**The Higher Learning Commission** Action Project Directory

**Southeast Missouri State University**

### Project Details

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Strengthening faculty-Based Academic Advising – Part I</th>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>1-Helping Students Learn</td>
<td>Updated</td>
<td>09-10-2009</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>05-01-2009</td>
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### 1: Project Goal

A: The Academic Advising Council will add a faculty member from each college and will be charged with evaluating accessibility of essential information for academic advising, training for faculty advisors, clarity of curricular guides for advising, student needs, faculty incentives for advising, distribution of advising loads, communication between professional advisors and faculty advisors, and other factors impacting the quality of academic advising. The Academic Advising Council will recommend to the Provost particular actions to improve the quality of advising. From this recommendation, a subsequent AQIP Action Project will be developed focused on strengthening academic advising by faculty.

### 2: Reasons For Project

A: Discussions at our Strategic Enrollment Task force meetings have highlighted faculty advising as a point in the process of supporting students where a high degree of inconsistency occurs. There is a large variability in the type and quality of advising the students receive from faculty. Advising is not spread out evenly among faculty; a subset of faculty advises most students. The Academic Advising Council consists of the college advisors as well as a few staff from other units. The council is poised to add faculty to its membership. The objective is to have faculty discuss advising techniques with other faculty as well as college advisors. This should lead to improved advising and more consistent advising for students. The objective for the action project is to put forth recommendations to the provost on improving faculty advising. The implementation of those recommendations would be Part II, and will be a subsequent AQIP Action project.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic Departments as well as Schools and Colleges would be impacted. The ultimate impact will be on the student body.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The basic process that should ultimately be improved is faculty advising of students. This would be done by adding faculty to the Academic Advising Council.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The Academic Advising Council is ready to begin discussions with faculty as part of their membership. This goal of this action project is to have this committee put forth recommendations to the provost. This should easily be accomplishable within the next Academic Year.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Minutes from the Academic Advising Council meetings, as well as discussions with the Council and possible interactions between the Council and the AQIP Steering committee will allow us to monitor the progress on this Action Project.

### 7: Project Outcome Measures
The outcomes will be a set of recommendations to the Provost. When these recommendations have been produced and approved, the project will have been successful.

Other Information

This is the first part of a two-part process. It is hoped that if this first part is successful, Part II will commence following the completion of this first part.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

The expanded Academic Advising Council which was charged with the task of strengthening faculty academic advising completed its research in spring of 2008 and presented its recommendations for action to the AQIP Steering Committee. It identified four specific means whereby faculty advising could be strengthened: (1) training, (2) resources, (3) processes, and (4) recognition. Under training for faculty, the Council recommended specifically that an advising overview continue to be included in the new Faculty Teaching Enhancement Workshop, that experienced faculty advisors be encouraged to mentor less experienced faculty, that an advising workshop be held the first or second Common Hour in October, and that there be implemented an ongoing training program for special advising topics. Under training for staff, the Council recommended training sessions on advising for administrative assistants in academic departments. And under training for students, the Council recommended improvements in the degree audit report, advising workshops for students, and continued pre-graduation orientation sessions. Under Advising Resources, the Council recommended creating a mission statement for advising at Southeast, setting up an online faculty advising manual, and developing an Advising Toolkit to be distributed to faculty at the Teaching Enhancement Workshop and available to other faculty on request. Under Advising Processes, the Council recommended improved electronic communications to advisees, more timely updates for curricular changes, and regularizing the process of curriculum updates. The Council determined that it lacked sufficient information at that time to make recommendations regarding ways of recognizing faculty for their contributions to academic advising. On August 14, 2009, the co-chairs of the academic advising action team (Dr. Jim Champine, faculty member, and Amanda Eller, professional advisor) presented a progress report at the Administrative Council's annual retreat. Administrative Council is the President's chief advisory council including representation from all employee groups, faculty, chairs, directors, deans, and others. A significant accomplishment was reported that was not specifically foreseen in its original recommendations, namely, the decision by the University, based on the Academic Advising Council's recommendation to adopt DegreeWorks as the new degree audit and course registration system. The Council's recommendation was based on its perception after visits with other institutions that use DegreeWorks that this application would resolve many of their original concerns about the transparency of the degree audit and curriculum update process for students. DegreeWorks is now being implemented and is expected to “go live” in summer of 2010. In addition, the Council reported that several of its original recommendations had now been implemented, including, continuance of advising component in the Teaching Enhancement Workshop, encouragement of a mentoring system for new faculty advisors, an October faculty advising workshop (attended last October by approximately 60 faculty members), special topics training opportunities, training sessions for administrative assistants, graduation orientation sessions, online faculty advising manual, and the new Faculty Advising Toolkit. Recommendations not yet implemented, but still going forward as goals include development of an advising mission statement, further development of departmental cultures that value academic advising, and finalizing of a recognition plan for faculty advisors. It is expected that each of these goals will be addressed in the 2010 academic year. Since the advising action project was intended to make recommendations, it is now considered complete, though efforts to improve and track the improvement of advising will continue.

