Question 1: Describe the past year’s accomplishment and the current status of this Action Project.

We have met for one year, meeting once per month. Our charge was to “foster a sense of community at the College by providing opportunities for effective communication. Specifically, the College will designate a particular time each week during which no classes will be scheduled, thus freeing all members of the campus community to participate in inter- and intra- departmental discussion.

At our first two meetings, we explored the data we received from the 1st and 2nd Campus Conversations. We looked for main themes that would be considered communication topics.

We divided our group into three subteams: Formal Communication, Informal Communication, and Scheduling. The subteams met once per month and brought Action items to the larger group, or took ideas from the larger group to explore in more detail.

Formal Communication: The progress made from the formal communication team stemmed from a common thread that top down communication was lacking. It was felt that since moving from a storefront location to a much larger location, the communication has decreased. The first Action Item from this group was to pilot an assessment of upper administration by full time faculty. We had excellent participation from the faculty, and will be addressing the pilot results this fall.

**Goal: Increase communication between faculty and instructional administration.**

**Action Item F:** Instructional Administrative Feedback

**Description:** Pilot an evaluation tool (see below) in instruction, March 2007. This would be distributed in faculty mailboxes, could be completed in written form or in Word. Paul Folger will collect and compile results.

Allan Saaf, Steve Herald, Sarah Diel-Hunt, Dan Hagburg, Tom Clemens, Robert Shaw, Padriac Shinville, and Catherine Miller have volunteered to participate.

**Resources:** Copies and distribution to faculty mailboxes.

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1. Keeps faculty informed of institutional policies, procedures, and activities.
2. Explains rationale for administrative actions.
3. Acknowledges and considers faculty questions, complaints, suggestions, and requests.
4. Creates an atmosphere of open communication—downward from administrator(s)
5. Creates an atmosphere of open communication—upward from faculty.
6. When appropriate, takes action upon faculty questions, complaints, suggestions, and requests.
7. Involves individuals or group in decision making related to their working conditions; including scheduling, physical plant, class size, team composition, etc.
8. Knows and makes effective use of talents and interests of faculty.
9. Acknowledges and rewards competence and dedication with praise and support.
10. Helpful in the procurement of materials and supplies
11. Objectively counsels faculty members on performance problems in a professional manner.
12. Stimulates experimentation and innovation by supporting recommendations of faculty.
13. Helpful and constructive in evaluations of faculty.
15. Exhibits commitment to the institutional mission (Heartland Community College provides access to higher education and excellence in teaching and learning.)
16. Exhibits commitment to Academic Values—e.g., collegiality, open inquiry, reasoned discourse, concern for the academic consequences of decision-making, program integrity, promotion of learning as an end rather than a means, etc.
17. How does this person provide leadership to improve teaching and learning?
18. What suggestions would you make to help your supervisor become a more effective administrator?

Informal Communication: The progress made from the informal communication team stemmed from the feeling of isolation and distance that many staff/faculty members felt. Several Action items have been tentatively approved by the cabinet, to begin implementation this fall. They are listed below. We plan to work with the Employee Development Team this fall to integrate these items.

Goal: Increase internal communication among and between faculty, staff, and administration at HCC.

**Action Item A:** Employee Newsletter

**Description:** Internal and informal monthly newsletter to include spotlights on employees, events, and news. *See mock-up attached.*

**Resources:** Time for two employees to collect information and create the newsletter. Computer and printing resources.

**Implementation:** August 2007

**Action Item B:** Department/Division Open Houses
Description: Each month, a different department/division will have an open house to introduce all employees of HCC to the faculty/staff in that department/division as well as expand knowledge on the function of that particular department/division.

Resources: Budget line item for snacks/drinks at open houses. These will also probably be potluck, so the cost should be minimal. $50.00 - $75.00 per month. Candace Brownlee has volunteered to chair the scheduling of these Open Houses.

