GRCC College Action Project Update  
Due to SLT Exec Council: August 1, 2013

Project Title: CAP 5.1.2 Integrating the Early Alert System for student persistence & completion 
Champion Name: Lynnae Selberg

August 1 Update Questions

NOTE: All current CAP projects are scheduled to be completed by July, 2014.

The Champion’s responses should be direct and factual to provide a clear picture of its progress, accomplishments, and challenges.

1. Describe the past accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project since August of 2012. Describe any changes to your implementation plan that you have made this year. Describe concrete achievements: meetings, data gathered and analyzed, plans made or implemented, changes in processes, and measured results. If your team hasn't made expected progress, explain why things are moving slower than planned. If you implementation plan has changed, please describe why.

The CAP team consisting of Lynnae Selberg, Pat Missad, Emily Nisley, Sara Dorer, Eric Kunnen, Mark Nordblom, Fatima Nieves, Khalia Daniels and Melissa Polonco-Nunez met 6 times during 2012-2013. For this past year, we made some changes in our CAP (the title, purpose and goals) as we had achieved the first set of goals set before us and we felt it was time to take it to the next level. Below were our new goals and what we’ve achieved over the past year.

1. **Data Analysis**: this is a goal we have continued to struggle with. I will explain this further in the next couple sections, but this will be a primary focus for us in 2013-2014 as we hopefully move to a new system which will allow for data collection.

2. **iData Implementation**: We purchased the iData system that was supposed to be able to provide us with some data. The implementation kick off was in June 2012. At this point we are just testing the system and have yet to move it to production. We have struggled with the iData team as well as the Starfish software. This too will be explained further in future sections.

3. **Flag Clearing Percentage**: We have made significant strides in clearing flags despite seeing growth in the number of flags raised with no additional human resources. Please see table below for flag clearing percentages by semester.

4. **Intentional Contacts**: With this we have established a couple new processes that have allowed us to target and work with our most at risk students. First was the addition of the “probation” flag. During the winter semester, we added a probation flag to all students who found themselves on first time probation following the fall semester. This allowed us to quickly identify the student as an “at risk” student should any other type of flag be raised on them and moved them to the top of the follow up list.

   Another process put in place was the “no follow up needed” flags. With the behavior, attendance and performance flags, we differentiated whether the faculty
specifically wanted us to follow up or not. For faculty who had an issue in the classroom which they addressed, they might raise a “no follow up” flag. This still allowed us to see the big picture on each student (for example how many flags do they have raised) and allowed us to see if there are patterns that we might not have known about and can now address.

Another process put into place was that we gave access to the system to the College Success Coaches so that they too could follow up and work with flags raised on their specific at risk student population.

When we implemented the “flag survey” (request for participation) each semester, we broke out AFP (foundational classes) first so that we could reach these at risk students first before sending out the remainder of the course sections. See the table below around the response rate with flag surveys as this too saw increases.

5. **Explore the “attendance” feature:** We have this feature available, though it has been found useful by limited faculty, it is another time intensive piece to set up each semester. So we have not “mass” implemented it at this point.

6. **Department Utilization:** We continue to work with Departments to come in and talk about the system, how it works and how it benefits students. We have approached a number of faculty who have significant use in the system to gather feedback about how we can improve the system for them.

7. **Other:** We have made some other improvements in the system over the past year:

   - We implemented an “academic dishonesty” flag to allow us to track academic dishonesty for the HLC reports.
   - We have developed “resource” packages that are sent to students whom we are unable to reach by phone or e-mail after numerous attempts. These packages are based on the type of flag raised (performance or attendance) and provide the student with helpful information, connects them to resources and strongly encourages they set up a counseling appointment.
   - We updated the landing page in Blackboard as well as all of the support materials available to assist faculty in utilization of this system.

**SLT Executive Committee Comments:**

It is clear from your summary that the team has done a tremendous amount of work towards the accomplishment of the project. It might be helpful if the section was more clearly centered on original goal statements. Your initial paragraph indicates that the team has made some adjustments to the purpose and goal statements, but it is a bit unclear as to how these accomplishments or steps in process might align with newly formed goal statements.

