

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Joliet Junior College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Improvement of Underprepared and At-risk Student Success Rates	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b> 09-13-2010
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### 1: Project Goal

**A:** This project will focus on implementing the recommendations of two prior AQIP projects (“Refining the Mission of a Comprehensive Developmental Education Program” and “Planning and Implementing Suitable Advising and Orientation for Students”) that were not previously addressed.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Joliet Junior College is concerned about improving the retention and academic success of all students but in particular students who are underprepared and at-risk. We know that orientation, advising, and best practices in developmental education are all avenues to improved student success and retention. Our performance report indicates that we are behind our peers in student retention and graduation rates and it is imperative that we address gaps in student performance as quickly as possible. In addition there have already been many good recommendations that have come from the work of previous AQIP teams and still need to be implemented.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** Developmental reading, writing and mathematics (housed in the English/World Languages Department and Mathematics Department); the Counseling Department, which oversees advising and general student development; Academic Skills Center (testing and tutoring); StAR (disability services); Enrollment Management committee and Dean; Academic Standards Committee, Writing Center, Math Learning Center, Project Achieve, Division of Adult and Family Services

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** • Implement mandatory orientation/advising for all new first-time, full-time students. • Require advising for all students who place into developmental courses. • Do not allow at-risk populations of students to drop below 12 credit hours without intervention. • Require intervention after a student has failed a developmental class two times. • Drop students for non-attendance at 10th day. • Assess performance and progress of student athletes who place in developmental courses and provide interventions. • Enforce completion of COMPASS testing at 12-15 credit hours. \_\_\_\_\_ • Add additional sections of developmental classes as faculty and space become available. • Explore use of ACT scores to place students into classes. Review COMPASS cutoff scores. • Provide bridge programs for students transitioning from GED, ESL and ABE classes to college-credit classes. Provide a summer bridge program for students in developmental classes. • Enhance opportunities for academic ESL. • Create more learning communities linking developmental and GSD courses. • Hire more full-time faculty to teach developmental courses. • Continue to provide teaching and learning professional development opportunities for faculty teaching developmental classes. \_\_\_\_\_ • Realign Academic Skills Center and StAR to improve testing and tutoring services for all students. • Address central intake position • Offer additional support services \_\_\_\_\_ • Partner with the high schools to address issues of articulation. • Establish developmental coursework prerequisites and co-requisites for college-credit classes • Celebrate the accomplishments of faculty and students in developmental classes.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** Much of the time-intensive ground work has been done. The focus of this project is on implementation and we feel a sense of urgency to implement previous recommendations.

## 6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Monitor student success rates by gathering and assessing data on successful course completion, semester-to-semester retention, utilization of services, program delivery and participation, and implementation of new processes and interventions (including technology support).

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

A: 1. Use internal data to identify trends, including increased success in developmental courses, semester to semester retention, and graduation rates. 2. Survey students and faculty to evaluate satisfaction with services and processes. 3. Gather data on actual usage rates of services and processes. 4. Use benchmarks of other schools to compare data on retention, successful completion of courses, and graduation. Trends indicating increases in all of these measures would be indicators of success. Any flat or downward turns in these measures would indicate a need to assess and make improvements in processes.

