

## Annual Update: 2008-09-12

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

The Faculty Advising Project has gained tremendous support from both general advising staff and the faculty that participate. This progress is significant given the challenges the project overcame from its original inception. Challenges included difficulty in providing the level of comprehensive training needed for faculty to work in the student information system, Banner. Expecting faculty to complete the training and then enter advising notes into Banner diminished the value of the faculty involvement to respond directly to students with discipline specific questions. A creative strategy was implemented in the opening of a physical "Triage Area" immediately adjacent to the general advising and admissions offices of the Student Welcome Center. The Triage Area provides a walk up service staffed by faculty for four weeks during peak enrollment periods at the start of each semester. Participating faculty are trained by the general advising staff to offer immediate assistance to students seeking information about course registration, placement testing, and other enrollment and registration processes.

#### *Review (09-15-08):*

Red Rock Community College (RRCC) has completed the second year of its Faculty Advising Pilot Action Project. Originally submitted as a one-year initiative in August 2006, the project continued through 2007-08. This extension was the result of a transition in leadership during year one as well as challenges in using the data-based student information system, Banner. It appears that these challenges impeded the intended timeline for engaging faculty in academic advising as well as commensurate training. While progress on the Action Project initially was slower than planned, it appears that the college has refocused its efforts and implemented several facets during the past academic year. The Triage Area concept of faculty and student services staff jointly providing assistance in a common location during peak periods of student enrollment and registration activity demonstrates the AQIP principles of focus and collaboration. The focus on addressing the needs of students evolved from Constellation Survey and Conversation Day feedback. Collaboration between two distinct entities, instruction and student services, has facilitated a systems and improvement approach for this project. RRCC indicates that it has addressed the issues of faculty training and use of the student information system technology that impeded this project during year one. However, it is unclear whether the number of students assessing academic advising, an initial goal of this project, has increased. As noted by RRCC, this Action Project directly supports AQIP category (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. Providing valid, reliable, and timely academic advising to students also indirectly enhances the organizational areas of academic program planning and student retention aligned within AQIP category (1) Helping Students Learn. Improving processes in one area complements processes in the other category.

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

In an effort to gain an objective perspective of the effectiveness of the action projects, task forces were formed fall, 2007 from faculty and staff that had no previous involvement with the development or implementation of the projects. The make up of the task forces were intentionally designed to include staff from outside of instruction. The task force reviewing the Faculty Advising Project (FAP) found that the project has been extremely successful for students, faculty, and advisors, according to surveys and other research the committee conducted.

The benefits of the (FAP) include the following: • Effectively helping students when they most need it, during peak times. • Fostering collaboration between Student Services and Instruction—faculty who have participated have expressed a high level of enthusiasm for the project. • Involving faculty in advising creates and improves alliances between Instruction and Advising and assists all involved with conveying accurate and timely information to students. The Faculty Advising Project (FAP) has bridged the communication gap that can grow between two different areas of the College such as instruction and advising. Participating faculty complete training offered by the general advising staff to include shadowing the advisors and role-playing so that the faculty members may respond to the wide range of questions students may have as well as enrollment and registration questions. Faculty are also supported in being able to provide information across multiple disciplines using information guides and web pages provided by instructional departments to the advisors. Participating faculty have reported positively that involvement with the FAP has increased their knowledge of programs and departments. Faculty participating in the FAP may be compensated to staff the Triage Area at the non-instruction rate of \$20 per hour. General advisors have reported positively that their interchange with faculty have become much more frequent as a result of the close working relationship between faculty and general advising staff as a result of the FAP implementation. The general advisors meet monthly and invite faculty from each department to provide updates and discuss information that would be helpful for students as part of the advising process

***Review (09-15-08):***

RRCC employed a unique approach in gathering employee feedback regarding the effectiveness of this project. Surveys and research were conducted by a task force of faculty and staff who were not involved in the development and implementation of the original project. While the institution does not state the decision-making process used to select task force participants, it appears that this approach enhanced an objective analysis of data and anecdotal comments received from FAP participants. This model also expanded the number of employees who played a key role in assessing this process. The college has demonstrated the application of the AQIP principles of people, information, communication, and collaboration with this project. Faculty received diverse aspects of training reflecting an institutional investment in employees. Academic advising guides and access to web pages provided consistent informational resources. The institution also reported improved communication and collaboration between two operational divisions. At this juncture, faculty participation in the triage advising project appears to be voluntary. Monetary compensation and service to the college goals contribute to participation. As the Triage Area represents only one facet of academic advising, it is probable that other aspects of faculty advising complement the role of this component. Students could benefit from increased faculty participation in this project, as faculty members are content and academic rigor experts for specific disciplines and courses. The college might also gain additional insight by flowcharting the composite advising model employed by RRCC in order to assess the larger, integrated process. A multi-department focus group or task force could facilitate this. It might also be advantageous to explore the participation of management services personnel (information technology, accounting, etc.) to respond to applicable student questions during registration.