Implementation: August-September 2007

**Action Item C: Social Events and Roundtables**

Description: Activities from chess games to book clubs will be organized for the campus employees.

Resources: Linda Ellerman and Jill Blair have volunteered to chair this group and will work in conjunction with existing college organizations.

Implementation: Fall 2007

**Action Item D: Departmental/Division Social Directors**

Description: One member from each department/division is informally assigned the job of departmental/division social director/town crier to walk amongst their department/division and share news and items of interest. They will also encourage participation in social events, college assembly, and other important college events.

Resources: One person from each department/division will be designated for a one-year term. The average expected time commitment is 2 hours per month. The informal subteam will accept volunteers and will recruit Social Directors.

Implementation: Fall 2007

**Action Item E: Staff/Faculty Lounge Area**

Proposal for Faculty/Staff Lounge
At the March 20 meeting, the committee examined the exciting Phase II Campus Master Plan. Out of the discussion about the new facilities came ideas for a Faculty/Staff Lounge. This lounge would be an informal meeting place for a minimum of 50 people where faculty and staff could eat lunch; hold interest group meetings such as book club, Mah Jongg, and chess; relax away from offices; and gather any and all information about the Heartland community.
Rationale:
- Research shows that an organization receives better productivity and satisfaction from employees when those employees have opportunities for breaks, along with a designated place to go for breaks.
- With the expanding student population, the café is often filled to capacity.
- The vast offerings of student activities in the café are wonderful for our students and faculty/staff but are not conducive to relaxation for faculty and staff.
- Without other alternatives, people eat in their offices/IT asks that people not eat at their computers.
- A lounge could provide a central posting place for faculty/staff information.
- A lounge would provide a place for small groups to meet during lunch to interact in leisure activities.
- A lounge would provide a central gathering place and promote camaraderie between departments.
- The IDC, which is currently the suggested space for faculty, only seats 12 to 14 people. It is also used for formal meetings, so it is not a reliable place for informal activities such as lunch or leisure.

Suggested location for Faculty/Staff Lounge
1. Former Child Development Center – if we were to knock out a wall or two, this area would provide a large eating/socializing space, and also a few small rooms for interest groups and relaxation. BONUS: An outdoor space is already in place! This area is not too far from the café.
2. Space in the new Student Center – a designated room could be provided which would offer all of the above and also be close to the café.
3. Café area – the expansion of the café area might afford a designated space to be used for a faculty/staff lounge.

Scheduling: The scheduling team gave a recommendation, which is listed below, after researching institutions that have such a policy of “no classes period”. In addition, at Campus Conversation III, it was found that staff and faculty wanted such a time designated. We are continuing conversations on feasibility of a down time policy.

To: Heartland Community College AQIP Communications Action Project Team

From: Scheduling Subcommittee
   Linda Ellerman
   Tom McCulley
   Susan Salazar
   Pam Westerdahl

Date: 18 February 2007
**Purpose of this report:** This report is meant to summarize the scheduling subcommittee’s recommendation for a universal, permanent meeting time slot.

**Preface:** This is a preliminary report.

This report is meant to start the conversation concerning a need for a universal meeting time slot. This report is not exhaustive. The sub-committee recommends further study by the larger Communications Action Project Team, study that the smaller subcommittee feels is beyond its charge.

The scheduling subcommittee believes it is time for the larger Communications Action Project Team to make a decision regarding the feasibility of moving forward with the idea of creating a universal meeting time.

**Report:** After analyzing information provided by its members, the Scheduling Subcommittee recommends to the larger Communications Action Project Team that a time slot be set aside as a universal meeting time for college activities. The exact nature and types of meetings that would occur during such a time will best be worked out in communications between the formal and informal subcommittees of the Communications Action Project Team and various branches of Heartland Community College.

