

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Project Details			
Title	Build valuing people into everyday processes.	Status	COMPLETED
Category	4-Valuing People	Updated	08-05-2005
Timeline		Reviewed	09-20-2005
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-14-2003	Created	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	Version	2

1: Project Goal

A: Valuing people is demonstrated not by one or two events once in a while, but rather through many events over time. Valuing people needs to be integrated into all that is done at the college. The goal will be to improve the staff's perception of feeling valued over time.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Valuing people is foundational to good morale. The rationale evolved from the Constellation Survey, Vital Few process, and follow up conversations. Several items of concern arose, including heavy work loads, inconsistencies of practices by divisions, lack of support for programs experiencing low enrollments, need for more professional improvement opportunities, need for more staff input/communications, and lack of incentives for retirement. Follow up conversations led to an airing of many complaints from individuals. Some of which can be addressed quickly, others will take more time, and still others may not be solvable. We do need processes for employees to give input which will give an opportunity to assess problems and work on solutions before the problems escalate. People may not always get what they want, they may be told no, they may be disappointed, but they should understand the rationale and the rationale needs to be based on facts and consistent.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The entire staff.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Valuing people needs to be considered in all processes.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The Vital Few will serve as targets to which college strategic directions and Leadership Team member's individual professional development goals will be tied.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Number of work load problems Number of changes in support staff job definitions Number of teaching hours Number of staff utilizing professional development opportunities Reduction in division inconsistency Increase in communications/stakeholder input

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Number of work load problems solved Number of support staff participating in job reclassification Less teaching hours per 100% load More professional development opportunities Improved consistencies between Divisions More communication opportunities

8: Other Information

A: 1)Improve work load formula for faculty 2)Institute a joint management-union load committee to take complaints and collaboratively work on solutions. 3)Increase the professional development opportunities for staff. 4)Begin using "valuing people" as a major criterion for all process development and improvement. 5)Offer "Foundations of Quality" to all staff 6)Recognize the maintenance staff following the major construction projects 7)Management and the union plan a process for support staff reclassification 8)Carefully consider continuity across college functions through the Leadership Team & Deans Council1)Initiate "Round Table" discussions with the president to provide a communication forum for all employees 2)Offer a morale "booster" at fall inservice 3)Have all staff participate in the Color Matrix 4)Begin the support staff reclassification process 5)Set into place better hiring criteria along with search and screen techniques. 6)Plan a better orientation process for new faculty to adjust to the technical college setting 7)Continue to improve workload formula for faculty 8)Implement an Administrative Professional Improvement Plan that ties individual goals to college strategic issues and the Vital Few 9)Provide a better orientation process for new faculty to adjust to the technical college setting 10)Develop administrative goals tied to Vital Few 1)Implement the new staff orientation process 2)Improve contract language to be more clear and user-friendly 3)Plan balancing work loads to minimize faculty and staff burnout 4)Implement a mentor program to help new staff adjust

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: 1) A new employee orientation/academy was created and implemented in August 2004. The two week orientation program gave new employees the opportunity to learn about the College, learning, students, policies and procedures, expectations, etc. In addition, the new employees received one of the six required certification courses during this two week period. New employees are also assigned peer mentors for their first year of employment. 2) Our mentor program for new employees has been extremely successful as evidenced by the very positive feedback that we received from the three surveys completed by new employees as well as feedback received on multiple occasions from the mentors. Our year end celebration of the mentor/mentor program (called M&M) produced rave reviews. The process will continue for future academic years. 3) During the last round of union/management contract negotiations, both teams focused on revising contract language to assure as much clarity as possible. The contracts are available to faculty and leadership team members via our College Intranet site. 4) Continued review of faculty workloads by the joint management-union load team has again this year prevented any grievances concerning loads. An employee with workload/assignment concerns is encouraged to speak directly with his/her supervisor to resolve issues. If resolution is not reached at that stage, the workload team reviews the concern and takes corrective action, if necessary. In addition, the College has capped the workload percentage at 120% for faculty in an effort to help prevent burnout. Assignments greater than 105% must be by mutual consent and assignments greater than 120% may occur only if approved by the College President.

2: Institution Involvement

A: 1) A team was formed to develop the new employee orientation program. The team solicited feedback from employees who were hired prior to the start of this program to learn what they viewed as needed and helpful information. Other stakeholders also provided input in an effort to make the program comprehensive without creating information overload. Throughout the first year of the orientation, all of the new employees and their mentors were involved in providing feedback for improving the program. 2) Employees who were hired prior to the new employee orientation and mentor program were solicited for feedback about what was needed or would be helpful from a mentor. We also used best practices of other Wisconsin Technical College's mentor programs. 3) The management and union negotiation teams were responsible for the contract negotiations and language changes. Management received input from the Leadership Team and the union from its membership on what contract language was confusing and should be clarified. 4) The Workload Committee is a joint management/union team. All employees represented by the union are asked to bring forth concerns about their workload to their supervisor. Employees and supervisors work together for resolution. If resolution is not reached at that level, it is advanced to the Workload Committee for resolution.

