

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Luoma Leadership Academy
Action Learning Project 2009-2010

Project #10

Improving Early Student Success Initiatives and Development Educator Processes:
Key to Improving Student Success at Century College

Executive Sponsor

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Problem

Students at Century are not achieving success at expected rates relative to retention, transfer and completion of degrees, certificates and diplomas. Processes for new entering students and for developmental students need to be examined for their impact on student success.

Team Charge

Develop and conduct a research proposal which focuses on the following questions:

- a) **Do other MnSCU two-year colleges have a "floor" on Accuplacer scores?** Yes, the majority of colleges are using the Accuplacer cut-scores determined by MnSCU, however there are a few exceptions to this that are noted in the detailed findings.

- b) **Do other MnSCU two-year institutions have Adult Basic Education offerings where low-scoring Accuplacer students are referred for developmental coursework?** Yes, many offer Adult Basic Education offerings; some are offered on-campus and others are off-campus.

- c) **Do other MnSCU two-year institutions have more than two developmental courses in a sequence in reading, writing, mathematics, and ESL/ESOL?** Yes, the developmental course offerings vary significantly across the system. Refer to the table of developmental coursework offerings for more information.

d) **Do other MnSCU two-year institutions offer "fast-track" developmental courses?** Yes, fast-track offerings in developmental coursework vary from one institution to another, and from one discipline to another. Some colleges offer fast-track developmental coursework in the summer sessions, which some consider fast-track offerings.

e) **Are there two-year colleges with high success rates in developmental reading? Developmental mathematics? Developmental ESL/ESOL/EAP? Which colleges are these?** Refer to individual responses as this information was not readily available for the majority of institutions. It was challenging to determine the colleges with the highest success rates due to variances in data collection for student retention and developmental coursework completion. Also, minimal data is available for comparison.

f) **Identify the three colleges among MnSCU's two-year institutions exemplifying best practices in developmental education.** Best practices varied among colleges and it was challenging to identify particular colleges given the limited data provided. The most common best practices identified across the system included tutoring and learning communities.

g) **Other questions, issues which emerge.** Refer to detailed summary for issues, questions and recommendations.

A survey was administered to 27 two-year colleges in MnSCU. The return rate was satisfactory with some colleges only responding to a limited number of questions. All survey responses were compiled according to the question and then analyzed. In addition to survey responses, the team researched developmental course offerings online to compile a complete listing of current developmental course offerings in reading, writing, and mathematics among MnSCU two-year institutions. ESL/ESOL/EAP course offerings are listed according to survey responses. Limited data was available and/or provided for students' success rates in developmental coursework. Century College provided extensive data related to developmental coursework and retention rates unlike other institutions, so it was not possible to do a quality comparison. Developmental coursework credits and evaluation also vary significantly from one college to another. Many colleges are in the initial phase of exploring or implementing best practices in developmental coursework. In the following documents, you will find the survey and results that address each of the above questions in further detail.

We are appreciative of the opportunity to participate in this project and hope that the survey findings, recommendations, and best practices are valuable for future initiatives. As more students are requiring developmental coursework upon entering post-secondary institutions, it appears that more data are necessary. There are many variances in developmental course offerings across the system which can pose challenges for colleges, educators, and students. The team members are supportive of future developmental coursework initiatives across MnSCU institutions to promote greater student retention, transfer, and completion and overall student success in post-secondary education. It is possible that this could be achieved by reducing the variances within the system and coming together to develop common definitions in order to meaningfully share standards and best practices in developmental coursework.