

Highland Community College, IL

Project: Cultivating Collaborative Relationships with External Partners at HCC

Version 1.0- Project

Q: What is the current status of your project?

A: In-progress

Q: Please indicate the original project start date, original project end date, and anticipated completion date if project is not completed. Please list dates on separate lines.

A: Original project start date- 9/30/2014

Original project end date- 3/30/2017

Anticipated completion date- 8/30/2017

Q: Briefly describe the current status of the project. Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio, if applicable.

A: As constituents have observed positive outcomes of collaborative efforts in terms of both their interests and those of the College, the word has spread indicating such efforts are well worth our time. Strategic initiatives which have been moved forward as a result of this project include serving more diverse and expanded populations, specifically:

- High school students
- Adult learners
- Lifelong Learning students

- Seniors
- Underprepared students

In Highland's 2014 Systems Portfolio, the College acknowledged that there would be a great benefit in creating a more aligned and integrated process for building collaborative relationships. Since the inception of this Action Project, the College has identified potential areas of growth (i.e. dual credit, LifeLong Learning) and created goals for each area. Based upon these goals, the College has strategically cultivated relationships with organizations, institutions, and individuals that would intersect and align with these goals.

List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the Q: metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal.

A:

- Increase number of collaborative relationships with external partners by 40% by the end of year one, and by 60% by the completion of this project.
- Increase quality of existing collaborative relationships with external partners to be evaluated by surveys and focus group discussions following each stage of development.
- Increase campus-wide interaction with other organizations to be measured by tracking attendance and participation in collaborative planning activities.

Metrics/measures being used include:

- Increases in alternative revenue streams as compared to past years
- Increases in enrollment categories as compared to past years
- Increase in number of transfer agreements with four-year institutions

A number of these partnerships have generated new revenue streams and enrollment increases that would not have otherwise been realized.

- Enrollment for the current semester is up 4.8 percent in unduplicated head count
- Lifelong Learning classes offered during the past school year increased by more than 300 percent
- Dual credit and concurrent enrollment increased by 20 percent last year as compared to the previous year.

In FY16 there were 973 Dual Credit and 133 Dual Enrollment for a combined total of 1106.

In FY15 there were 799 Dual Credit and 125 Dual Enrollment for a combined total of 924.

(source: A1 data)

- Gifts to the College from external foundations totaled more than \$1 million in the past year, more than in any past years by far

Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to Q: include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year.

A: During the past year, Highland has significantly strengthened existing external partnerships and initiated a number of new ones. Summaries of accomplishments in each of these partnership categories are listed below:

Regional School Districts

- Freeport School District – Highland's president has joined a group organized by the superintendent of Freeport School District. This “Key Communicators” group consists of community organizational leaders who meet every other month to share and overlap strategic planning efforts. Another outcome of collaboration with the Freeport High School principal and her staff has resulted in a pilot program which offers Freeport High School students the opportunity to take advantage of articulated college credit when if they migrate to Highland Community College after graduation – this began last year.
- Oregon School District – Last year, for the first time ever, we began piloting dual credit at no charge for Oregon High School students. This increased dual credit enrollment from this high school significantly.
- Counselors from all high schools in our district are routinely invited to a luncheon at the College each spring. Last year for the first time we invited their input for new program development and strategic planning. Several of these counselors are now involved with our core strategic planning committee.

P-20 Education Partners

Highland has joined the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network which is a collaborative effort between universities, community colleges, high schools, and regional organizations to increase college and career success for students. The driving force behind the initiative is to regionally impact the State of Illinois' 60 by 2025 goal (60% of the adults in IL will have completed a credential or degree by 2025). Highland is one of twelve post-secondary institutions within the network. The P-20 Network also includes five State Agencies, six Education Organizations, and seventeen School Districts. Highland is partnering with Freeport School District 145 to reduce remediation not only within the student population in Freeport, but throughout the Highland district.

University Alliance Partners

In the past year, we have added transfer agreements with four-year institutions including Northern Illinois University and Western Illinois University, and are moving quickly toward additional transfer agreements with both of these institutions.

Business and Industry Partners

As a result of strengthening collaborative efforts with business and industry partners, in

the past year we were able to document an increase in enrollment for training and professional development programs of more than 20 percent overall. We are also increasing the number of business and industry partners in academic advisory groups and were able to launch a Hospitality Management program with support from a local corporation. This program would not have been possible without that partnership.

