

Part H: Quality Focus Essay

Introduction

After the initial drafting and compiling of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) in December 2017, the College's Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) met in January 2018 to determine the process for deciding on the Quality Focus Action Projects (AP's). IEC was chosen as the college committee to do this rather than the Accreditation Steering Committee because of the implications for multi-year college planning and assessment.

The committee determined that the best way to get broad-based input on the AP's was to present the idea of the Quality Focus Essay at a variety of college committees and workgroups, discuss some of the initial analysis that came out of the draft ISER, and listen to suggestions for projects or even just for areas of improvement that could be turned into projects. The groups engaged in this dialogue and the dates were

- College Council, January 18, 2018
- Academic senate, January 18, 2018
- Classified senate, January 24, 2018
- Administrative Cabinet, February 5, 2018
- Student Success and Support Council, January 31, 2018
- Faculty Chairs, January 22, 2018

IEC reconvened in February with a list of 10 topics, considered the input, combined some suggestions and reworked others, and decided on the following two AP's:

- Improve Onboarding of Students
- Improve Completion of Students' End Goals

The table below identifies the two AP's and the Standards associated with them.

Action Project	Standards Related to Action Project
Improve Onboarding of Students	I.B, II.A, II.C, III.A
Improve Completion of Students' End Goals	I.B, II.A, II.B, II.C, III.A

Action Project One: Improve Onboarding of Students

Identification of the Problem

Cerro Coso Community College has been focused on strategies for improving the student experience since it joined the Achieving the Dream in 2013. As part of that effort, the College took its first concrete steps toward a data-informed approach to student success, training data coaches, generating disaggregated student success data, and developing a participatory governance committee (the Student Success and Support Council, or "SSSP Committee") whose

charge was to analyze data for patterns and trends in student success and lead institutional change for improved student learning and achievement. In 2014, the College began its partnership with the Educational Advisory Board, one of the first activities of which was to audit the College's onboarding processes from a student perspective. This led to a number of improvements in practices and service delivery, such as rewriting the welcome letter to give students very clear direction on next steps. The College's work with EAB has led it to be a Beta school for the implementation of the Navigate platform that is described in more detail in [Standard II.C.2](#). This platform provides a clearer structure for students, leading them through career interest, major exploration, and registration; it also gives students notifications and nudges along the process. This has resulted in the College's application conversion rate, the number of students applying vs. the number actually registering, climbing from 44.7% in 2015-2016 to 57.9% in 2017-2018, a 30% increase.

Nevertheless, substantial work remains to be done. Guided pathways has come along at the right time for Cerro Coso Community College in terms of providing it with best practices, a structure, and funds for continuing its work on improving the onboarding experience of students. The College has continued to identify multiple points of attrition and loss starting with first enrollment through to census. For example, even though numbers have been better in recent semesters, the College still loses 10%-15% more online students than onsite students from first day to census day.

Desired Goals/Outcomes

The goal of this AP is to focus on retaining students from pre-enrollment to census day. Students quit or walk away from education for a variety of reasons that cannot be helped. The focus of this AP is to make sure the College is not the reason, that it is doing everything it can to remove barriers, streamline processes, provide areas of interest, connect students early to programs, and be a welcoming environment for a strong start to educational plans. Critical to this effort is cross-functional inquiry to analyze the College's onboarding experience and clarity of program and pathway information for students—especially important for a College with numerous physical campuses, a strong online program, and a variety of non-traditional student populations. For that reason, it is important and necessary to develop strategies for ensuring input and applicable implementation for all sites and delivery modes. A clear charge for will need to be developed for each cross-functional team that backward-maps from the intended outcome.

Actions/Steps to be Implemented

- Develop infrastructure for cross-functional inquiry work of the institution, including the development of protocols processes and procedures, such as those concerned with initiating, scheduling and organization, structure and membership, incorporating the student voice, requesting and using resources, reporting, and acting on outcomes.
- Develop the charge for the two cross-functional teams:
 - Onboarding Inquiry- while the complete charge and approach to this inquiry will still need to be fully developed, the SSSP Committee has mapped out the following elements of the student experience to focus on improvement in onboarding: pre-

enrollment, application, core services, registration, and interim communications leading to first day and census

