

# Strategically SPEAKING

*A brief update on Operational  
Projects and quality issues  
at Stark State College  
of Technology*

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## **Upcoming Surveys Spring term 2008**

Three major survey projects that support the 2007-2010 Stark State College of Technology Strategic Plan are underway for the spring term.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) provides information on student engagement, a key indicator of learning and of the quality of community colleges. The national survey, administered to community college students, asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention. The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) is a companion instrument that provides comparative faculty-student data on perceived levels of student engagement.

In conjunction with the Career Services Office, an Alumni Survey of 2002-03 graduates (5 year) will be conducted as well as an Employer Survey which will provide employer feedback on how well our recent graduates meet the General Competencies.

## **Fall 2007 Course and College Withdrawal Survey**

### Summary

A short survey was administered to students by the Registrar's Office when students turned in their drop forms fall term 2007. Reasons for dropping courses or withdrawing from the College were examined in an effort to identify what issues affected student choices and how and where the College might be able to respond to student needs. Results indicate that different factors were important influences for students deciding to drop courses or withdraw from the College, although personal issues were cited as the primary reason by both groups of students.

### Results

A key factor likely affecting student course and College withdrawal rates was the excessive number of work-hours students reported. Almost 80% of students who withdrew from the College reported working more than 30 hours per week as did 61% of students who dropped one or more courses. The percentage of students who reported working more than 40 hours per week was nearly twice that of spring term 2007. Working more than 20 hours per week and maintaining acceptable grades is an unrealistic expectation for most students.

### Conclusions

Students who must work over 30 hours per week should be advised that a full-time course load translates to 70-80+ hour work weeks. Given that the majority of our student population is first-generation and has less developed academic skills, it is critical that they be made aware of the time commitment needed to be successful. Course-work related issues can be addressed through faculty/academic advisors, while the personal issues can be addressed through staff counselors.

### Actions

A Credit Hour-Work Hour Advising Matrix was developed in response to survey findings and has been distributed to faculty/staff advisors and is posted on the Faculty Access Intranet. Additional research examining the inter-relationships between Early Alerts, course withdrawals, and Standards of Academic Progress is underway.

*Please see the College Intranet -Institutional Research and Planning for the full Survey report.*

# Quality MATTERS

## Academic Quality Improvement Program

### **ACTION PROJECTS:**

*Capitalizing on Information/ Learning Resources to Foster Learning* - Since the beginning of the Action Project on the library a lot of work has been accomplished. The link for the *Learning Resource Center* was added to the main page of ANGEL and the main page in our computer labs. The page on our *Web site* was revamped to show the services and support links available at the library and includes a photo of the building. We are tracking the hits to the library to demonstrate a trend in improvement based on adding the link to the ANGEL main page and the main page in the computer labs. The number of hits has more than doubled since the Action Project began. We added the library as a stop for students who are touring the college. We are tracking the number of tours as well. We worked with the Director of the Library to update our subscriptions. We conducted a survey of faculty and a separate survey of students to identify resources they currently use and resources they would like to see added.

We are adding resources to our *Web site* that are free to students and the college and will help students with writing, research, paper format, etc. Some faculty members have already identified resources for the digital library *Web page*, and additional resources will be added throughout the semester. If you have resources you would like to see added, you can

forward them to the AQIP Coordinator/Liaison and she will take them to the next Action Project meeting. As a result of the efforts of the Action Project committee, a subcommittee was formed to investigate the addition of a digital library on our campus. The subcommittee includes members of the Action Project Committee and Executive Council. The subcommittee is in the process of meeting, and additional information will be forthcoming on the location and look of the digital library.

*Consistency of Policies in Internal and External Publications* - One of the first tasks of the Action Project committee was to identify all documents that contained college policies. Over 150 documents were identified through this process. A next step for the committee was to discuss how to systematically address the inconsistencies in our documents, given the number identified. An outcome of those discussions is that the committee decided that we should consider revising the layout of our Policies and Procedures Manual and the information that is included in our college publications. The suggestions from the committee will be brought to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee later this semester with the request that IEC take the suggestions to President's Cabinet. The process the committee is proposing should streamline our documents and reduce the likelihood of policies being inconsistent in publications, as well as being in incorrect locations. In addition, switching to *Luminis* as our portal will assist with the communication portion of policies by sending policy updates to all employees at Stark State College. Additional information on the recommendations being proposed by the Action Project committee is forthcoming at future President Cabinet meetings and will be provided in the next copy of this newsletter.