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A:
- The JJC New Student Orientation Program (formally group advising) was revised to more efficiently serve large numbers of students and to provide assistance to the counselors in conducting the sessions. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, over 2100 new students have attended the revised NSO program (approximately a 200% increase from last year at this time). In addition to mandatory NSO for first-time full-time students, four voluntary follow-up sessions, entitled *JJC Connect*, were piloted in summer 2010 in an effort to increase opportunities for students, parents, and families, to increase their knowledge and comfort with the college transition process. These opportunities involved student development staff, current faculty members, and continuing students.
  - The new athletic support specialist completed the advisors course and has been in his position for one year.
  - The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs added a second Student Recruitment and Retention Specialist with a focus on African-American students. He joins the Latino Student Recruitment and Retention Specialist to provide mentoring and other support services for minority students.
  - The Office of Admissions added another full time recruiter this academic year.
  - Both Recruitment and Retention Specialists from OMSA and both new Admissions Recruiters have taken or are currently taking the Advisor Training Course.
  - Three new part time faculty advisors were added in 09-10 to assist more students in popular majors.
  - A part-time counselor was added in the Student Accommodations and Resources (StAR) department to increase the counseling and advising options for students with disabilities.
  - We are continuing to strengthen counseling and advising by adding part-time counselor hours.
  - We are working on implementing an institutional policy and process that drops students who have never attended class by the 10<sup>th</sup> day census date.
  - We are continuing to look at the issue of unsuccessful course repeats through the Academic Standards Committee with the intent to provide intervention prior to a third attempt.
  - The Social and Behavioral Science department added developmental English prerequisites to Soc 101 (Introduction to Sociology) and Soc 240 (Introduction to Comparative Religions) to see if they will improve student retention and/or success rates in those courses.
  - A new orientation for international students was developed and is being coordinated through the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.
  - A reading faculty member and the JJC football coach collaborated on a pilot aimed at improving athletes' literacy and retention in reading classes. The athletes were provided with *Never Die Easy: The Autobiography of Walter Payton* to read independently without classroom support. The athletes participated in two literacy circles facilitated by JJC volunteer staff and faculty. The project concluded with a confirmed visit by Walter Payton's son, Jarrett Payton.
  - An academic intervention pilot program was implemented with the use of the *Starfish Early Alert* Software. Starfish Early Alert is an innovative academic intervention tool that supports the effective and integrative use of technology for classroom instructors and student development support staff. The tool allows instructors to easily alert students of their academic progress and behavior in a course (i.e. attendance, poor academic performance, general concerns, etc.). An alert generates an automatic e-mail, which instructs students on follow up processes and the support resources available such

as tutoring and/or counseling.

- The Academic Standard of Progress (ASP) process was reviewed in support of an administrative transition to the Dean of Student Success area. An expanded system of communication utilizing e-mail, phone calls, and tracking student follow up was initiated to support increased awareness for students on caution, probation, suspension, and dismissal.
- Fall 2010 has a GSD 085 section linked to the new EAP curriculum. By being taught in the identified EAP classroom, the course should support the formation of a community of learners.
- A LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) tutoring center has been established and is serving students. The center is also piloting the ALADIN independent study computer curriculum which helps English minority language learners to develop academic proficiency skills in the areas of: Note-taking from recorded lecture, Dictation: word endings & vocabulary. Sentence structure: choices & tense, Vocabulary, and Short answer using lecture notes.
  - A web-page, targeted to minority English speakers, was created and linked from English and World Languages and Student Services websites. Information is provided which directs students to non-credit ESL classes and to credit EAP courses options.
  - Working with Adult Education and Developmental Education, Academic Skills Center developed a brochure explaining the College's ability-to-benefit (AtB) policy for perspective students without a high school diploma or equivalency.
  - A new EAP college readiness curriculum has been developed and implemented for the fall 2010 term.
  - The ESL version of COMPASS was piloted for alignment with adult education non-credit ESL levels 5 & 6 and developmental reading and writing placement. The English & World Languages department created a writing prompt and assessment rubric for assessment into EAP writing courses. Both placement assessments were implemented spring 2010 for students taking FALL 2010 EAP.
- Developmental mathematics is addressing the content overlap in the Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra courses. The new content sequence will be implemented in spring of 2011.
- City Campus has purchased new computers and Compass and Compass ESL placement testing are now available at the location.
- The non-credit to credit academic mathematics transition will be supported by the offering of a developmental Elementary Algebra course at City Center during fall 2010.
- Collaborated with Northern Illinois University's Dr. Norm Stahl, Chair, Dept. of Literacy, NIU and Academic Fellow of American Council of Developmental Education Associations and Dr. Sonya Armstrong, Assistant Professor of Postsecondary Literacy, Dept. of Literacy, NIU to facilitate a reading audit of the general education departments to establish a definition of what college-text readiness looks like in the introductory college-level courses. This framework will guide our programming and staffing decisions (including how to best deliver reading support and what the new dev ed reading coordinator should look like).
- A FIPSE research assessment to measure gains in academic English proficiency was piloted during spring 2010 in the current credit ESL courses. The goal is to pilot a statistically validated pre- and post-test for academic proficiency which will become a college-readiness exit assessment for the new EAP curriculum.
- Two new Compass retake self-study review preparations were piloted through Academic Skills Center. Collaboration between Developmental Education and Division of Adult Education Family Literacy piloted the Career and Academic Readiness System online curriculum for ICCB. This provided access for reviewing basic reading, writing, and/or College Arithmetic content. Students were also able to benefit from a pilot using MyMathTest to review arithmetic and developmental algebra content. Both programs have diagnostic pre-tests which identify content gaps and create study plans specifically addressing the student's deficiency.
- Developmental education increased its outreach to high schools including college readiness presentations at the college district's Regional Office of Education, high school mathematics articulation faculty dinner, and the tech-prep consortium Three Rivers Education for Employment System (TREES).
- Adult Education and Developmental Education has formed an Academic Transitions Committee which is meeting monthly to streamline the academic pathway between non-credit and credit English and Mathematics courses.
- The Director of Developmental Education is 1) a member of the IBHE & ISBE state task force developing a process for implementing the national College & Career Readiness Core Standards across the state; and 2) a co-director of one of the sub-groups looking at developing state-wide standards for developmental mathematics at Illinois community colleges (Developmental Education Advisory Council).
- A task group surveyed various departments/ student support programs with the purpose of understanding overlap in services and making recommendations. The data collected demonstrated a lack of consistent operational definitions for support services and concluded overlap/duplication of services among departments. Recommendations were made for improvement related creating clear operational definitions for services to students, identifying primary functional responsibilities for each department/area (limiting duplication and overlap), and reassigning functions and developing clear learning outcomes for services offered to students.