Highland is also now enrolling students from a local plumbers and pipefitters union into classes that have become part of their apprenticeship training. On the horizon for later this year is an opportunity to partner with a new federal correctional center to train soon-to-be-released inmates in welding.

Collaborate Freeport Initiative

The President and at least five other faculty and staff members have recently agreed to partner with the “Collaborate Freeport” initiative. This group consists of a broad range of community leaders in education, business, service organizations, and government who are committed to branding Freeport as a desirable community in which to enhance the appeal of the quality of life in the Freeport area. Although the College is unable to contribute dollars as many of the organizations involved have, we have committed to providing in-kind services and expertise to move the initiative forward.

Oregon Together Initiative

The President and four other administrators from the College are also participating in the “Oregon Together” project, which is another initiative to strengthen the economy and quality of life for current and potential residents and stakeholders (Oregon is a smaller community within the College district.)

HCC Strategic Planning Initiative

In the past year, HCC began a new strategic planning cycle. After beginning with an external chair of this committee, former Freeport School District Superintendent Dr. Peter Flynn, we enlisted the support of more than 40 internal and external stakeholders from various communities throughout our College district. The work then was expanded to include more than 200 individuals asked to participate in focus group discussions. Ideas and suggestions gleaned from this are now being summarized by the College cabinet and will be presented to the Board of Trustees prior to a new strategic planning document being formalized early next year.

Linking Academic Programs with External Partners

In planning and introducing the launch of three new academic programs last year (Hospitality Management, Criminal Justice, and Mass Communication), and three additional programs this year (Environmental Science, Phlebotomy, and Mechatronics), we involved key stakeholders from professional sectors of each area as members of advisory committees. Organizations and companies represented by these and other individuals partnering in this work have all offered resources for experiential learning opportunities for students enrolled in these programs. This would not have been possible without related partnerships.

External Foundation Partnerships

As noted previously, more than one million new dollars were committed to Highland from two external foundations – Freeport Community Foundation (FCF) and the

Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL). FCFNI provided nearly \$9,000 for distance learning technology which will allow us to connect high school and other remote learning communities with instruction and classrooms on the main campus. CFNIL committed to up to one million dollars in matching scholarship funds, primarily for high school students wishing to enroll in college credit classes and for nontraditional students with economic needs. This new potential scholarship funding being primarily for high school students has allowed us to shift more emphasis toward increased dual credit and concurrent enrollment programs.

Local mass media attention toward work resulting from these partnerships has increased due to concerted efforts to be more diligent in sharing news as it relates to progress. One important measurable indication of this has been documented. During the past year, prime time stories on regional television and radio news programs, along with feature stories in regional newspapers regarding collaboration between the College and partners to be mentioned have more than doubled.

Q: Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration, particularly during the past year.

A: Specific groups and individuals have been listed and described with each partnership category cited above.

Q: Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

A: The most rewarding effects have stemmed from increased enrollments in virtually every targeted population, and increased support from external partners and foundations. The institution has learned that we must make more time to involve ourselves with initiatives that have potential benefits for our constituents, and to bring more of them into our strategic planning process. We have also become much more aware of the importance of communicating with our constituencies through expanded efforts involving mass communication and more attempts to personally connect with these partners.

Q: Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A:

One challenge that we have realized involves local perceptions centering around concerns that growth of and new investments in the College are risky because of the state's current budget crisis. Some have said that funding our growth is contributing to deficit spending. It has become critical for us to increase awareness that we are depending more on external and alternative revenue streams, which has actually relieved our reliance on traditional state funding and tuition revenue. In terms of institutionalizing learning from this project's goals, it has become important to be completely transparent in explaining how new programs and growth are being funded. Virtually all of these new programs and expansion of existing programs would literally be impossible without expanded efforts to collaborate with external partners noted.

In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step.

A: During the next 12 months, we must capitalize on our progress through:

- Sincerely and publicly expressing our gratitude to external partners for their contributions to our mission, Fall 2016
- Help internal and external communities understand that growth from these types of collaboration actually relieves financial pressure and recurrent state funding shortfalls, Spring 2017
- Make the most of feedback and other generous contributions by adequately communicating the values added that this work brings, Summer 2017

Provide any additional information, inquiries, or concerns that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project. Enter N/A if not applicable.