2: Institution Involvement

The Academic Advising Council's research involved all University constituencies including faculty, deans, professional advisors, staff, and students.

3: Next Steps

This action project is now complete.

4: Resulting Effective Practices
As indicated above, several of the recommendations of the Council have been implemented. Furthermore, the adoption of DegreeWorks is considered to be a major step forward in providing more transparent information and processes for advising. It is also significant that the action project process has now been integrated into the University's existing process for taking stock of progress towards goals and setting new annual goals, particularly as this process involves Executive Staff and Administrative Council.

### Project Challenges

There are no significant challenges remaining for this action project; though the challenge of continually improving advising will naturally be ongoing.

### AQIP Involvement

This Action Project has been completed. The project team created recommendations on how faculty advising could be strengthened. The team made recommendations in the following areas: (1) training, (2) resources, (3) processes, and (4) recognition. Southeast Missouri State has employed several of AQIP's Principles of High Performance Organizations including Focus (by maintaining the project scope) and People (by focusing on the people within the advising chain). The specific recommendations of the committee include: - Including an advising overview within the new faculty Teaching Enhancement Workshop - Providing training sessions on advising for administrative assistants in academic departments - Improving the degree audit report, advising workshops for students, and continued pre-graduation orientation sessions. - Creating an advising mission statement - Setting up an online faculty advising manual, and developing an Advising Tool Kit - Improving electronic communications to advisees On August 14, 2009, the co-chairs of the academic advising action team presented a progress report at the Administrative Council's annual retreat (the President's Advisory Council). Most of the recommendations of the committee have been implemented including the deployment of Degree Works for 2010. In addition to Degree Works, Southeast Missouri State also indicates pursuit of the remaining goals including the development of an advising mission statement, further development of departmental cultures that value academic advising, and finalizing of a recognition plan for faculty advisors. Now that this project has been completed, the project team should consider documenting the process for accomplishing this project. For example, how was the team selected? Did the team represent all aspects of the campus community well? How would the institution approach this project differently? Has a process been established to maintain the Faculty/Staff Handbook? What process allow ed the team to complete the task in such a quick manner? Did the campus community feel that the communications from the team were adequate? The documentation process of how decisions were made and how goals were selected and monitored will assist the institution in future projects and assist new team members. Note: Please update “Actual Completion Date” in the Action Project system.

### Institution Involvement

The project sought broad based involvement from all University constituencies including faculty, deans, professional advisors, staff, and students. By seeking broad participation, Southeast Missouri State improves the decision making process as encourage by AQIP. The project team is encouraged to capture what methods were most successful in soliciting input from each group. Did the team have a website to disseminate information? Which audiences were most likely to utilize the website? Did the team use open forums to solicit input? Who were the most frequent participants? By collecting data on effective communications mechanisms, the institution will be better positioned for future projects.

### Next Steps

The institution identified several next steps including the implementation of Degree Works. In addition the institution will be pursuing the remaining goals including the development of an advising mission statement, further development of departmental cultures that value academic advising, and finalizing of a recognition plan for faculty advisors. Although the project is complete, the institution is...
encouraged to continue tracking the progress on the long term impact. Did the project meet the anticipated needs of the campus community to improve academic advising? Are additional changes necessary for improving the process? How will success be measured?

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The institution is to be commended for completing the action project. While the project has been completed, the institution is encouraged to pursue their recommendations that have yet to be implemented. As part of the ongoing AQIP process, the institution is encouraged to identify institutional needs during all projects as a basis for future projects. As the campus selects future projects, Southeast Missouri State is encouraged to develop an ongoing campus dialogue as new projects are selected – thus reinforcing AQIP’s Principles of High Performance Organization including Focus (by refining the projects and project scope of potential projects), People (through the involvement of multiple people at different levels), and Continuous Improvement (through the selection of projects that build off of each other). This dialogue will provide a solid foundation for future projects.

5: Project Challenges

A: The college indicates that this project (academic advising recommendations) will be completed upon receiving this report. The challenge of making this (or any) project a success is the involvement of the campus community and changing the institutional processes for ongoing improvement. As part of this AQIP project, the College has identified the challenge for continual improvement of academic advising. The College is encouraged to continue their progress on this project by transitioning the project’s successes to other projects identified by the college. As the institution begins other AQIP projects, it should consider how to best capture progress through the collection of data and dissemination of results.

6: AQIP Involvement

A: The institution did not request of AQIP assistance. Should the institution find the need for additional assistance; they are encouraged to contact AQIP 9777

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: This project has been completed.

2: Success Factors

A: The project succeeded in involving faculty in a review of faculty advising, developing materials (such as a faculty advising toolkit), and pointing the way to the adoption of DegreeWorks to improve student accessibility to degree audits, simplify the process of online registration, and provide timely and readable information to academic advisors.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: The project was aimed at making recommendations for the improvement of advising. One recommendation which has proven difficult to follow up on effectively was to improve faculty reward systems so as to better recognize the critical role of faculty advising and make the faculty advising workload more equitable.