- In support improving a centralized intake process for student contact and data reporting, the SARS (Scheduling and Reporting System) software has been extended to two additional departments over the past academic year. The Academic Skills Center and the Office of Multicultural Affairs joins the Counseling Center and the Student Accommodation Resources (StAR) Office in utilizing SARS.
- With hiring of staff for the Dual Credit Program (1 part-time staff and clerical staff), a centralized location at the JJC City Center Campus has been identified as the Dual Credit Office. This has increased the identity of Dual Credit as well as a central point of communication for high school partners.
- Recommended ACT Scores as Determiners for taking the COMPASS TEST:

1.

1. English 096/098/099: Because no data has been forthcoming over the last three years of the current AQIP project, the English department decided to set our standards high. We can always lower the number in the future, but we do not intend to review this topic again until IR provides us with the requested data. The ACT score we have determined necessary to be exempt from taking the COMPASS test is 23 or higher. These scores will be implemented for placement in Fall 2011.
2. English 020/021/096: Students will need an ACT reading score of 23 or higher for exemption from taking the COMPASS placement test for reading. Students with ACT reading scores of 22 or lower will be required to take the COMPASS placement test for reading.

- Developed a COMPASS Retake Policy for English 098/099: Developmental Writing Sequence:

1.

1. All students wanting to retake the COMPASS test for writing must first complete the writing review in the Academic Skills Center and pay the \$10 fee.
2. If a student is within one or two points of the cut-off scores for either level (English 098/099), the student may sign a petition to write an essay (the prompt will be created by the English department faculty). Stephanie can have the students write the paper in the ASC and have it sent over to English/World Languages. Three readers will review the essay and determine correct placement.
3. The Dean of Arts and Sciences thought payment for the readers might come from the ASSESSMENT budget, and she will speak to Director of Assessment about this possibility. We would need three readers for each session (most sessions will take place during the summer), and all developmental writing/English 101/102 faculty would be eligible to become readers, but all must participate in the training for this task.

- Developed a COMPASS Retake Policy for English 020/021: Developmental Reading Sequence:

1.

1. Students may retake the reading portion of the COMPASS test as soon as they determine they are ready.
2. Students should prepare for a retake using methods suggested by the Academic Skills Center.
3. There will be no appeal after a second attempt. The higher score of the two attempts will be used to place students for reading.

- Developed Recommendations for Course Repeats:

1.