- Program/Pathway Information Inquiry- while the complete charge and approach of this inquiry will still need to be fully developed, SSSP has mapped out the following elements of the student experience related to pathways and clarity of program requirements: presentation and clarity of pathways online and in print, education planning's connection to the pathway and to fields of interest, and general education mapping for pathways and fields.
- Develop a timeline and matrix for the action items to come out of the cross-functional inquiry groups. Action items are expected to address some or all of the following:
 - Key communication points
 - Marketing and outreach strategies
 - The Cerro Coso College Promise program
 - Evidenced-based placement
 - Technology solutions
 - Cultural responsiveness training for front-line staff
 - Culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies for faculty
 - Establishment of key performance indicators, development of new data gathering instruments (e.g., survey) as necessary, identification of baseline data
 - Data literacy across the institution
 - Counseling/advising dashboard
 - Professional development opportunities that support items in this AP
- Implement action items based on a timeline reviewed by key governance committees, workgroups, and constituents

Responsible Parties

The SSSP Committee will be the main steering committee for all actions to be implemented. But it will be supported by a number of other committees, work groups, and units, such as the Student Services Executive Committee, the faculty chairs workgroup, and the Cerro Coso Office of Institutional Research.

The responsible administrator will be the vice president of student services. But again, it will be a team effort with other administrators, particularly the vice president of instruction, the student services directors and site directors that make up SSEC, the equity director, director of information technology, instructional deans, and others.

Resources

A variety of resources will be needed for this AP. To support the action items in this AP as well as the second AP, the College expects to focus or refocus the work of both existing and new personnel. For example, the College anticipates it will need an additional research analyst to help develop the tools needed to track onboarding data. Resources will also be needed for professional development activities, such as training of data coaches to assist departments and units in gathering and analyzing data, training of faculty and staff in cultural sensitivity for customer service and culturally responsive teaching, and training in best practices in communication and

marketing. It is expected that the vast majority of resources will be in personnel and professional development.

As this AP covers services in both student services and instruction, funding is expected to come from a variety of sources in addition to the general fund, such as Guided Pathways, SSSP, Student Equity, the Basic Skills Initiative, an IEPI grant the College secured in 2017, the College Promise grant Strong Workforce Program, and VTEA.

Assessment

Evaluation of the progress and success of this AP will be measured by the completion of specific tasks as well as improvements in key performance indicators.

Sample tasks include

- Development of a well-mapped student experience
- Identification of gaps and improvements that are student informed
- Revised meta-majors mapped to active degrees and certificates
- Development of a comprehensive communication plan
- Identification of general education pathways onsite, online, and in the prisons
- Professional development activities planned and run for cultural sensitivity training
- Professional development activities planned and run for culturally responsive teaching and learning
- Development of baseline performance data and usage data
- Automation of the application of multiple-measures according to the MMAP Measures and decision trees
- Completion of data tracking to evaluate multiple-measures placement process

Improvements expected include

- Application Conversion Rate
- Attrition Rate (= loss of students from first day to census)
- Retention Rate (= students kept till end of term)
- Core Service Completion
- Number of students with accurately declared major
- Percentage of College Promise students
- Attempted 12+ college credits in first term
- Attempted 15+ college credits in first term

Action Project Two: Improve Completion of Students' End Goals

Identification of the Problem

This AP is the companion and complement of the first AP. Whereas that one focused on improving the student experience from first contact to successfully starting the student's first semester, this one takes it from there, focusing on the rest of the student experience to the

completion of the student's education plan, whether a short-term CTE certificate or a 60-unit transfer degree.

The scope of the problem in this area for Cerro Coso Community College is revealed by its completion statistics. The most recent CCCCO Scorecard rate for completion of degrees and certificates shows the College at 38%, ten points below the state average. CTE completion rates hover at 40%, well below the state average of 54%. And the College's own in-house report on student learning and achievement, Elements of Student Success, shows the five-year average of students completing 30 units in their first year as 1.9%, which is consistent with the other two schools in the district but unacceptable.

The College has identified a number of areas of focus in connection with that this problem. One is the very large percentage of part-time students it serves. All indications are the longer a student works on an educational plan without completing, the more time there is for life to intervene and the less likely the student will complete. Data Mart shows that Cerro Coso Community College's percentage of part-time students in fall 2017 was 84% compared to 71% statewide. Its percentage of students taking 15 units—in other words, on track to complete degrees in two years—is just 3.56%, below half of the state average of 8.37%. This has several consequences for the College, including fewer completers and more load on student and learning support services, who are interacting with more students for less apportionment.

