

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

NorthWest Arkansas Community College: Valuing People

Project Details

Title	Valuing People	Status	COMPLETED
Category	4-Valuing People	Updated	05-08-2012
Timeline		Reviewed	07-19-2012
Planned Project Kickoff	08-01-2011	Created	08-29-2011
Actual Completion	07-12-2012	Last Modified	09-21-2012

1: Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

A: *The project will deliver specific measures of valuing people. The project will focus on creating measures in three categories for valuing people. These three categories are 1) evaluation processes, 2) recognition processes, and 3) development processes. These measures will be measurable, documentable, and provide data used for the continued improvement of valuing people projects. A group that includes various constituents from across the campus will be involved in the planning process.*

2: Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

A: *"Valuing People" was identified in the Systems Appraisal as an issue affecting institutional strategies.*

3: List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

A: *This project will affect all divisions and department at NWACC but will have a large impact on the Departments of Human Resources and Organizational Development to provide leadership and direction.*

4: Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

A: *An overall improvement in the measurement of employee satisfaction which we anticipate will generate greater organizational productivity.*

5: Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

A: *In order to facilitate the maximum participation across all areas of the college, a year timeline was designated to complete the project.*

6: Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

A: *Identified measures of Valuing People recommended and approved by the NWACC college cabinet.*

7: Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

A: *The identified measures assigned to the appropriate process owners and the implementation of tools to measure them. The project team will be charged with identifying the criteria for measurement in each process area: employee evaluation, employee recognition, and employee development.*
The outcome of the project can be measured by the successful identification of specific measures for valuing people that will be used by NWACC. The measures could include a survey and focus groups.

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1: Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project:

- A:** The AQIP Action Project for Valuing People task force scheduled weekly meetings from October 2011 through March 2012. This Action Project focused on three specific areas for Valuing People, evaluation, recognition and development. The method used by the task force was to address each area individually. The task force reviewed the Systems Appraisal on Valuing People and discussed practices currently in place in evaluation, recognition and development as they related to Valuing People. A College wide survey was completed in February 2012 to evaluate employee awareness and opinions of valuing people through current recognition initiatives. Additional input included task force members sharing informal feedback from their respective divisions/departments during discussions regarding methods for valuing people in evaluation and development. The charge was for the task force to identify measures in these three areas. Representative from Human Resources and Staff Development were present on the task force and shared process improvements in the areas of evaluation and development that have been initiated by department leaders placed in key positions since this Action Project was identified at the 2011 Strategy Forum. As a result the task force will suggest measurements aligned with these processes that could be used as data for measuring how NWACC values people.

2: Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project:

- A:** Each division cabinet representative was asked to recommend a representative from their area to serve as a member of the Valuing People Task Force. Members represented: Faculty, Learner (student) Services, Corporate Learning and Continuing Education, Human Resources and Public Relations. The College wide survey on recognition initiative allowed for global participation in this component of the project.

3: Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project:

- A:** The AQIP Action Project for Valuing People Task Force will submit a recommendation to Quality Council for measures that can be incorporated into processes for valuing people in Human Resources and Staff Development for employee evaluations and development. Suggestions for alternative or enhanced employee recognition will be included in addition to a recommendation to continue the College wide employee recognition survey on valuing people as an annual event.
- A copy of the recognition survey results accompanied the report submitted to Quality Council.

4: Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project:

- A:** This Action Project was aimed at addressing areas for improvement identified in the Systems Appraisal and further specified at the 2011 Strategy Forum. As a fairly new AQIP institution, aligning Action Projects with opportunities for improvement noted in the Systems Appraisal not only allowed for addressing relevant issues, but simultaneously provided learning opportunities for task force members to further explore and understand the many components associated with the accreditation process.

5: What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project? This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback and advice from our review process. Use this question to specify where your blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems are. If you have already fashioned strategies to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help beyond the review process, explain your need(s) and tell us whom to contact and when.:

- A:** The scope of this Action Project is limited due to the nature of the task force charge. The task force will not be implementing the measures, conducting the measurements, nor can the task force ensure implementation. Our function is one of recommendation. It is up to the departmental process owners to accept and incorporate these measures for Valuing People.

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1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The AQIP Action Project for Valuing People task force scheduled weekly meetings from October 2011 through March 2012. This Action Project focused on three specific areas for Valuing People, evaluation, recognition and development. The method used by the task force was to address each area individually. The task force reviewed the Systems Appraisal on Valuing People and discussed practices currently in place in evaluation, recognition and development as they related to Valuing People. A College wide survey was completed in February 2012 to evaluate employee awareness and opinions of valuing people through current recognition initiatives. Additional input included task force members sharing informal feedback from their respective divisions/departments during discussions regarding methods for valuing people in evaluation and development. The charge was for the task force to identify measures in these three areas. Representative from Human Resources and Staff Development were present on the task force and shared process improvements in the areas of evaluation and development that have been initiated by department leaders placed in key positions since this Action Project was identified at the 2011 Strategy Forum. As a result the task force will suggest measurements aligned with these processes that could be used as data for measuring how NWACC values people.

