

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Des Moines Area Community College

Project Details			
Title	Mandatory Placement & Retention	Status	REVIEWED
Category	3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	Updated	09-26-2013
Timeline		Reviewed	10-08-2013
	Planned Project Kickoff 04-01-2012	Created	03-26-2012
	Target Completion 12-17-2013	Version	1

1: Project Goal

A: The goal of the project is to improve student persistence and completion by providing a cohesive student resource that focuses on the academic environment/community, navigation, survival, and career exploration needs of students coming to a community college. The project design is structured to enhance and imbed the DMACC one-credit SDV108 The College Experience course, making it part of the general education curriculum and mandatory for all students seeking an AA, AS, or AGS degree. The ultimate goal is to see improvement in student retention, persistence and completion at the college.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Over the past year DMACC's completion task force has focused on improving student retention and completion. The task force completed a study exploring the effectiveness of FYE courses. They reviewed internal DMACC data that looked at the persistence of students who took DMACC's The College Experience course relative to the general population. SDV108 The College Experience was identified as a course that demonstrates consistently higher persistence and provides transferable college credit. At this writing the course is voluntary. The recommendation from the task force was to require the course for all AA, AS, and AGS degree students new to DMACC. The course competencies will be readdressed to focus on the academic environment navigation/survival/career exploration/advising/scheduling needs of students enrolling in the liberal arts and sciences programs. A common syllabus will be created; FT and adjunct faculty, advising staff, and counseling staff will be trained; and an introduction to on-line course participation and other technology will be imbedded in the course.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Student Support Services (Advising, Counseling, Academic Achievement), Distance Learning, Scheduling, Curriculum Commission, Human Resources & Faculty Development.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Initially, only FT students new to DMACC in the AA, AS, and AGS degree programs will be affected as the change in requirement of the course rolls out. After the course is accepted by the curriculum commission and imbedded in the degree requirements for the college, all degree seeking students, both FT and PT in the AA, AS, and AGS awards will be impacted. With the increase of students participating in the course, more courses will need to be scheduled and more instructors will need to be recruited and trained. In Fall term 2011 there were 41 sections of Orientation to College offered across the 6 campus district. It is anticipated that when mandatory placement fully rolls out for both FT and PT students, it's estimated that DMACC will need the resources to provide 354 sections of the course.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: It is anticipated that the project will require a year and a half as there are several major steps to be taken to implement this initiative.

- Revise the course
- Develop a common syllabus
- Recruit and train instructors
- Gain curriculum commission approval for the program changes

- Make the program requirement changes into the college catalog
- Get the change adopted in all specialized AA and AS degree programs and passed through the curriculum commission

It is anticipated that the first students impacted will be FT new students this upcoming fall 2012. In spring 2013 the PT students will be impacted and the specialized programs will have their modifications incorporating the SDV108 course in fall 2013.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: This action project will be monitored for success at each major step. The steps are specific and easily tracked to identify problems and make adjustments along the way.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Along with the monitoring of major steps, data will be collected to monitor student course retention, pass, success (=>C) and persistence at both the participating student level and the whole college level.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The steps taken to move this project from concept to actionable started with the President's Completion Agenda. The Community College Presidents created a completion initiative, and in response to that initiative DMAACC developed a Completion Task Force directed by the Executive Vice President of Student Affairs.

From there the College Completion Agenda Taskforce convened an oversight committee of student support services and academic administration who redesigned the SDV108 (The College Experience) course to a district-wide curriculum with common syllabus and assignments focusing on specific skills students need to navigate college successfully. The goals of the course are to connect students with DMAACC counselors/faculty/staff, resources, and other students, while teaching healthy lifestyles, leadership, ethics, basic study skills, diversity, and college procedures. SDV 108 faculty help students determine their programs of study and design their college Completion Plans. The learning components cover mandatory Advisor meetings; the development of a Completion Plan over the course of the semester; Blackboard introduction, web resources and navigation; and a cohort experience.

The inclusion of the SDV108 course in the degree requirements for the AA, AS and AGS awards was proposed to and approved by the Curriculum Commission. The initial rollout focused only on first time, full time students. It has evolved to all new students both full and part-time. A waiver of the requirement exists for students transferring in with a minimum of 24 credits and GPA =>2.0, summer 'guest students', or students enrolling in HON101 (which is a similar course for Honors Program students).

Instructors to cover anticipated 300+ additional sections were recruited. The textbook used in the course was updated to the 4th edition. Course training materials were developed and training sessions were conducted with all instructors. In addition, instructors were encouraged to complete Blackboard Training in order to web enhance their sections. New instructor training is conducted each summer and instructor brainstorming/design meetings are held twice a year for enhancement and troubleshooting the course.

