

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Gogebic Community College

Project Details		
Title	Master Syllabi Standardization Project	Status COMPLETED
Category	2-Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives	Updated 11-17-2013
Timeline		Reviewed 04-07-2014
	Planned Project Kickoff 10-31-2012	Created 04-04-2012
	Actual Completion 08-29-2014	Version 1

1: Project Goal

A: Major goals of this project include:

- To develop a uniform format for all Master Syllabi in use at GCC.
- To ensure that all syllabi in use at GCC are current.
- To ensure that all Syllabi reflect currently accepted best practices.
- To ensure that all syllabi have clearly defined learning objectives.
- To ensure that all syllabi accurately reflect time committed to each of the major topics.
- To have all Master Syllabi available in the advising module (jenzabar).

2: Reasons For Project

A: It has been observed by members of the Curriculum Committee that syllabi recently presented for review are inconsistent in their formats. As a result, we have decided to conduct a review of all syllabi currently in use and to make all necessary format and compliance related changes. We believe that standardization and publication in the advising module will help our students to better understand course and program expectations. By archiving these syllabi each year we will create a database of syllabi that we will be able to reference in the future.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: This Action Project will involve all areas of campus. We will begin with Division Chairs and members of the Curriculum Committee. After the development and adoption of the format, individual instructors will be asked to review and update their syllabi reflecting current practices. These syllabi will then be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and Dean of Instruction. The final versions will be published in the advising module which can be accessed by faculty, staff, and students.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Advising:

Curriculum Development:

Recruiting:

Transfer:

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: This will by necessity be an ongoing process even after the action project has been completed. The time frame for this project is ambitious but certainly attainable. We will begin prior to the start of the Spring semester so that we can establish and communicate the format and other requirements while the majority of the faculty are available. Individual faculty can review and update their syllabi during the spring and summer semesters. During the Fall semester, the review process can begin ensuring that the syllabi meet the established guidelines and that the course content has not deviated from what has been previously approved by the Curriculum Committee. Any course that appears to have undergone substantial changes in content will undergo formal review by the committee.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The Syllabi requirements will be established and communicated prior to the Spring 2013 semester. Completed syllabi will be presented to the Curriculum Committee no later than the start of the Fall 2013 semester. The review process is expected to be completed by December 2013. A schedule of additional benchmarks will be established during the initial planning meetings.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: This project will be considered a success when all Master Syllabi in our catalog are properly formatted and published in our advising module.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This year, working collaboratively with faculty and the curriculum committee, we established a common template that syllabi must follow. Faculty submitted their syllabi for review to the Dean of Instruction by the end of the first week of the fall semester. Syllabi were organized by instructional division, discipline, or in the case of occupational programs by program type. Where necessary, clarifications were requested by the Dean of Instruction in order to ensure that all syllabi followed the template and included stated requirements and components. We are currently in the process of uploading syllabi in to the College advising module so that academic advisors and students have immediate access to course information, requirements, and expectations.

The following are required components of updated syllabi:

Course number and title

Semester and year

Description of course from current course catalog (available online) or course overview, in your own words

Learning objectives

Course agenda (meeting dates, topics)

Textbook information

Description of graded assignments

Gogebic Community College's plagiarism policy

Evaluation and measurement (how grades are determined)

Faculty contact information

Attendance and/or participation policy

Optional: Course bibliography

Optional: Assignment rubrics

2: Institution Involvement

A: Initially our Dean of Instruction, Division Chairs, and members of Curriculum Committee developed a template that all syllabi now follow.

Once this initial work was completed, the template was distributed to all faculty for comments and additional feedback. The final version of the template was distributed to all faculty members prior to the end of the spring 2013 semester so that they would have time to make necessary adjustments to syllabi during the summer.