A: N/A

Declaration

Q: Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

A: This College-wide action project is being introduced to involve more external stakeholders in strategic planning and all related elements as they apply to fulfilling our mission as a community college. Such collaborative efforts are currently limited to advisory committees, recruitment, community forums, and inter-organizational partnerships. Primary goals of this project will be to analyze and strengthen these functions, and to explore innovative opportunities to expand this work. Key organizational processes to review and modify include recruitment, community input for the institution, organizational partnerships for student opportunities, program development, and expansion of specialty academic programs.

Q: Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.

A: One of our previous action projects focused on the development of a "Think Tank" for the institution. While we had numerous struggles with this project, we ultimately identified a number of other ways in which the institution interacts with its partners outside the College. Assigning collaborative efforts as its own action project with a distinct set of outcomes will provide us with a campus-wide goal of building stronger relationships with all of the organizations we work with on a regular basis. We chose a 2.5 year time frame for this project because it will unfold in progressive stages that will be dependent upon data and evaluation gleaned from the first full year.

Q: List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.

A:

- Increase number of collaborative relationships with external partners by 40% by the end of year one, and by 60% by the completion of this project.
- Increase quality of existing collaborative relationships with external partners to be evaluated by surveys and focus group discussions following each stage of development.
- Increase campus-wide interaction with other organizations to be measured by tracking attendance and participation in collaborative planning activities.

Based on Reviewer's Feedback additional project goals were identified:

- Utilize existing and future survey data for purposes of identifying specific opportunities to strengthen collaborative partnerships with external and internal constituents.

- Identify and consult with peer institutions that have undertaken similar initiatives to build collaborative partnerships.

In order to measure progress toward the primary goal to increase the number of collaborative relationships with external partners by 40% by the end of year one, and by 60% by the completion of the project, we will calculate the total number of existing partnerships with external constituencies at the beginning of each calendar year including this action project's timeline then track totals and statistically compare to previous year's totals to determine if the goals are attained.

In order to measure progress toward the primary goal to increase the quality of existing collaborative relationships with external partners, we will administer qualitative survey and conduct focus group discussions semi-annually with constituents. Data gleaned will be analyzed to measure levels of progress. The expectation would be that the survey feedback would reflect a higher level of involvement of external partners and an increase in their satisfaction with the interaction they have had with Highland. In order to measure progress toward the primary goal to increase campus-wide interaction with other organizations, we will track attendance at each planning meeting with external partners. This data will be compared annually to gauge whether or not interaction and involvement has increased. The expectation would be that the involvement increase by 25% over a two year period.

Q: Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

A: Learning community members will be invited to plan and participate in open forums, newly introduced advisory boards, and town hall meetings according to their interests and specialties. Outcomes from these efforts will provide the College with direction and continued expansion of dialogue. Timetables for each initiative will be determined according to short-term and long-term needs.

Q: Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

A: At the end of each semester (December 2014, May 2015, August 2015):

- Track number of total and new collaborative relationships with external partners -- then compare these data to similar data from the 2013-2014 academic year.
- Review data to be gathered from focus group discussions following planning meetings in order to glean qualitative data regarding participant satisfaction and suggestions.

- Administer survey to participating external partners to measure satisfaction with planning processes and progressive development.

At the end of each semester (December 2015, May 2016, August 2016, December 2016):

- Track number of total and new collaborative relationships with external partners -- then compare these data to similar data from the 2014-2015 academic year.
- Review data to be gathered from focus group discussions following planning meetings in order to glean qualitative data regarding participant satisfaction and suggestions.
- Administer survey to participating external partners to measure satisfaction with planning processes and progressive development.

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: One challenge that became problematic with the "Think Tank" action project was successfully encouraging engaging participation among external stakeholders. Discussions often ended prematurely with a lack of productive outcomes. It now appears that community awareness of these initiatives was insufficient. To remedy these challenges, we will seek to connect more mutual benefits for the College and communities served. It will also be important to plan gatherings and events more carefully and with additional opportunities for input from all stakeholders involved.

Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.

A: As the College moves through transition during the next year, the opportunities to involve and engage more external stakeholders in charting our future course will be timely and well received by all constituencies.

