

Early Alert

WEAKNESSES/PROBLEMS: ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Through a comprehensive process of analysis described on pp. 19-22, IHCC and DCTC identified major academic problems impacting their growth and self-sufficiency which include: (1) high numbers/percentages of adult and first generation students; (2) declining success rates; and (3) increasing demand for online and hybrid courses. Contributing causes and consequences of these problems to be addressed by the Title III project are discussed in this section.

Academic Programs Problem 2: Success rates for IHCC and DCTC students are declining

Overall success rates for IHCC's and DCTC's adult students have been on a downward trend since fall of 2009. The colleges define student success as students who enter in fall of one year and either return, transfer, or graduate the following fall. At IHCC, success rates dropped from 71.9% in fall 2009 to 61.4% in fall 2013. The situation is similar for DCTC where success rates dropped from 72.2% to 66.2%.

Retention. IHCC and DCTC fall-to-fall retention rates of adult students (FT/PT) have been declining for the past few years. IHCC's retention rate dropped from 50.8% for students who entered in Fall 2011 to 48.7% for students who entered in Fall 2013. DCTC experienced a sharper decline during the same time period from 50.3% to 42.6%.

Transfer. Between Fall 2011 and Fall 2013, adult student transfer rates (FT/PT) decreased at IHCC from 9.8% to 8.5%; DCTC rates also decreased from 8.1% to 5.6%.

Graduation. Graduation rates of 150% normal-time-to-completion for full-time students at IHCC dropped from 33.7% for students who entered in Fall 2009 to 25.5% for students who entered in Fall 2011. DCTC dropped from 53.3% to 49.0% for the same time period.

Institutional Management Problem 1: Advising systems and related processes present numerous challenges related to accessibility, accuracy, and consistency

An assessment of IHCC's and DCTC's advising systems and processes identified several common challenges including limited capacity to be accessible and available to students; inconsistency with respect to the quality of advising across each institution; inability to provide accurate and timely information by knowledgeable, trained and evaluated advisors; lack of process designed to build the advisor/advisee relationship; unreasonable advisor loads; and decreased student satisfaction with their advisor and the advising process.

Noel-Levitz Retention Opportunity Analysis. Results of a comprehensive Noel-Levitz Retention Opportunity Analysis completed in February 2015, noted the current academic advising for new students at DCTC is organized around a viable centralized professional advising model for the first registration term with faculty advising in subsequent enrollment terms. However, the actual delivery of the faculty advising "was uneven, the handoff from professional advisor to faculty advisor was poorly defined, and most professional and faculty advising appeared to be more closely associated with registration advising, with limited attention given to relationship building." Further, during peak times, wait times for professional advisors are lengthy. Students in the focus group acknowledged the value of

advising and generally were supportive of additional required advising contacts, provided they were seamless and convenient.

Higher Learning Commission Feedback. IHCC experiences a similar situation related to inconsistencies in delivery of advising and marginal attention to building advisor-advisee relationships. Higher Learning Commission (accrediting body) reviewers noted, "...it is unclear how IHCC maintains relationships with students," and suggested IHCC has the opportunity to develop processes to improve the college's capacity to identify and address changing needs of student groups.

Early-Alert System. At IHCC and DCTC, an early-alert system, Hobson's Retain, which has excellent potential for connecting at-risk students with needed college resources, has limited faculty participation and overloads easily at critical times due to limited human resource availability for handling referrals and follow up. There is no clear expectation for faculty to develop a systematic process to ensure every student is aware of their academic progress during the first weeks of each term. This is especially important for first generation students whose expectations may not be realistic and whose previous experiences may not have adequately prepared them for college-level rigor. While the numbers of students being referred through the early alert program have grown, the participation rate of IHCC faculty has declined. In fall 2012, the participation rate was 78.5%; in spring 2013, that rate dropped to 64.6%—a decrease of almost 14 percentage points.