1. After first failed attempt or withdrawal, student should receive a warning letter or email, similar to that sent out by the Academic Standards of Progress.
2. After the second failed attempt or withdrawal, require tutoring while taking the class.
3. After a third failed attempt or withdrawal, the student should be required to take a semester off (from all classes).

**These were the subcommittee's original ideas for course repeats, but it was under the impression that the state reimbursed the college for three class attempts. Now we know that it will only reimburse for two attempts. We are sending our recommendations to the Academic Standards committee and asking these members to review the new data and make recommendations.**

- EAP (English for Academic Purposes): This program has been approved by the curriculum committee, and placement in these classes is occurring for Fall 2010. As this program progresses, more links will be created for the ESL bridge from the City Center, where grant-funded courses for language acquisition are taught.
- Certification of tutors has been put on hold due to budget constraints.

## 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** The student success AQIP team continued to work in three committees (advising and registration, course placement and academic bridges, and support services/college and community partnerships). This structure kept a larger number of individuals involved and productive than might have been possible in one large team and individuals were able to tailor committee involvement to the issues of most interest to them.

### 3: Next Steps

- A:** The student success AQIP project will be retired this year although a number of initiatives will continue including:
- Fine-tuning both components (advising and registration and JJC Connect) of the new student orientation program.
  - Completing an enrollment and retention plan.
  - Working with the Academic Standards Committee on issues referred to their attention such as course repeats.
  - Continuing to explore the implementation of advising holds.
  - Placing an informational COMPASS alert which notifies students who have accumulated 13 hours or more hours but have not taken the Compass test that they need to do so.
  - Implementing a policy and procedure that drops students who have never attended class at the 10<sup>th</sup> day.
  - Continuing to implement athletic retention activities.
  - Continue to increase outreach to H.S. as it relates to the Dual Credit Program. Continue encouraging the Dual Credit specialist to work closely with the BEST coordinator by attending college articulation meeting for the Career and Technical Education programs.
  - Evaluate task group recommendation forwarded: Identifying and Clarifying support area/offices primary responsibility, centralized student services intake process (via SARS tool), and minimizing duplication and gaps in services.
  - Take next steps in considering use of the Starfish Early Alert tool to further engineer a manageable academic intervention and alert program that directly influences student success outcomes.
  - Take next steps to fine-tune NSO and JJC Connect programs through effective assessment practices.

**We are proud that many of the accomplishments of this team have already been institutionalized.**

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:**
- Innovatively improved the mandatory advising and orientation program for all first-time full-time students.
  - Addressed unfinished business such as the drop for non-attendance at 10<sup>th</sup> day, a 45 hour advising hold, the implementation of ACT cut-off scores instead of mandatory COMPASS testing, and intervention with students after a second unsuccessful course repeat.
  - Increase systemic outreach to critical community stakeholders, partners, and collaborators inside and outside of the college.

### 5: Project Challenges

- A:**
- Student placement in appropriate classes is impacted by enrollment growth and limited availability of some classes.
  - Use of technology to support student success initiatives (such as certain kinds of programming in Colleague/Datatel).
  - Collecting, assessing, and effectively filtering through appropriate data (qualitative and quantitative) that will best support informed decisions and strategic improvements toward student success outcomes.

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** This is the third and final year of a complex project that began in 2008. The institution has identified many activities that were accomplished during the past year in its effort to improve success rates of under prepared and at-risk students. The activities appear to have the institution headed in the right direction.

As this project winds down, the institution may want to step back and evaluate how it conceptualizes and reports its improvement

efforts. The intent of the comments which follow is not to be critical of what has been done for it appears much has taken place since the project began in 2008.

First, in all the activity that has been reported, it is not clear what key processes have been improved. Not all activities are of the equal value and activity should not be confused with improvement. Some activities and some processes are more critical than others. Reporting so many activities may actually cloud the ability to evaluate improvement efforts by confusing changes with significant improvements. In future updates, the institution may want to consider reducing the number of activities it reports and give priority to key processes that are central to the project.