The Scheduling Subcommittee looked at the following information when coming to its recommendation:

1). Time of day when many/most students, faculty, administrators and staff were on campus. The subcommittee wanted a time-slot when many people were already on campus in the hope that once the time-slot became operative most of those individuals would choose to stay on campus to take advantage of whatever types of meetings/activities occurred in the time slot.

2). Time of day that might allow for some meetings to involve “food” activities. The subcommittee believes that a “lunch” time slot will allow for more informal meetings to include a meal or food of some sort. Sharing food together is often a way of breaking down barriers that might exist when building new relationships.

3). Time of day that would allow for student day-care issues to be addressed. The subcommittee assumed from the beginning that the universal time slot would be used for student activities as well as for faculty/administration/pro-tech activities. The subcommittee wanted a time of day when many students that use daytime daycare services would already have those services in place. In other words, students that use standard daycare services would not have to make other arrangements to participate in student activities/meetings.

4). Reports about student “ownership” and college activities. While by no means an exhaustive study, the subcommittee did look at information provided by Linda
Ellerman concerning student activities and “ownership” of student education. The information provided supports the idea that when students have scheduled ways to participate directly with their peers in activities that are not limited to the classroom, students as a whole report more satisfaction with an institution of higher learning and a feeling that they have more ownership of their own educational experiences. The subcommittee realizes that more study in this area will be necessary before a final recommendation for a permanent universal meeting time slot is proposed. However, the subcommittee feels the information provided thus far supports the idea that a universal time slot would allow for more direct student participation in non-classroom activities.

5). A selected analysis of thirteen AQIP Communications Action Projects undertaken by Pam Westerdahl and assistants. Again, this was not an exhaustive study. However, the team did look over Action Projects from thirteen schools that directly involved communications. Of the thirteen schools, only one has implemented a permanent meeting time slot. Information on that one school appears in number six below.

Among the other twelve schools participating in Communications Action Projects a few universal themes emerged. One such theme was the need for centralized ways of communicating across the various colleges. Over and over again communications projects that were being considered or recommended centered on the need for creating a permanent time and space for said individual projects to be born, grow and mature. The conclusion reached by the subcommittee was that a single permanent time slot would overcome some of the scheduling obstacles other colleges seemed to be encountering.

6). Brief analysis of the Communications Action Project from Central Community College in Grand Island, Nebraska. This information is attached. Central College is the one college the subcommittee found that has implemented a permanent meeting time slot. Please note the starred areas on page one of the attached document. Most important is the fact that a permanent time slot was not successful at Central until it became official policy.

Recommendations:

1). The subcommittee proposes a permanent time slot for on-campus formal and informal meetings for every Tuesday and Thursday from 11-12:15. The subcommittee proposes that this idea be piloted for a period of one to three years beginning with the fall semester, 2008. The subcommittee realizes that the final time slot might be different. We are “floating” this time slot for preliminary study. The subcommittee believes that any preliminary vote by the Communications Action Project Team should focus on the idea of “A” time slot, not necessarily that this is “The” time slot.

2). The subcommittee proposes that the college work with student services and division associate deans to schedule as few classes as possible during this time slot. The subcommittee does not propose that the college “shut down” during this time slot, at least not during the early implementation stage (i.e. the first two to three years).
3). The subcommittee proposes that the college work with technical and support staff to find out how such staff might work on a rotating basis so that all employees are able to use this time slot at least once or twice a month for formal and informal communication needs. (This would include librarians, division secretaries, our accounting staff, our custodial staff, etc). The subcommittee sees this as an area that will need further development.

4). The subcommittee proposes that the college work with Joe Alstat to establish most or all student group “business” meetings during this time slot. The subcommittee recognizes that many student group activities also occur in the evenings, on weekends, etc. Therefore, this recommendation is simply that “business” meetings for most student groups occur during this time slot so that faculty/staff advisors and most students will be able to attend such meetings.

5). The subcommittee proposes that the college work with the formal and informal communications subcommittees to establish more detailed and specific uses for a permanent meeting time. These uses could encompass everything from "fireside chats" with the president of the college to division "open house teas" to ongoing activities like the Hear and Know Show, etc.