2. **Describe the next steps for this Action Project for 2013-14**

   Be specific about the next critical steps planned to move the Action Project ahead for next year. In many cases you will need to assemble your team and develop a Work Plan that you all agree on. This plan should be detailed as to guide your team’s activities for the next year.
The next steps for this CAP:

- Purchase & implement the new Early Alert system to the campus. This will have many smaller steps:
  1. Purchase the software
  2. Implement software
  3. Notify campus users & students
  4. Develop training materials & train campus users
  5. Monitor and increase usage by campus end users
  6. Gather data on results

- Train and bring up to speed the newly hired Retention Specialist.
- Explore opportunities to increase faculty usage of the system both in raising flags as well as following up on raised flags.
- Work with DLIT around the online component and erroneous automatic flags.
- Continue to identify at risk populations and how we can better serve them.
- We continue to grow the number of departments involved. A next step would be to evaluate the number of faculty within the department utilizing the system and grow the faculty pool.
- We will need to re-organize the team. There is a new Associate Dean and Retention Specialist who will most likely will be involved with the team. Eric Kunnen has left and we may need to replace his position. We would also like to have more classroom faculty involvement as we roll out the new product over the next year.

SLT Executive Committee Comments:
There are a number of clear next steps outlined in this section. However, we are a bit unclear about the recommendation to purchase and implement a new Early Alert system. It would be helpful if you could include some additional details with this recommendation. Have we clearly identified significant concerns with the current system, from both the counselor and the faculty perspective? Are there barriers in the current system that are limited faculty use, and that you believe would be improved in a new system. Is a new system already selected?

As we work to finalize these reports, and ultimately share them with our campus community, we are working to remove specific individual names. Could you please replace names with titles as you work on revisions?

3. What challenges, if any, are you facing regarding this Action Project?
   This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback, advice, and help from the SLT Executive Team. In your response, specify blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems.

We still face a few challenges, with two significant obstacles facing this CAP project. One is has taken a significant step towards some resolution (#2), the other we are hoping SLT can help us move forward (#1).

1) Software: The Starfish product has turned out to be a human capital intensive product (increasingly so). The system is not intuitively user friendly. There are pieces that one would think we as the end user would have control over, but do not. For example, we wanted to change the “automatic e-mails” that went out after a flag was raised. This can only be done by Starfish. So we sent the e-mails to them in August (they didn’t get fixed), in December (still not fixed), and again in February. It has taken almost
a year to get these updated despite our sending them in, by the established deadlines. The loading of
the courses, linking the users and running the entire “term transition” process (must be done each
semester) is extremely labor intense, changes frequently and is not user friendly. It frequently proves
problematic causing disruptions in launching the system each semester and requiring Starfish to assist.
Then last year, the survey process which used to be managed by Starfish was pushed out to the end
users. Again, this is a very time intensive and cumbersome process to set up each semester and
requires multiple people work on it to get it to run effectively.

The Starfish system continues to be independent of any other system we use when working with
students and requires faculty and staff who are part of the system to log into additional software to
utilize it. Counselors already log into e-mail, Blackboard, Advisor Trac, My Degree Path and People Soft
and then we add Starfish. So when time becomes short, as it frequently does, something has to give and
Starfish (because it is not user friendly or intuitive) is often what gives. The system is unable to link or
connect with any of the other programs that counselors use to be able to provide the valuable
information in a user friendly, time efficient manner. As we are in need of updating our Advisor Trac
system, over the past year we have been getting demonstrations of new software. With each piece that
we evaluate against our needs, we have made sure that they have an Early Alert component so that the
two pieces will work together, provide valuable (and needed) data as well as be efficient for counselors
when working with students. So as mentioned above, we hope to purchase a new system in this next
year to help alleviate some of these challenges. So an SLT funding request will be coming shortly to help
us obtain the new Early Alert system (which is more user friendly and significantly cheaper (annual cost)
than the current system).

2) **Resources**: Over the past year, our contingent Retention Specialist left for a new position at GRCC. So
we transitioned over a counseling intern who had been working in the Counseling & Career Center into
the contingent Retention Specialist role. With her skills she was able to further develop the follow up
and outreach to students. She would meet with them and get them appointments in Counseling. This
just this week we hired a full time, permanent Retention Specialist who will be taking on the work with
Early Alert.

Though we now have a permanent full time position, when we are looking at over 9,000 flags a
semester, that is too much for any one person to resolve in a timely manner. It really takes a group of
people all working with the student to be able to make an impact. The counselors still struggle to utilize
the current system, it isn’t user friendly and is an additional piece for them to access with their limited
student interaction time. So we have high hopes that this new system, since it is part of the new
advising system, with all its functionality can result in the ability to have more of an impact by the
counselors and faculty without additional time & effort.

3) **Online Classes**: we have faculty who are using external sites outside of Blackboard that they send
students to in order to complete course work. As Starfish is linked to Bb for the last log in flag, when
faculty do this, it provides erroneous flag raising as students might be doing the work, but just not
logging into Bb to do it. Thus the last log in flags are not an accurate reflection of student participation
in online classes.