Implement a Proactive, Program-Based Advising Model. Expanded intrusive advising practices will revamp the current advising process in order to provide an increase in students using advising services, faculty participation in the early alert system, and advisors following up with students at least monthly and more frequently as needed. Advising services will be offered conveniently through online service and/or different hours that are more convenient for adult learners. The Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI) will be used to prioritize students' success strategies by assessing the motivational factors influencing entering students and will allow IHCC and DCTC to respond to their requests for assistance. The CSI identifies the leading non-cognitive indicators of students' success and provides detailed information about their academic motivations, levels of risk in a range of areas, and receptivity to assistance. This survey provides data to make interventions more meaningful and relevant, before a student begins disengaging. The CSI survey results and AgileGrad will be used by advisors when working with adult learners and veterans to plan course schedules. This supports an intrusive advising model that is convenient for the adult learner as a key component is online accessibility. AgileGrad gives students and advisors the ability to look up course requirements and schedule courses around selected student parameters. The tool also gives advisors specific ability to track student performance. An Adult Learner Advisor will be hired to help implement this strategy as well as keep other advisors trained with regard to best practices in advising adult learners, including veterans, and will lead adult learning initiatives in collaboration with the Director of Adult and Distance Learning and Director of Prior Learning Assessment.

The proposed strategies include increasing student use of advising services and faculty participation in the early alert system, with more frequent advisor follow up with students. In 2011, Noel-Levitz conducted a 71-item, web-based poll that included both four-year and two-year institutions to identify what is working in student retention at the undergraduate level. The poll revealed that early alert and intervention systems—both aspects of extensive advising practices—were regarded as highly or somewhat effective by the majority of the respondents.

Key Overall Goals and Measurable Objectives

Overall Goals	Measurable Objectives	Specific Tasks and Methods	Tangible Results
<p>Academic Programs</p> <p>Goal 1: Increase success and completion for underserved adult learners</p> <p>Goal 2: Reduce time to degree for adult learners</p>	<p>Obj. 1: By September 30, 2020, increase the fall to-fall success rates (defined as retention, graduation, or transfer) of all IHCC students age 25+ to 67%. (Baseline = 61.4%)</p> <p>Obj. 2: By September 30, 2020, increase the fall to-fall success rates (defined as retention, graduation, or transfer) of all DCTC students age 25+ to 72%. (Baseline = 66.2%)</p> <p>Obj. 3: By September 30, 2020, increase IHCC's faculty participation rate in Hobsons Early Alert/Retain to 75%. (Baseline=64.6% Spring 2013)</p> <p>Obj. 4: By September 30, 2020, increase DCTC's faculty participation rate in Hobsons Early Alert/Retain to 75%. (Baseline=42%)</p>	<p>1. Develop career ladders infused with proactive, intrusive academic and career advising: (a) implement a course scheduling process; (b) implement a Proactive, Program Based Advising Model; and (c) expand Center for Experiential Learning (CEL).</p> <p>2. Improve and expand prior learning assessment (PLA) with competency based education and assessment (CBE/CBA) and credit for prior learning (CPL): (a) implement process for students to integrate college credential attainment with industry cert. and credit for prior learning; (b) increase degree acceleration through hybrid and online course offerings</p>	<p>③ Clear pathways for students in more career and technical education programs</p> <p>③ Completely online degree options</p> <p>③ expanded Accelerated blended/hybrid degree options expanded More students have an academic plan</p> <p>③ Increased # of students using advising services</p> <p>③ Increased faculty participation in advising</p> <p>③ Increased success rates</p> <p>③ Advising services offered online and/or different hours for convenience of adult learners</p>
<p>Institutional Management</p> <p>Goal 3: Increase professional development for faculty and staff</p>	<p>Obj. 5: By September 30, 2020, increase percentage of IHCC advisors/counselors who are trained on career and intrusive advising best practices and strategies to 100%. (Baseline = 75%)</p> <p>Obj. 6: By September 30, 2020, increase percentage of DCTC advisors/counselors who are trained on career and intrusive advising best practices and strategies to 100%. (Baseline = 30%)</p>	<p>3. Provide professional development to faculty, staff, and administrators to effectively fulfill the needs of the adult learner</p>	<p>③ Increased professional development opportunities</p> <p>③ Increased advisors and counselors trained in implementing and facilitating online orientation and advising</p>

Timetable of Implementation Activities

Specific Tasks to be Completed	Primary Participants	Methods Involved	Tangible Results	Timeframe From To	
Year 1: 2015-16					
Purchase & implement AgileGrad	IHCC/DCTC Hobsons Admins; AgileGrad Mgmt. Analyst; IT; Adult Learner Adv.; DCTC Dir. of Student Success; IR Dirs.; IHCC/DCTC Dean of Students; Hobsons AgileGrad Imp.	Follow established IHCC/DCTC purchasing policies and procedures; convene implementation team and develop project implementation timeline; train implementation team	AgileGrad purchased; Hobsons Implementation Team Specialist/Facilitator contracted; timeline implemented; team members knowledgeable about using AgileGrad; product fully implemented	1/16	9/16