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

The general advisors have requested an advance schedule of faculty assigned to the Triage Area that identified the disciplines represented. It has also been recommended that posters be placed in

the Triage Area so that students would know when faculty from specific disciplines would be available to answer questions in the Triage Area. Refresher training needs to be developed for faculty that may be coming back to the Triage Area after more than one semester. The Institutional Research Office will be consulted to provide real time updates several times during the day of class closures as enrollments fill. This timely information will help the Triage Area be able to help students enroll in open sections. A larger conversation is continuing concerning if advising for new first time students should be required. The task force that completed the evaluation of the Faculty Advising Project (FAP) conducted a survey of students that visited the Triage Area. Overwhelmingly the students positively responded that the assistance they received from the Triage Area was helpful. Eighty percent of the students respondents also indicated that students should be required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes. The task force evaluating the FAP found compelling reasons to consider mandatory advising for first time students as a result of their interviews with faculty and students. The task force recommended group advising sessions to help with the impact on the advising area of increased student traffic.

***Review (09-15-08):***

RRCC continues to evolve this Action Project. The identified next steps are designed to improve information access for students and continue to improve communications between the two divisions. Implementation and feedback from this Action Project have generated another potential area for improvement – advising for new first time students. The enrollment services division is generally the gateway to an institution. Advising, assessment, and placement are integrated and link to student success in courses and programs. Recommendations from the task force could be piloted or developed into future Action Projects as the institution retires the FAP. In addition, the college might track the types of questions students bring to the Triage Area. From this information, RRCC could create a “frequently asked questions” handout. This would supplement verbal responses to students’ inquiries and address the diversity of learning styles. Faculty participation in the Triage Area seems an important goal and benefit of this Action Project. While participation has been voluntary, developing a plan to increase the number of engaged faculty can enhance continued collaboration and broaden the institution’s understanding of changing students’ needs.

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

Students benefit from the immediate access to discipline specific faculty as part of the initial advising experience during the enrollment process. The Triage Area has greatly reduced the time students may wait in line to see an advisor. General Advisors “sweep” the line and students with general enrollment or registration questions are directed to immediate assistance in the Triage Area. Participating faculty have reported the connection made with students in the Triage Area has lead to students being much more likely to follow up with the faculty member if they should need additional support during the semester. The general advising staff has also appreciated the direct access to faculty in the Triage Area with questions about adding students as classes fill, or responding to students’ questions concerning pre-requisites and other discipline specific information. The Triage Area has freed the general advising staff to concentrate on one-on-one appointments with students needing assistance with degree planning and credit transfer. Currently a faculty member is being compensated at the non –instruction hourly rate to coordinating the schedule of participating faculty in the Triage Area. Surveys of the thirteen faculty involved in the project this last fall was overwhelming positive with each member

reporting his or her intent to participate again next term.

**Review (09-15-08):**

RRCC has described benefits to students, participating faculty, and general advising staff as a result of this project. The college has reported that participating faculty members are positive in assessing this experience and contribution to students. Possibly these instructors could recruit peers to increase faculty involvement rather than relying on the faculty coordinator. Data analyzing the impact of the Triage Area on student retention in courses and/or programs could supplement survey feedback and document the effectiveness of this service. The concept of a Triage Area is a pragmatic, yet unique approach to providing just-in-time academic advising to students. Lessons learned should be shared with peers to provide valuable insight in addressing a common problematic area during student enrollment and registration.

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

Both advisors and faculty are supportive of transitioning the Faculty Advising Project to become a standard operating practice of the College. In order to complete this transition decisions need to be made concerning the identification of the faculty member(s) that will coordinate the recruitment and scheduling of the faculty to work the Triage Area. Efforts to recruit more faculty participating to work in the Triage Area are ongoing with the goal of ensuring representative coverage of a range of disciplines throughout the high peak enrollment times.

**Review (09-15-08):**

RRCC has demonstrated major progress during year two of this project. Since decisions concerning recruitment, scheduling, and coordinating faculty to staff the Triage Area are pending, it appears that the college is not ready to retire this project at this point in time. Quality improvement and team building tools might enhance decision-making during year three. As these issues are addressed, RRCC can successfully conclude this initiative and integrate these processes into the institutional culture for understanding and addressing students' needs.

**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?**

**Review (09-15-08):**

N/A