*Assessment of Academic and Non-Academic Departments/Programs* One of the first tasks of the committee was to identify all support services and support departments at the College. Once the list was developed, the committee began constructing a draft of the template we will use to assess the support services and support departments. The draft of the template was approved by the committee at the end of the spring semester. The template includes a *Departmental/Unit Self-Assessment and Action Plan*, a *List of Program/Service Goals*, and a *Program/Service Assessment Report*. The assessment criteria are consistent for all support services and support departments. The committee met with each of the support services and support departments to determine current performance benchmarks. When the committee had the template in final draft form, it was reviewed by the AQIP-Strategic Planning Steering Committee, the College Staff Association, the support service/support department directors and Vice-Presidents, the Executive Council, and the President's Cabinet. Because the template for assessment of the non-academic areas has been completed, this project was retired with the HLC.

A new Action Project was created at the beginning of this semester. The purpose of the new Action Project is to modify the non-academic assessment template to meet the needs of the academic division with the goal of having a common document and reporting process for both academic and non-academic assessment. The new Action Project committee began meeting this semester. Once the template has been modified to meet the needs of the academic and non-academic areas, it will be reviewed by various committees at the college. These committees include the AQIP-Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Faculty Association, Academic Dean's Council, and Executive Council. Once the template has been reviewed by the various committees, it will be presented to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee with the request that it be taken to the President's Cabinet for approval.

### **SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO:**

The nine committees have completed approximately 60 of the questions we are required to answer in our Systems Portfolio. A process is followed for completion of the questions. The committee completes the worksheet with the information needed to answer the question. Once the worksheet is complete, the AQIP Coordinator/Liaison reviews it. After the worksheet is reviewed, it is added to the agenda for the AQIP-Strategic Planning Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes additions, changes, etc. to the worksheet. The AQIP Coordinator/Liaison and the respective committee chair update the worksheet based on the changes made. The worksheet is then taken to the Extended Executive Council for final review. Once the final review is complete, the worksheet is added to the "Completed Worksheets" folder,

which is located in the AQIP folder on the S-Drive. The completed worksheets are in PDF format and are available for anyone to review. The nine committees are following the same process that the HLC peer review team will follow when appraising our Systems Portfolio. In addition to answering the question, the committee self-evaluates where it feels SSCT is on the question. The self-evaluation can be a "SS" (super strength), "S" (strength), "O" (opportunity for improvement), or "OO" (outstanding opportunity for improvement.) The committee also identifies any unresolved issues or ideas for future projects that relate to the question. The AQIP Coordinator/Liaison has tracked the unresolved issues and suggestions and will be discussing them with the respective committees. Following this process in answering each of the Systems Portfolio questions educates the committee members on the process the HLC peer review team will follow when conducting their Systems Appraisal. It also allows us to identify areas where improvements can be made prior to submitting the Systems Portfolio. Not only does this process support a culture of quality improvement but it also allows us to engage in quality improvement while drafting our Systems Portfolio.

### **AQIP SOURCES of COMMUNICATION:**

The College is using various means to communicate updates on our AQIP accreditation process:

- This newsletter is being produced a few times each year;
- Updates are reported at the monthly President's Cabinet meetings;
- Detailed information on the progress of each of the Action Project committees and Systems Portfolio committees is on the S-Drive in the AQIP folder;
- College-wide updates are being held periodically.
- Information is on the AQIP website at <http://www.starkstate.edu/AQIP>;
- Monthly updates are also provided at the Extended Executive Council meetings and AQIP-Strategic Planning Steering Committee meetings;
- Periodic updates are provided at the Faculty Association and College Staff Association meetings.

Please contact Dr. Lada Gibson-Shreve @ 330-966-5457, Ext.4326 or [L.Gibson@starkstate.edu](mailto:LGibson@starkstate.edu) if you have questions or want more information about AQIP, including the Action Projects and the Systems Portfolio.