<p>Implement a proactive, program-based advising model</p>	<p>IHCC VP of Student Services; IHCC/DCTC Dean of Students; Adult Learner Adv.; Dir. PLA</p>	<p>Expand use of Retain; begin to use AgileGrad; advisors meet once per semester with adult learners and veterans utilizing Retain and AgileGrad data and tools; analyze service hours and expand to improve service, begin using technology to hold virtual sessions, and develop innovative practices to reach out to adult learners and veterans</p>	<p>Retain is expanded and used by 50% of faculty; semester meetings scheduled and service hours adjusted; advisors using AgileGrad; advisors holding interactive virtual sessions, visiting classrooms, actively communicating with adult learners and veterans (ongoing)</p>	<p>1/16 ongoing</p>	<p>5/17</p>
<p>Implement professional development opportunities for faculty/staff related to adult learners, career and workforce issues, and veterans</p>	<p>IHCC/DCTC VP Acad. Affairs; Acad./Faculty Dev. Days Planning Committee; Fac. Dev. Coord.; Dir Adult & Distance Ed; Dir. PLA</p>	<p>Provide professional development opportunities for faculty who teach online, accelerated classes; provide workshops on adult learning theory and andragogy; provide workshops on advising adult learners; plan and implement Adult Learner Institute</p>	<p>Professional development opportunities offered during required professional development days fall and spring, new faculty orientation, professional development work groups with 75% participation; 100% participation of advisors in workshops on advising adult learners, career and workforce issues, and veterans; Adult Learner Institute scheduled for June 2016</p>	<p>10/15</p>	<p>6/16</p>

Year 2: 2016-17					
Implement course scheduling process that allows adult learners' wants and needs to be met	Acad. Deans; Fac.; Adv.; AgileGrad Mgmt. Analyst; Degree Audit Record System (DARS) Coord.; Course Schedulers; Workforce Center Adv.	Implement existing scheduling process that integrates AgileGrad; ensure College Catalogs, DARS and AgileGrad are in alignment	There will be a clear pathway for adult learners in computer science and application programs and accounting and business programs; course fill rates at the workforce center will improve 10%; accelerated blended/hybrid degree options will be expanded to two degree pathways; College Catalogs, DARS, and AgileGrad are aligned for development of career pathways	8/16	5/17
Year 3: 2017-18					
Advisors will work with adult learners to develop specific academic plans that include PLAs using AgileGrad	Advisors	One-on-one advisor/student sessions face-to-face or virtually	An additional 10% of adult learners will have an academic plan	9/17	5/18
Expand advisor expertise related to best practices for onboarding new adult learners	Dir. Distance & Adult Learning; Dir. PLA; Adult Learner Adv.	Train advisors on using technology such as Skype, Adobe Connect, Camtasia and mobile applications to develop a virtual orientation	All advisors will understand how to facilitate a virtual orientation; 10% of adult learners will participate in virtual orientation	11/17	8/18

Implement course scheduling process that allows adult learners' wants and needs to be met	Acad. Deans; Faculty; Adv.; AgileGrad Mgmt. Analyst; Course Schedulers; Workforce Center Adv.	Expand existing scheduling process and use of AgileGrad	There will be a clear pathway for adult learners in executive, administrative, and legal assisting programs and human services/early childhood development programs; course fill rates at the workforce center will improve another 10%; accelerated blended/hybrid degree options will be expanded to two or more degree pathways	9/17	5/18
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Year 4: 2018-19

Implement course scheduling process that allows adult learners' wants and needs to be met	Acad. Deans; Faculty; Adv.; AgileGrad Mgmt. Analyst; Course Schedulers; Workforce Center Adv.	Expanded use of AgileGrad; clear pathways established that includes one of three avenues to completion— face-to-face, blended/hybrid, online	Previous noted pathways will include 3 avenues to completion; there will be a clear pathway for adult learners in criminal justice, law enforcement, patient care technician, and licensed practical nursing; course fill rates at the workforce will improve another 5%; there will be an increase of 3% in time to degree completion for adult learners and veterans	8/18	6/19
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Year 5: 2019-20

No Actions Noted