

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southeast Missouri State University

Project Details		
Title	Improve Student Engagement Through Co-Curricular Program Development and Assessment	Status ACTIVE
Category	6-Supporting Institutional Operations	Updated
Timeline		Reviewed
	Planned Project Kickoff 08-01-2013	Created 09-23-2013
	Target Completion 08-01-2015	Version 3

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

A: *The action project is to better define what attributes contribute to an engaged Southeast student body and the development of specific strategies, from these defined attributes, to increase the engagement of students across the Southeast campus. Campus engagement involves a broad connection to the University through student involvement in co-curricular activities, student athletics, campus governance, and the local community.*

2: PROJECT RATIONALE

A: *Southeast has a strong emphasis on student involvement, however, this involvement is not consistent across the student body. University faculty and staff often observe many of the same students at student events, participating in student organizations, serving in student leadership organizations, and participating in other student engagement opportunities. There exists an opportunity to build a better connection between the students of Southeast and the various opportunities for student involvement across campus.*

There is strong evidence that participating in extracurricular activities serves to better integrate students in the campus and has a positive impact for "persistence and degree completion" (Stuart, Fostering Student Learning and Success through First-Year Programs, 2006). The University is currently examining strategies and putting in place specific efforts to improve student retention and student persistence to graduation. This increased focus by the campus on retention provides an optimal time for this action project. While not the primary focus of this action project, one demonstrated effect of increased student engagement is an increase in student retention and persistence. This action project adds to the synergy across campus involving retention and the various strategies being considered to improve the services and programs to our students that assist in their retention and persistence.

3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: *Admissions
Athletics
Campus Life
Counseling and Disability Services
Dean of Students Office
International Education & Services
Military and Veterans Services
Recreation Services
New Student Programs
Residence Life
Student Activities Council
Student Government
University's Speaker Series program
Victory Program
Various faculty and staff*

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: *The critical areas this action project has the potential to impact include:*

- 1. The coordination of campus wide co-curricular programming across departments. The coordination of programming will have a direct impact on the staffing and budget needs of multiple departments, including the possible budget requests through the University's Budget Review Process.*
- 2. Elevation of Campus Life as the campus leader for campus wide programming and co-curricular efforts, including the tracking and organizing of community service opportunities.*
- 3. Program assessment, as measured against the values assessment completed as a first part of the action program. Programs and other students engagement efforts will be assessed using previous measures (attendance, costs, satisfaction), however, the addition of the values finder to connect program development and program presentation is an important addition.*

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: *The timeline for the action project is:*

- Summer 2013: Committee development and interactions with Dr. Adam Peck, project consultant. Development of study to define engagement attributes.*
- September 2013: Survey and interview efforts with Southeast students and campus visit with Dr. Peck to define engagement attributes.*
- December 2013: Delivery of Development of Consultant Report and development of student engagement plans based upon consultant report.*
- Spring 2014: Student engagement plans formally adopted for following academic year*
- Fall 2014: Student engagement plans implemented.*
- Spring/Summer 2015: Evaluation of engagement plans through examination of participation rates, NSSE, Graduating Senior survey.*

The timeline provides for assessment and planning during the 2013 -2014 academic year and an opportunity to put these improved efforts at student engagement into place for the 2014-2015 academic year. The campus planning for large events, including Homecoming and the University's Speaker Series will occur in the 2013-2014 academic year and the results of this action project can be combined with this planning as activities and programs are developed for the 2014-2015 academic year.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: *This action project is a critical goal for the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Success. As this effort has been adopted as an Action Project it has the explicit support of the University's AQIP Committee, University Executive Staff, and the University Administrative Council. The inclusion of the Executive Staff and the Administrative Council provides strong University support for the program.*

The action project is central to the future work of multiple student life and student activity staff, including departments outside of the division such as Athletics. Beginning with the launch meeting and continuing through the action project, no fewer than eight departments are directly involved in the action project. The widespread involvement from across departments and divisions, including the support from the leadership of the University provides this action program strong visibility and buy in from across the campus.

The progress on this action project will be regularly monitored by three groups:

- 1. The Division of Enrollment Management and Student Success maintains active involvement and review of the project through its staff meetings bi-monthly.*
- 2. The action project steering committee monitors the work of the consultant, the planning teams, and various departments involved in developing strategies from the work of the consultant.*
- 3. The AQIP Steering Committee will monitor the project through periodic reports from the Action Project liaison to the committee.*

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: *This action project provides the University with an opportunity to build better connections between the students of Southeast and the various opportunities for student involvement across campus. Evidence of this opportunity can be found in the survey responses of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), in particular the Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) section and in a survey administered by the University, the Graduating Student Survey, which measures the experiences of Southeast students upon graduation.*

The EEE section in the 2012 NSSE data demonstrates that both first-year and senior students at Southeast report lower levels of “complementary learning opportunities that enhance academic programs” when compared to all three comparison categories, Plains Public, Carnegie Class, and NSSE 2012. In all comparison categories, there was a $p < .05$ or greater level of significance between our students and those in the other comparison categories. In the Graduating Senior Survey, approximately 60% of students reported they felt the student’s voice in “college politics” or the role of Student Government to be “irrelevant” to their Southeast experience.

Taken together these two surveys demonstrate an area of opportunity for Southeast to identify the reasons for the current level of student engagement on campus and in campus activities. Through a clear understanding of the factors discouraging student engagement on campus a more effective plan for student engagement outside the classroom can be developed and put into effect.

The outcomes of this process are fourfold:

- 1. A concrete understanding of the current level of student engagement and the factors that encourage or prevent Southeast students from taking advantage of the various opportunities available to them.*
- 2. A series of action steps to be implemented by various offices/departments at Southeast to increase awareness of the co-curricular programs and events across the Southeast campus.*
- 3. A series of action steps to be implemented by various offices/departments at Southeast to increase student participation, as measured by NSSE and the Graduating Senior Survey, in co-curricular programs and events across the Southeast campus.*
- 4. An increase in reported student engagement as shown by increased survey responses on the EEE section of the NSSE and the University administered Graduating Student Survey.*