Council are in place and are enhancing the application and prompts to align it with the Honors Program goals as well as to receive a clearer picture of the candidates.

Establish additional marketing initiatives with Phi Theta Kappa directly in the area High Schools to expand awareness.

Several Honors seminar faculty are developing Blackboard shells for all of the Honors seminar classes (HON101, HON150, HON201, and HON250) to promote consistency in the Honors curriculum and in the experience of the Honors students across the district. These shells house resources for the Honors seminar faculty district-wide. They will contain a base of sample syllabi and activities for use by faculty within each of the honors seminars shells.

#### **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** This Action Project in combination with the Mandatory Placement and Retention Action Project, which focuses on requiring students to participate in a highly structure Orientation to College experience, are building off of each other's successes and obstacles. Even with different pathways, they provide a collaborative two-pronged dialogue on the DMACC Strategic Indicator of First in Quality – A. Within term credit course retention, B. Fall-Spring credit student persistence, C. Fall-fall credit student persistence, D. Graduation rate. - All geared to improve student retention, persistence and completion.

#### **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** This update is a midpoint in the data collection process of the Action Project. There are no identified challenges.

### **Update Review**

#### **1: Project Accomplishments and Status**

**A:** The college has made progress toward furthering the initial action project of implementing a Honors Program by implementing processes to track students and performance (AQIP Information Principle). The addition of Foundation funding for scholarships further strengthens the College's commitment to student success and academic achievement (AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn). Having the data relative to student enrollment in Honors designated courses will enable the College to demonstrate success of the program as well as identify gaps and opportunities for improvement (AQIP Information and Learning Principles; AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness).

#### **2: Institution Involvement**

**A:** The College has involved students (Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society), administration, faculty, and advisors in the recruitment of students for the program and in the identification of honors courses (AQIP Involvement and People Principles). Since this project is in the deployment stage, an opportunity may exist for the College to establish a method to continue or broaden the involvement of key stakeholders in a manner that will strengthen the program for growth and sustainability (AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement). This could be achieved through professional development training and activities or through incorporating the results into overall institutional plans or reports (AQIP Focus Principle).

#### **3: Next Steps**

**A:** The College has identified appropriate next steps that include tracking the program through the collection of data for analysis of results (AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness). The plans to expand the application process to include a method of identifying students for the honors program, and the plans to establish marketing strategies enhances the College's commitment to this project. The use of Blackboard to provide "shells" for the classes along with faculty resources will enable the College to ensure consistency in implementation (AQIP Learning and Information Principles)

#### **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** The College has identified effective best practice of aligning the Honors project with mandatory placement and retention projects to ensure students have avenues suited best for their learning and success (AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn and Category 3: Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders Needs). The College has effectively defined the linkage of this project to its Strategic Indicators of First in Quality; a characteristic of high performing organizations (AQIP Focus Principle). The College may have an opportunity to systematically document identified best practices to share with other institutions and/or to further demonstrate commitment to continuous quality improvement efforts (AQIP Learning and Information Principles).

## **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** While the project is only at the mid-point and no challenges have been identified, the College may benefit from conducting an analysis of potential future challenges (AQIP Foresight Principle). Identifying potential future challenges may enable the College to establish strategies to mitigate any potential issues that may impact the project (AQIP Learning Principle).