3: Next Steps

A: As of now, not all courses have been updated because a number of courses are offered only during the spring semester. By mid-January 2014, the full academic year of courses will be converted to our new format and posted to the advising module. We will continue to update all syllabi each academic year and archive them by academic year providing students convenient access to this information in the future. In addition, we anticipate placing all syllabi on the College website so that prospective students, transfer institutions, and other stakeholders such as our workforce partners have access.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: We have dramatically improved communication and access to course information for advisors and students. This allows for a stronger, relevant, and most importantly efficient student advising experience. As a result of this project, we can better accommodate student syllabi requests, increase transparency of our operations, and improve stakeholder service.

5: Project Challenges

A: From an operational perspective, we still have a lot of work to do. Our primary challenge is managing our process to stay on track and continually work on syllabi and website updates to allow advisor, current student, prospective student, and transfer institution access to this timely resource.

Update Review

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: The College appears to still be in the very early stages by reviewing submitted syllabi to the Dean in the fall semester of 2013. The college may wish to consider more stakeholder involvement such as the admissions/enrollment department, career services, students, retention office, etc. The college may consider giving adequate time and attention to their desired goals, outcomes, and measures to understand their action project goals and to enlist all stakeholders for decision-making. Faculty involvement is crucial to the project success.

2: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Developing a template and receiving additional feedback from all faculty shows inclusion of the faculty. The college may want to consider the inclusion of other stakeholders as mentioned above. Involving cross-functional departments assist in the breakdown of silos that often derail projects and involvement. Feedback is crucial to ensure the continued success and momentum of the program. This may be a time to focus on developing measurable outcomes which is key to assessment and making improvements as part of the continuous quality of improvement cycle.

3: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: Continued involvement is extremely useful in maintaining and sustaining momentum. The college may want to provide a timeline for next steps as well as measurement tools that will be incorporated for effective measurement. The continued and improved use of data, and the continued identification of clear, well-developed goals may serve the college well in overall process improvement.

4: BEST PRACTICES

A: The College may want to benchmark with other institutions with similar mission or goals to assist in the development of best effective practices. Improving efficiency in key student support areas is valuable and one that a college may wish to share with other institutions. The college may wish to research other valuable resources such as "Assessing Student Learning in the Community & Two-Year College" - successful strategies and tools developed by Practitioners in Student and Academic Affairs.

5: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: The college has identified more work to accomplish; additional challenges may surface along the way especially if the college incorporates more stakeholder involvement. The continuous quality improvement cycle involves planning and/or identifying, the action and/or developing, the evaluating and/or measuring, and then adapting, adopting, or abandoning the learning outcome for proper change. In order for the College to continue to move forward the college may want to consider lessons learned and how in the future these challenges are addressed on a continual cycle. Continue to communicate progress throughout the institution and to have measures in place to stay on track and continually improve processes.

6: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: No response required.

7: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: No response required.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: No response required.

Project Outcome

1: REASON FOR COMPLETION

A: We successfully completed the project by meeting all of the project goals. Here are the specifics why the project is now closed. These specifics are based on the original major goals outlined in the project summary. At the completion of the project, a uniform master template was completed and provided to all faculty. The expectation is that all syllabi follow this uniform template. Second, the process ensures that there is a common look and feel to our course syllabi. This was also an important aspect to presenting consistent and clear syllabi to transfer institutions or when communicating with a prospective student. Third, syllabi are reviewed by the dean to provide feedback on how course syllabi reflect best practices in regard to course organization and clear, effective and measurable course outcomes/objectives. Fourth, all syllabi include core objectives as defined in the master template. Fifth, providing the time designated to course topics can aide both faculty and students to have clear and consistent expectations. Finally, each course syllabi is available on college's central information management system (Jenzabar). This provides easy access to academic advisers who work closely with students.

2: SUCCESS FACTORS

A: An aspect of this project's success was the collaboration and development of a consistent and clear syllabi management system. This project also enabled the college to present each syllabi on the college web page under each division. This created a useful level of accessibility for current and prospective students seeking information on a course or program.

3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

A: One challenge, while the project was successful, was assuring that all syllabi were updated and presented to the deans office in a timely manner. Another challenge early on in the project was uploading the syllabi to Jenzabar and to division websites. Once this process was adjusted, the updates proved efficient and effective. It was a positive learning experience.