A second area of focus is the College's large population of non-traditional students served, including dual enrollment and concurrent students, incarcerated students, and online students. Part of the problem with these populations is that the College sometimes doesn't know what it doesn't know. For instance, initial indications are that incarcerated students outperform other students in course success, particularly traditionally underperforming subpopulations, but why is that? For students taking both online and onsite classes in the same semester, what guides the decision about what classes to take where—day and time scheduling of onsite courses, offerings in the major, particular instructors?—and do certain decisions lead to better success? While the students who participated in the Success Factors inquiry groups in 2017 reported they wanted greater connection in the online environment, what does this mean? Would students use an online student center? What features would enhance their feeling of connection, what would they not use?

Desired Goals/Outcomes

The goal of this AP is to arrange college operations and processes so more students are enabled to complete educational plans. In some ways, this means simply getting out of students' way—for example, making it easier for students to access tutoring help by putting it right in the classroom. In other ways, it means doing more, like reaching out proactively and referring students to support services when students seem to be struggling, or doing a better job “offboarding” students to jobs or transfer. AP #2 works closely AP #1 in being the next logical step toward the same outcome: once students are successfully through the most critical first few weeks, what does the College have to do to help them finish what they started?

Actions/Steps to be Implemented

- Develop the charge for additional new cross-functional teams:
 - Staying on the Path Inquiry - while the complete charge and approach to this inquiry will still need to be fully developed, SSSP has mapped out the following elements of the student experience for improving scheduling patterns and program completion: success in the first semester, success in the first year, completion of program, successful “offboarding” into employment or transfer (or parole)
 - Special Populations Inquiry – the following topics have been developed by SSSP related to staying on the path for particular sub-populations served by the College: the special challenges and needs of part-time students, special challenges and needs of first-generation students, special challenges and needs of incarcerated students, special challenges and needs of special admit students, and special challenges and needs of online students.
- Develop a timeline and matrix for the action items to come out of the cross-functional inquiry groups. Action items are expected to address some or all of the following:
 - Days and hours services are open
 - Open educational resources (OER’s), onsite, in the prison, and online
 - Institutional literacy for all staff for seamless and proactive referral to support services
 - Cultural responsiveness training for front-line staff
 - Culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies for faculty
 - Corequisite remedial education and embedded tutoring
 - Online teaching engagement tools
 - Online student center
 - Student-informed scheduling
 - Milestone recognitions
 - Offboarding strategies for employment and transfer
 - Establishment of key performance indicators, development of new data gathering instruments (e.g., survey) as necessary, identification of baseline data
 - Data literacy across the institution
 - Instructional faculty dashboard
 - Professional development opportunities that support items in this AP
- Implement action items based on a timeline reviewed by key governance committees, workgroups and constituents

Responsible Parties

Similar to AP #1, the SSSP Committee will be the main steering committee for all actions implemented in this action plan to be supported by a number of other College committees work groups. For this AP, the responsible administrator will be the vice president of instruction, supported in turn by the vice president of student services and a team of directors, deans, managers, faculty chairs, faculty, and classified staff.

Resources

Resource needs will be similar to AP #1. As indicated above, the personnel-related nature of the action plans establishes hiring, directing and redirecting of work, and professional development as the highest priorities. Aside from the professional development items enumerated above, of which there is significant crossover, additional activities will include adopting OER's, training in best practices for corequisite instruction, continued training in engagement technologies for online classes, enhancing institutional literacy, and using best practices with incarcerated students, part-time students, and online students. Like AP #1, it is expected that the vast majority of resources will be in personnel and professional development.

Assessment

Sample tasks to be accomplished include:

- Implementation of curriculum to allow students to enter directly into college level math and English at the main campus and online.
- Offering Co-requisite English at scale in spring 2019
- Focus group results of part-time student needs for services onsite and online
- Increased adoption of OER's
- Professional development activities planned and run for cultural sensitivity training
- Professional development activities planned and run for culturally responsive teaching and learning
- Development of baseline performance data and usage data
- Milestone recognitions/implementation of a recognition system
- Development of an online student center
- Development of a detailed set of offboarding strategies for 1) students who gained employment in their field, 2) students who gained employment not in their field, 3) transfer students.

Sample key performance indicators to see improvement on:

- % students earned 6+ college credits in first term
- % students earned 12+ college credits in first term
- % students earned 15+ college credits in first term
- % students earned 30 + college credits in first year
- % students with completed long-term ed plans
- Average # credits attempted in year one for first-time degree-seeking students
- Average # credits successfully completed in year one first-time degree-seeking students
- Successfully completed transfer-level English in year one
- Successfully completed transfer-level math in year one
- % students persisting from term 1 to term 2
- % students persisting from term 1 to term 3