A central depository of resource materials covering course tools, activities, assessments, literature, etc. was established and is maintained by all instructors.

In fall term 2011 there were 25 sections of SDV108 attended by 315 students across the 6 campus district. At that time the course was optional. In fall of 2012, with the requirement for full-time first time students, there were 140 active sections of SDV108 with a census of 2,501 students.

Term	Sections	Census
Fall 2011	25	315
Spring 2012	11	106
Summer 2012	5	55
Fall 2012	140	2,501
Spring 2013	59	811
Summer 2013	19	298

2: Institution Involvement

A: The flow of development crossed DMACC at all levels. It started with the President's completion agenda. From there, the College Completion Taskforce convened. It is led by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and has representation from Faculty, Academic Administration, the Executive Dean of Student Support Services, Academic Achievement Center, Counseling, Advising, At-Risk Programming, and the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness. Institutional Effectiveness has supported research data for the action project at each level of involvement. A sub group of the taskforce served as an oversight committee to move the Action Project forward. Distance Learning developed and conducted training for instructors. Program Development has committed and funded an annual budget to support continued faculty development resources.

3: Next Steps

A: It was agreed that the project as established is complete; however, the Mandatory Placement initiative will be continued for three years and data studied by the Completion Agenda Taskforce before a decision of permanency is made.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Instructors for the SDV108 course are drawn from non-faculty college resources such as Counselors, Advisors and other Administration giving students the benefit of a wealth of college life expertise. A design team was brought together to develop this course and initial instructional materials. Instructors teaching the MAT064 course have established a community repository for all teaching materials and meet bi-annually to strategize the course, troubleshoot problems and enhance consistency in student learning. The resulting best practice enhances community, sharing, quality, consistency and rigor.

5: Project Challenges

A: There are no challenges still being faced with this project.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The enrollment statistics provided in this update indicate the degree of success that DMACC has achieved in relation to making SDV108 a required course for all students pursuing AA, AS, or AGS degrees. Further, DMACC has done well in ensuring that this first year experience includes a number of practices which are designed to enable greater degrees of student success and retention; for example, SDV108 connects students with counselors, faculty, staff, and other resources which help them to create effective habits of mind and a college completion plan. This is excellent progress in relation to building a first year experience for the students of DMACC. The college may consider continuing to capture additional data to supplement the enrollment figures it already collects. These data may help DMACC measure the actual impact of SDV108 on student success, retention, and college completion which is the goal which this project supports.

2: Institution Involvement

A: This project's success is dependent largely upon the degree to which the entire institution shared responsibility for deploying improvements and recommendations from the College Completion Taskforce. A broad array of departments are represented on the project team which is led by executive level leadership. DMACC is to be commended for engaging stakeholders across the institution's structure because this demonstrates the College's commitment to the project as a high level priority.

3: Next Steps

A: The project is complete in the sense that a mandatory placement initiative is in place. DMACC may wish to carefully maintain the newly implemented processes and programs resulting from this successful project; further, it will be important to continually measure the impact that mandatory placement in SDV108 has on student learning, retention, and success. Careful and continuous analysis of these data may help the college develop additional improvement initiatives; it may also ensure that the College community remain

focused on the overarching purpose of mandatory placement which is to retain students.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: A positive outcome of DMACC's project is the collaboration between "non-faculty college resources" and faculty resources like the MAT 064 teachers. Further, this program will benefit from a rich repository of teaching materials which those counselors, advisors, and administrators can draw upon as they plan and teach the SDV108 course. DMACC may also wish to consider training needs related to the instruction of SDV108. What continuing professional development to these "non-faculty college resources" need in order to be the most effective classroom teachers they can be? Will these opportunities address more than "teaching materials"? For example, in what way(s) does the community repository address pedagogical concerns like engagement, collaboration, assessment, evaluation, etc. Needs assessment may be a consideration as the College works to plan training and development opportunities for those teaching SDV108.

5: Project Challenges

A: As mandatory placement into SDV108 is fully implemented, the College has experienced no challenges in terms of ensuring all students are enrolled in the appropriate class. This success is the result of excellent planning, collaboration, and communication. Given this very positive momentum, the College may wish to be proactive in monitoring the continued success of the Mandatory Placement and Retention program. Such proactive initiatives may involve continued measurement of the program's impact on student success and retention over time. Other proactive initiatives may involve conducting a needs assessment to determine what training and development counselors, advisors, and administrators need as they facilitate student learning in SDV108. Proactive initiatives during this "control phase" of the project may identify and resolve future challenges before they negatively impact student learning, success, or retention.