Missing in the update accomplishments is data that indicates whether the changes are verifiable improvements. A few questions may illustrate the point. What confidence does the institution have that each activity that has been reported has really been an improvement? What benchmark is the institution using to evaluate change? Is the institution now closer to these benchmarks than it was before the change took place? How does the institution compare to other institutions in the activities reported?

While the institution is to be commended for the enthusiasm with which it has attempted to improve the success of under prepared and at-risk students, in the future the institution may want to give greater emphasis to systematically measuring what it wants to improve and building measurement points into the change process.

## **2: Institution Involvement**

**A:** The institution is to be commended for the spirit of collaboration it has shown and for its commitment to involvement of individuals from across systems. These are important characteristics of high performing organizations.

## **3: Next Steps**

**A:** The institution has begun the important work involved in retiring a project. This includes identifying aspects of the project that will continue beyond the life of action teams. This can be a challenging transition as the improvement efforts move from development status to institutionalized status. The action team may want to develop specific plans for how and when this transition is to take place as well as who will be responsible for carrying out the new processes on a permanent basis.

## **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** The mandatory advising and orientation program appears to be a more effective way to ensure that all students receive proper advising and orientation, including underprepared and at-risk students.

As the action project comes to a close, the action team may want to evaluate the processes it used in developing and monitoring the project and identify effective practices involved in carrying out the action project. One of the characteristics of high performing institutions is the commitment to be a learning organization. Time spent reviewing not only the outcomes of the project but the processes used in carrying out the project may help new teams build on the success of the previous action team and avoid ineffective practices.

## **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** The challenges identified are important challenges. These challenges should be passed on to those who will be responsible to continue the work after the action project is retired.

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## **Project Outcome**

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### **1: Reason for completion**

**A:** We have reached the three-year point on the project, we have fulfilled the defined goals, and we have institutionalized the processes so that they will continue without the formal reporting of an AQIP/QAP.

### **2: Success Factors**

**A:** The project had a **diverse group of participants** including faculty and staff, which allowed the project to address issues both within and outside the classroom.

The **new student orientation program** for all first-time full-time students has been extremely successful. The program has enabled the college to provide more information, advising and assistance to a larger number of new students.

**Positions** which have been added to address retention have been very helpful including the retention specialist for athletics, the retention specialists for African-American and Latino students, the additional full-time recruiter, the part-time counselor in StAR (office for students with disabilities), and additional part-time counselors and advisors.

The **Starfish Academic Early Alert program** is in its second year of implementation and is being utilized by both faculty (with classes) and staff (with cohort groups).

**SARS scheduling and reporting software** has been a very helpful addition in the offices that utilize it including Counseling, StAR, the Academic Skills Center, and OMSA.

Students who plan to enroll in fall 2011 classes will, for the first time, be able to **utilize ACT scores** for placement into college-level English classes.

Advising has become more standardized across all campuses and departments including the grant funded programs. Formal **Advisor Training** is required for all new advisors, counselors, and staff who advise students as part of their regular job duties. A **Counseling Advisory Committee** has been formed to work on advising issues and to promote better services for students.

**Developmental English prerequisites** were added to courses in several departments. Buy-in from other departments is increasing.

### 3: Unsuccessful Factors

**A:** The **JJC Connect project** which was a follow-up to the summer orientation programs was less successful in terms of participation (it wasn't mandatory for students) but we are still committed to the program and believe that it is worth continuing. We are still working on finding ways for new students to connect with faculty and academic departments early in their experience with the college.

We have not been able to implement any institution-wide interventions when students **unsuccessfully repeat courses** more than two times.

We continue to struggle with how to serve our **international students**. The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs is no longer integrally involved with this population with the exception of providing advising for students who are English language learners to assist them to enroll in the appropriate courses. The addition of an **EAP curriculum** is very positive, but we are still working on how to most effectively transition students into these classes.

Technology is not in place yet to make **advising holds** practical for students at various, strategic thresholds (such as at 12 – 16 hours and again at 45 hours) to make sure they are getting proper advice as they work toward degree completion.

Compass test alerts have not been implemented yet to prompt part time students with more than 12 earned credit hours to take the placement test.

Automatically dropping Students who have not attended by the 10<sup>th</sup> day has not been fully implemented yet.