4) **Educating Faculty**: right now we still receive flags the week of finals and after the student is to a point
in a class where an intervention would not prove beneficial. We need to encourage and educate around
the “early” aspect as well as get faculty to input comments in the system to help those following up on
the raised flags. We need to help faculty understand that we don’t have an ultimate means of
contacting students. We contact them via every means available to us (phone numbers, e-mails), but if
the student doesn’t answer the phone or respond to messages or e-mails, there is little we can do. We have created additional resources that are sent to “non-responsive” students to offer them assistance even if they don’t want it. But some faculty express frustration when we indicate we were unable to reach the student.

SLT Executive Committee Comments:
Again, it is clear from the challenges outlined above that this team has done a tremendous amount of work, making significant progress in the implementation of the Early Alert system.
As we noted in our comments in section 2, we would like to see some additional data around the recommendation to change the early alert system we currently use. Specifically, what are faculty saying about the system. Are they experiencing the same concerns? Has a new product already been selected? If so, what steps have we taken to ensure that we will not experience some of the same concerns we have seen with the Starfish product?

4. What are the measures (data) you are using to document success of your project? How are you performing on those measures? Each project champion should be collecting data that demonstrates the progress they are making. Provide a table outlining this data. The SLT Exec Team will use this data to evaluate the success of your action project to date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Winter 2012</th>
<th>Summer 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Winter 2013</th>
<th>Summer 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starfish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flags Raised</td>
<td>9254</td>
<td>7588</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>6486</td>
<td>9392</td>
<td>6519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic</td>
<td>5852</td>
<td>5320</td>
<td>2218</td>
<td>4529</td>
<td>6828</td>
<td>6290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flags Cleared</td>
<td>3438</td>
<td>3217</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>4538</td>
<td>8976</td>
<td>5032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Cleared</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* as of 7/27/13

Observations:
- We continue to see growth in the number of flags raised, both the automatic as well as the manually raised flags.
- We have seen significant improvement in the % cleared.
- For summer 2013 we have already tripled the number of flags raised over summer 2012 and we still have time left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dept. Use</th>
<th># Flags Fall 2011</th>
<th># Flags Winter 2012</th>
<th># Flags Summer 2012</th>
<th># Flags Fall 2012</th>
<th># Flags Winter 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>1314</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>1343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>1283</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>1209</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>1629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations:
- The top flag raising departments correlate with those departments who service the largest number of students (they have the most students and most number of sections).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments that raised at least 1 flag</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Winter 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Winter 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Winter 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations:
- We continue to grow the number of departments involved. A next step would be to evaluate the number of faculty within the department utilizing the system and grow the faculty pool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flag Survey Info</th>
<th>Sent</th>
<th>Viewed</th>
<th>% Viewed</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>% Completed</th>
<th>Flags Raised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2011</strong></td>
<td>6200</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1639</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter 2012</strong></td>
<td>2930</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2012</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2012 AFP</strong></td>
<td>209</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2012 Remaining</strong></td>
<td>2471</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2012 total</strong></td>
<td>2680</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>1089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter 2013 AFP</strong></td>
<td>176</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter 2013 Remaining</strong></td>
<td>2396</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>1701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter 2013 Total</strong></td>
<td>2572</td>
<td>1149</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations:
- We continue to see an improved “view” and “complete” rate of the flag surveys.
• We are especially pleased with the response rate from the AFP sections as this is the most at risk population.

SLT Executive Committee Comments:
There is a vast amount of data, along with well written observations providing information about what the data is telling us. It might be helpful to add faculty usage data, broken down between full time faculty and adjunct faculty. With what has been provided, it is not clear what percentages of our faculty are using the system.

Do we have any data around student impact? Are we able to see lower withdrawal rates, higher completion rates, or higher student grades in classes where the faculty member is actively using the early alert system?

5. Do you anticipate that this CAP will NOT be completed by July, 2014? If yes, please discuss those components which you anticipate not being completed.

I struggle with the term “complete”. It isn’t that we won’t complete the tasks, but many aspects of this CAP are ongoing and don’t have an “end” upon which to evaluate “completeness”. It is our goal to have everything wrapped up to launch the new system fall 2014, though I fully anticipate there will still be transitional elements that will go into the next academic year.

6. From your perspective as a CAP Champion, how could the strategic planning process be improved?

I have greatly appreciated the ability to present to SLT and gather feedback, idea’s and insight into the direction that we go with this work. I feel this has been a very valuable aspect to the process. With the new faculty evaluation process, it will hopefully encourage a more diverse faculty pool to get involved with this type of work (as it always seems to be the same people involved in everything).