

Action Project

Institution: San Juan College
Submitted: 2007-09-02 **Contact:** Laurie Gruel
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 08-17-2007

Target completion date: 05-31-2010

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Designing a Communications and Input Process for San Juan College

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

The goal of this action project is to benchmark and recommend collaborative institutional processes and structures that will enhance communication as well as serve as bases for sustaining continuous improvement at a functional level at SJC.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Leading and Communicating

D. 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:

In February 2007, the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey was administered to SJC employees. The purpose of the survey was to obtain the perceptions of personnel concerning the college climate and to provide data to assist SJC in promoting more open and constructive communication among faculty, staff and administrators. The top five areas in need of improvement identified were: (1) The extent to which information is shared within this institution, (2) The extent to which open and ethical communication is practiced at this institution, (3) The extent to which decisions are made at the appropriate level at this institution, (4) The extent to which I am able to appropriately influence the direction of this institution and (5) The extent to which a spirit of cooperation exists at this institution. Currently, structures and processes are not sufficiently functional to allow appropriate sharing, review or input into decision making at SJC. A Communication and Input Design Team has been established to achieve the goal as stated above.

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

All organizational areas of the College will be involved in and affected by this project

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

The key organizational process (es) this Action Project will be to improve communication, decision-making and planning processes.

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

Three years appears to be a reasonable period of time to research and benchmark possible strategies with other institutions, provide opportunities for dialogue about possible proposals for improvement, and to assess the effectiveness of solutions that are implemented.

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

The response to G above incorporates some of the ways the project will be monitored. In addition, the Personal Assessment of Campus Environment (PACE) will be readministered at yet-to-be-determined intervals during the course of the project to measure changes that may have occurred since its initial administration in February 2007.

I. 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:

(1) Changes in responses to the PACE survey (2) Establishment of new communication and input processes and structures (3) Assessment of the effectiveness of these new communication and input processes and structures

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

Dr. Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan, Director of the National Institute of Leadership Effectiveness at North Carolina State University, the vendor for the PACE survey, presented the survey findings and conducted employee focus groups related to those findings as part of the Fall 2007 Convocation. She remains available to assist the College in this endeavor in the future.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Phone: 505.566.3631 Ext.

Annual Update: 2008-08-26

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

The Communications & Input Design Taskforce was formed to recommend institutional processes that would enhance channels for communication and input in order to provide as a basis for sustaining continuous improvement at SJC. Members benchmarked four colleges to identify best practices that were (1) sustainable collaborative processes that can be functionally integrated into the operation of the College in ways that will sustain continuous quality improvement, (2) support collaborative processes that ensure that initiatives of the Strategic Plan align with the Vision, Values, and Mission of the College and (3) be communicated to all College employees and students. Recommendations from the taskforce have led to the establishment of the Team for Strategic Oversight. Current status: Active

Review (10-03-08):

This project began in August of 2007 and has been underway for one year. It appears that two workgroups have resulted: the Communications and Input Design Taskforce; and the Team for Strategic Oversight. In this first year, the former workgroup researched and benchmarked four institutions for best practices and recommended the formation of the latter workgroup; then the second workgroup was formed partly through election and partly through appointments. This

project is directed at Criterion 5, Leading and Communicating. It very likely also (or perhaps more importantly) addresses Criterion 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs if one were to include employee groups as stakeholders. The expectation of election to a TSO indicates that there are clear categories of employees with perceived or real differences of interests. This project also addresses many of the standards in Criterion 4, Valuing People, regarding work environment, motivation, training, and satisfaction measurements. To achieve successful communications strategies (the trees), the TSO and project leaders are advised to keep an eye on the human interaction elements of this project (the forest).

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

Communications & Input Design Taskforce comprised of representatives from learning, student services, business services and administration focused on the five top areas in need of improvement as identified in the report of the results of the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey administered to SJC employees in February 2007. Results and recommendations were presented to the President's Cabinet in May 2008.

Review (10-03-08):

These are additional achievements during this past year that address Criterion 5, Leading and Communicating. I will presume that as a result of this survey and recommendation to the president's cabinet the decision was made to create the TSO Team. This indicates to me that there is executive leadership and support of this project which will be essential for its success. Future updates should address the involvement of leadership including the administration, faculty leadership and, if applicable, union or staff leadership. All these elements will be important in modeling communication within the organization.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

The Team for Strategic Oversight (TSO) has been formed as a follow-up to recommendations from Communication & Input Taskforce that SJC establish a "cross-cutting" venue for collaboration between the administration, students, and employees with regard to strategic institutional issues as a means for improving communication about and knowledge of significant college operations. TSO objectives include (1) promoting common knowledge and understanding of strategic issues and the possible consequences of those issues for SJC, (2) promoting effective communication between employees, students and the administration, (3) promoting increased focus on the Strategic Plan as driving SJC's future development and as the principal means by which progress will be measured on the strategic directions set forth in the plan. Voting membership will include six elected representatives (two from each employee category), six members (two from each employee category) appointed by the President, two student representatives appointed by the Student Senate and the Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning.

Review (10-03-08):

Again, the nature of the team and its creation requires that some members or campus leaders play a role that is outside of their normal stakeholder role, as it is apparent that there was stakeholder group representation in creating this team. It might also be advisable to have sufficient training and facilitation (external if possible) to work on the dynamics of communication within this team itself, even before the team tries to tackle projects for the organization as a whole. One objective might be to move the team from a formal concept of "voting" to one of building consensus as a way of operating. Voting implies winners and losers, consensus implies everyone having a say

and being heard, yet a decision as fair to everyone as possible being reached. Here this project again moves heavily onto the Valuing People (Criterion 4) territory.

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

While not an effective practice that resulted from our first year of work, the project team effectively utilized benchmarking as a means to document best practices and communication systems that were incorporated into the TSO.

Review (10-03-08):

Benchmarking is a good start and assumes there was some agreement reached on best practices as models. It will be exciting to learn how the TSO is able to adopt these, internalize them to itself and then work to publicize them and identify projects through which they can be tried and tested in the institution in your next update.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

Creation of the TSO follows up on the Spring 2008 AQIP Systems Appraisal Feedback report that encouraged SJC to continue its commitment to improving internal communications (Category 5) and to strengthening strategic planning (Category 8). Engaging employees in focused, constructive dialog may continue to be a challenge as the TSO is implemented.

Review (10-03-08):

This has evidently been a very busy year in terms of your AQIP performance. You have five current Action Projects listed on the roster. I would urge the campus leadership to connect these in the minds of employees as part of an overriding improvement effort and to do so consistently. You allude to challenges in creating employee engagement, so constant repetition of these themes in all leadership communications (speeches, emails, campus media, local media) would help to maintain a higher level of awareness and create a sense of pride among employees in their pioneering efforts. This may well be happening or be in the planning stages, so again it would be helpful to include information about overall communications strategies and leadership involvement in future updates.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

No assistance is necessary

Review (10-03-08):

The institution is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture. 9814