6). The subcommittee proposes that if the larger Heartland Community College AQIP Communications Action Project Team accepts its recommendations, that the Scheduling Subcommittee be disbanded and that its members integrate into the larger Action Project Team to help implement the above recommendations. The subcommittee believes its charge of proposing a preliminary time slot with preliminary justifications is completed. If the larger Communications Action Project Team is in favor of making a permanent time-slot recommendation to the college as a whole, such a recommendation is beyond the charge given to the Scheduling Subcommittee.

The subcommittee believes that the larger requirements for actually working with the college on implementing the above ideas are beyond the abilities of a four-person team. The implementation of a permanent meeting time needs to work through the larger committee structure with a much larger team. The subcommittee believes the implementation part of a permanent time slot is a two-to-four year project including a year of preparation and a two to three year pilot.

In other words, if the idea for a permanent meeting time is adopted, the subcommittee recommends that the 2007-2008 academic year be used to gather more information on college-wide impact. The 2007-2008 year should also be used to educate the college-wide population about the permanent time slot and to solicit support across the college for the best use of the time slot. Finally, the 2007-2008 year should be used to work with college administration and the Board of Trustees to make the permanent time slot official college policy, thereby guaranteeing the successful use of said time slot.

**Critical Thinking:**
Since critical thinking is a key part of the education process at Heartland Community College, the subcommittee thought it would attempt to anticipate preliminary questions about its recommendations.

1. What was the criteria for selecting the two days? See Above.

2. What was the criteria for selecting the 11 - 12:15 time slot? See Above.

3. What was the justification for determining this was worth the cost to the college? See Above—but this is an area that probably needs further/larger study.

4. How many courses are offered at that time? Since this is a preliminary recommendation, the subcommittee does not have that exact information. The subcommittee believes the larger Communications Action Project Team needs to study this question further.

5. How will this effect enrollment? The subcommittee does not have an answer to this question at this time. However, concerns about enrollment are one of the reasons the subcommittee is recommending a two to three year pilot. Our interpretation of the research is that this will increase student interest and retention.

6. Do we have physical space to move the disrupted courses to new time slots? The subcommittee does not have an answer to this question at this time. But hey, we’re about to build more buildings!

7. Will this apply to Lincoln and Pontiac? The subcommittee does not have an answer to this question at this time. What does the Communications Action Project Team think?

Question 2: Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

The institution involved people in work on these Action Projects by soliciting volunteers from the Campus Conversations. In addition, this fall, a new call was put out for interested parties. Six new individuals responded. Our team consists of members of every unit of the college; clerical, administrative, staff, adjunct and full time faculty.

In addition, the chair of this team reported to an oversight body on the progress and to receive any additional needed support.

Question 3: Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

Our planning this fall is to fully implement the Action items brought about by the Informal Committee in association with the Employment Development Team. We will also look at the results of the Administrative assessment pilot and make a recommendation for or against a college plan for this type of feedback. Finally, we will make a recommendation for a specific time/day for a “down-time” based on our feedback from the Campus Conversation III and from the research from the scheduling committee.
Question 4: Describe any “effective practice(s)” that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

Other colleges could benefit from several of our practices. The informal division/department open houses are a simple yet powerful way of introducing people and creating goodwill throughout the institution.

The Administrative assessment is probably a policy most other institutions have in place. We found several assessments online to work from. This worked very well, and some of the information imparted was a surprise to the administration.

Question 5: What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

Our biggest challenge is the fear of change among faculty with the scheduling issue. Our research shows that Friday and/or afternoon does not reap the benefits desired for forging such a time. However, we have heard from some faculty that any other time will hurt enrollment, will take away the academic freedom of teaching when they want to teach, etc. Some meetings feel like a battleground. There is great support for this idea and the report shows the benefits to our college, but there are several loud voices against change.