3: Next Steps

A: 1) We will continue the new employee orientation/academy. Feedback for continuous improvement will continue to be collected on regular basis and changes implemented. 2) We will continue the mentor/mentee (M&M program) for this academic year. Same measurement points will be incorporated as last year to have baseline and future data. Modification to the program will occur based on feedback. 3) Clarification of language issues will occur during the remainder of the 04-07 contract. Notes will be taken for other language clarifications that may need to occur during the future contract negotiations. 4) Continue the joint management/union team effort to review workload/assignment concerns that are not settled at the immediate supervisor level. After three years, this action

project will be considered closed. Valuing people will remain an important effort at the college and will never really be finished.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: 1) The HR office creates a calendar in April for purposes of tracking all the recruitment dates for each vacant position. This provides a map so all vacant positions are filled no later than mid-July to assure that new employees are able to attend the two week new employee orientation which begins approximately August 1. This has been very effective and will continue. While it is not 100% foolproof due to unexpected retirements/resignations that are not announced timely, it captures the majority of our vacant positions. 2) Noting contract language problems/confusion/mistakes during the duration of the pre contract assists both sides in being more prepared for negotiating improved contract language changes. Will continue to do so during this 3 year period. 3) When the joint management/union team identifies an error in instructor assignment/load, it is able to discuss with the involved parties and move to resolution immediately, shortstopping the need for a grievance. We also use any "key learnings" as discussion points at the Deans Council (Administrative) meetings to discuss and to assure correction to avoid future problems and to build consistency across all divisions when applicable. 4) The mentor/mentee program in its entirety is an effective practice. The Dean's Council (Administrative) reviews applications and recommends veteran employees who are interested in serving as a mentor to a new employee. Expert educators/performers are then selected and commit to a 1 year process of meeting once per week with the new employee, attend monthly mentee/mentor 50 minute *Lunch and Learns*, and periodic celebrations. The M&M program provides new employees with yet another person (typically a colleague not in their division who is not a member of Administration) they can go to for advice/feedback/consultation/assistance. While the mentors are paid a stipend for assisting in the process, most view being a mentor as an honor.

5: Project Challenges

A: There remains a misunderstanding of what "valuing people" means. From time to time, employees will accuse administration of not valuing them because a decision didn't go their way or they are not satisfied with the solutions implemented. Getting people to realize that stakeholder input is valuing people but that there are usually a variety of opinions, ideas, constants, constraints, and variables that require compromise or differences along the decision making process is important.

6: AQIP Involvement

A:

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: A. Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (SWTC) has implemented a number of new processes that demonstrate that the institution Values People (AQIP category 4). The measures taken to improve new faculty orientation at the college have been successful. Initiatives done to improve faculty work loads and decrease potential for grievances have also been effective. The college is on target with completion of this Action Project. It is presumed that the end result of this project will lead to enhanced Student Learning (category 1).

2: Institution Involvement

A: B. The college has involved a variety of employee groups in its efforts to improve new faculty orientation, work load, and contractual issues. Representation from union and management teams appears to have furthered this action project. Input from both new and experienced employees and integration of best practices from other mentor programs have enhanced this project.

3: Next Steps

A: C. The identified next steps should further enhance the college's improvement efforts as it seeks to demonstrate its accomplishments on this action project. The college should be commended for actively involving a number of teams, and for incorporating best practices from other technical colleges to improve management and union relationships, and to support new faculty in their roles.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: D. A good assessment of needs and a desire to be proactive have led SWTC to improve its processes. Several of the practices that were identified are innovative and would be of interest to other colleges experiencing similar areas of concern. SWTC is encouraged to continue to monitor employee feedback to determine on-going levels of satisfaction. The area involving reduction of inconsistencies between divisions may be more difficult for the college to measure. Finally, the college is encouraged to share all practices, such as those described, with AQIP and other schools seeking advice on process improvement to enhance category 4: Valuing People.

5: Project Challenges

A: E. SWTC has likely encountered a problem typically seen in any employment environment. The needs of individuals may not always be in line with those identified as substantial to meet the needs of the majority. Conflicts are inevitable, and compromise, as the college identified, will be essential.

6: AQIP Involvement

A: F. Congratulations on a job well done. A great deal of progress has been made by the college on this Action Project. Staff morale and satisfaction is likely to continue to improve as the efforts outlined continue to be implemented.