R:

The NorthWest Arkansas Community College Action Project team set up a very ambitious schedule with weekly meetings throughout most of the academic year. The college's referral to the Systems Appraisal document is commendable and indicates a willingness to receive feedback and plan continuous improvement directly based on those results. While this Action Project focuses primarily on Category 4, Valuing People, other areas might be impacted as well. Consider that effective faculty and staff evaluation might impact Category 1, Helping Students Learn, or Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives. The team should plan to gather preliminary data to establish a benchmark and then measure against these numbers to determine if outcomes are being met. Changes, if successful, can then be shared in the Improvements section of the AQIP portfolio.

The institution has incorporated some principles of high performing organizations by their broad-based involvement, promoting collaboration, and respecting people, in developing a college wide survey. It is not clear how the data discovered from this survey interfaced with the input from task force members; nonetheless, the committee should consider the creation of a formal communication plan to share the results of the survey and throughout the process. This will promote credibility through transparency, and will assure stakeholders that their comments were heard and noted.

2: Institution Involvement

- A:** Each division cabinet representative was asked to recommend a representative from their area to serve as a member of the Valuing People Task Force. Members represented: Faculty, Learner (student) Services, Corporate Learning and Continuing Education, Human Resources and Public Relations. The College wide survey on recognition initiative allowed for global participation in this component of the project.
- R:** The college designed the process to include a wide range of perspectives by involving a member from each cabinet division. Buy-in from top leadership will also be an important factor. The college might benefit from formal presentations to campus leadership and to the wider college community to increase understanding and support for the project. Sometimes projects that address evaluation can be controversial. The more involvement and transparency can be maintained, the less politically volatile the situation is likely to be.

3: Next Steps

- A:** The AQIP Action Project for Valuing People Task Force will submit a recommendation to Quality Council for measures that can be incorporated into processes for valuing people in Human Resources and Staff Development for employee evaluations and development. Suggestions for alternative or enhanced employee recognition will be included in addition to a recommendation to continue the College wide employee recognition survey on valuing people as an annual event.
- A copy of the recognition survey results accompanied the report submitted to Quality Council.
- R:** In addition to the recommendation, the task force might also wish to offer ideas in terms of metrics for success. Some of these might include creation of formal recognition events or processes, number of employees recognized, campus climate surveys, number of faculty/staff who earned certification or took courses related to their work area, alignment of evaluation with measureable improvements or departmental goals, etc. It is great to hear the college might continue the survey as an annual event. This will provide benchmark data and ultimately long term trend data in these important areas. The college might want to consider benchmarking with peer institutions to set specific targets for improvement. The team could consult the AQIP Action Project Directory:
- http://www.hlcommission.org/component/option,com_apdsearch/Itemid,217/
- which allows visitors to the site to search for projects by institution, AQIP Category, or key word.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: This Action Project was aimed at addressing areas for improvement identified in the Systems Appraisal and further specified at the 2011 Strategy Forum. As a fairly new AQIP institution, aligning Action Projects with opportunities for improvement noted in the Systems Appraisal not only allowed for addressing relevant issues, but simultaneously provided learning opportunities for task force members to further explore and understand the many components associated with the accreditation process.

R:

Connecting the dots in the HLC Criteria for Accreditation, AQIP Categories and your Action Projects will help create a substantial and cohesive continuous improvement process for the college. This understanding of how all of the aspects link together is a great first step and can hopefully pave the way for future team members working on additional Action Projects. For more information, consult the notebook you received at the Strategy Forum that includes a bibliography of books on Quality Improvements and Systems Thinking. This might also be an idea for a future professional development track for future task force members.

5: Project Challenges

A: The scope of this Action Project is limited due to the nature of the task force charge. The task force will not be implementing the measures, conducting the measurements, nor can the task force ensure implementation. Our function is one of recommendation. It is up to the departmental process owners to accept and incorporate these measures for Valuing People.

R:

NorthWest Arkansas Community College has created a task force with a charge to investigate, and hopefully advocate the proposed changes. Inclusion of upper management and leadership will be key for future success. As the task force disbands, they might want to take time to celebrate their accomplishments. Whether or not the recommendations are ultimately adopted, the team came together to work toward continuous improvement, which is a noteworthy step. The team might also consider if this should be a standing group that can recommend new changes if this first set is rejected, or metrics for evaluation if the proposals are adopted. Either way, this collaborative team should be recognized for their success in completing this Action Project.

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1: What is the primary reason for closing this project?:

A: The committee worked within the confines of an established time line to research the three specific areas presented for recommendation (as a result of the 2011 Strategy Forum) of measures for Valuing People. Over an 8 month period, representatives from every division of the College met bi-weekly to work on this project. The committee felt confident in bringing together a diverse voice in suggesting methods for measuring valuing people in: evaluation, development and recognition.

2: What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?:

A: The most successful aspect of this project was the completion of a College wide survey on Valuing People that addressed the employees viewpoint regarding awareness of current initiatives for recognizing employees, preferred methods for recognitions and suggestions for improving employee recognition. The survey results established a benchmarking component for valuing people at NWACC.

3: What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?:

A: Because the committee was charged only with making recommendations, it is unclear as to where the recommendations will go or whether or not they will be implemented. The committee provided valuable insight that may or may not be fully implemented. Lack of establishing implementation and evaluation phases are the least successful aspects of this project.