

Institutionalizing college-wide responsibility for supporting NTO student success

In Wisconsin, a continuous improvement philosophy guides the evaluation of post-secondary programs and services in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The Quality Review Process (QRP) aligns with the current strategic planning activities in the technical colleges (Plan, Review, Study and Adjust.) The QRP Indicators include 10 State level indicators, one of which is nontraditional enrollment.

The inclusion of NTO enrollment as a state required measure of performance for WTCS Programs provides incentive to continuously improve programs by diversifying the student body. As a WTCS College evaluates its programs on an ongoing basis (every 3 to 5 years), it utilizes as one of the tools a Scorecard comparing performance on all indicators, state required, institution determined and program specific. Scorecards are issued annually for each program allowing a program to track enrollment patterns over time. The Scorecard brings into focus for educational deans and instructors the data regarding the participation and performance of nontraditional students. It is a reminder that the responsibility for supporting NTO student success is shared between instructors and deans as well as those who have in the past been primarily responsible for providing outreach and support services – the nontraditional coordinators, outreach specialists, counselors and advisors. .

The introduction of the Five Step Process to our State through the STEM Equity Pipeline Project was serendipitous to an effort that was already underway among those who develop, deliver and evaluate post-secondary educational programs in the Wisconsin Technical College System. The STEM Equity Pipeline Project is teaching post-secondary NTO Coordinators as well as secondary Career and Technical Education Instructors and Coordinators to collect and evaluate data as part of and prior to the delivery of services, activities and instruction. As a result, those who are providing direct services to NTO students are beginning to do more surveys, as well as data collection and analysis. They are more aware of the importance of measuring the results of outreach efforts and retention related activities. While this at times, this work takes them outside their comfort zone, they are learning a language consistent in supporting the culture of continuous improvement. In Wisconsin Technical Colleges, the QRP Process and the tools of the Five Step Process and Root Cause Analysis are engaging more of the village (college) in supporting the success of nontraditional students.

For more information: Contact Frances Johnson, Fran.johnson@wtcsystem.edu or Karen Showers, Karen.showers@wtcsystem.edu Wisconsin Technical College System