Next General Learning Challenges

Iowa Community College Online Consortium

ICCOC

A Partnership for Learning

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transforming education through technology

ICCOC—The Beginning: 1999 to 2004

Who We Are

The Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC), has seven member colleges who work together to deliver online degrees and services to students and faculty. The institutions involved in the partnership are:

1. Eastern Iowa Community College
2. Iowa Lakes Community College
3. Iowa Western Community College
4. Northwest Iowa Community College
5. Southeastern Community College
6. Southwestern Community College
7. Western Iowa Tech Community College

Why We Formed

In 1999 seven colleges decided it would be better to try and to deliver online courses and services together, rather than as individual institutions. The ICCOC model is unusual, but has proved to be highly successful. The Consortium is not a college and does not grant degrees or employ faculty. Rather the consortium facilitates the delivery of courses across the seven colleges. Students enroll in one college, and receive their degree from that college. They may be enrolled in a course taught by an instructor at another college, but common course numbers, common textbooks and process that assist with communication work to make the process seamless for students.

Since the fall of 2000, when the first eleven sections were offered, enrollments have grown exponentially. Along with the growth in student population has been the challenge of meeting the need for student support services and for communication between faculty, students and advisors.

This document chronicles the journey the ICCOC Colleges have been on, and three key factors that have contributed to student success.

Mission

The mission of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium is to offer quality educational opportunities to online students supported by a comprehensive set of student support services.

Supporting Documentation

A. NGLC Grant Executive Summary
B. ICCOC Enrollment History
C. Past Data for Gatekeeper Courses (Math for Liberal Arts, College Algebra and Composition I)
D. NGLC Presentation from Conferences

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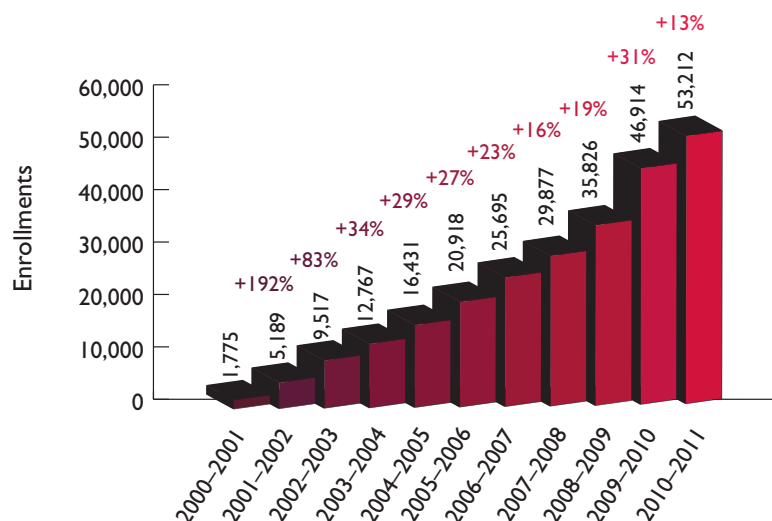# Student Success—Targeting At-Risk Students: 2004–2006

Title III

Colleges regularly use Title III funds to rapidly address changes that are designed to improve student success. In 2004 the ICCOC colleges were awarded a cooperative grant to improve student success through faculty development and student services.

The ICCOC Title III grant abstract says: "**Strengthening Student Performance through Faculty Development and Student Services.** *To improve online student course completion, academic performance, and satisfaction with the quality of learning through [1] establishing a "user"* **single point of contact** *for accessing support services that is seamlessly integrated into partner colleges operational practices, [2] establishing* **at-risk online student advising and intervention processes,** *and [3] implementing a comprehensive faculty and staff professional development program designed to build a cadre of faculty who utilize online pedagogy, classroom assessment and technology best practices to strengthen the quality of learning.*"

The first two parts of the grant primarily addressed issues surrounding student services. This is the group of people at any college that might include the Registrar, Admissions, Advisors, Financial Aid, services to special populations (TRIO, Enrollment Management, etc.). Each college has a different process for all of these services, so it was up to each college to determine who needs to be part of the team. While the NGLC grant does not address faculty development (part 3), it is part of a comprehensive approach to improving student success.

It is again important to note that all of this work was done while the ICCOC experienced significant growth in online enrollments.

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[1] Single Point of Contact

Communication is sometimes a challenge for the ICCOC, as it is for everyone. Faculty teach for one college, but probably have students attending one or all of six other colleges. Knowing who to contact about student concerns is critical – but was nearly impossible in our system. Students and college staff members also wonder who to contact. So, the ICCOC established the role of a "Student Services Manager" to serve as a communications concierge between college faculty, staff and students.

Utilizing Title III resources, the colleges established communication processes, and worked together to develop best practices for student advising. Individual students, advisors and faculty members rely on this person to direct communication to the right person at the other end of the internet.

[2] At-Risk Online Student Advising and Intervention Processes

The second part of this part of the grant focused on consistent advising of online students. Under the leadership of the Student Services Manager, personnel from all seven colleges met face-to-face twice a year, and in regular conference calls to share best practices and improve student success. Together they built an intervention system. This took the ICCOC nearly a year to develop.

The next step was to define "at-risk" for online student populations. A single definition (see below) made it possible to start collecting and comparing data, from which better practices for advising and intervention could be built.

The first at-risk definition included the following parameters.
- Failed an online course in the previous two terms (not counting summer term). (For fall, it is summer and spring; for spring, it is fall; students with Ds or Fs)
- Registered for four or more courses in fall or spring terms and three or more in summer term (8-week session: registered for more than 2 courses). (Same)
- First time online student. (New student as defined as enrollment date matches User Creation Date of Student Profile in eCollege)

The original definition was based on need, and on the information that was available at that time. Many other factors could have been used, but there was not a good way to get to that information.

It was decided to gather information from the LMS every week and deliver it to colleges in an Excel spreadsheet. The reporting was initially done by IT staff at our LMS, but eventually moved to reports that could be run by Consortia staff. Colleges then had information on student participation and performance, out of the LMS, to leverage in advising students.

Data and Processes Put Into Place

As you can see the ICCOC focused on key data that is housed in either the LMS or in the SIS. Challenges arose over who would/ could collect data, how it would be disseminated, and how it would be used. As capability has increased, the data fields have been expanded past login and activity to include submissions, and grades-to-date.

Two key reports have become the backbone of student intervention and retention practices.

The first report is the Student Participation Report, (custom report from the LMS that had to be requested prior to the day that it was needed) and the second is the At-Risk Report (manually complied by gathering data/information from different sources including emails from instructors containing concerns about students). Every Monday the Student Services Manager collects the data from the LMS and compiles the At-Risk information, sorts it by college and then disseminates it to the appropriate people in an Excel Spreadsheet.

1. The **Student Participation Report** is sent as an Excel spreadsheet, and a separate page exists for each week of the term. It contains the following data:

   a. Term Name
   b. Role in Course
   c. Last Name
   d. First Name
   e. Login ID
   f. Email Address
   g. Telephone Number
   h. Display Course Code
   i. Course Name
   j. Course First login Date
   k. Course Last Login Date
   l. Activity Minutes
   m. Activity Submission Count
   n. Course Points Earned
   o. Course Points Possible to Date
   p. Course Average To Date

2. The weekly **At-Risk Report** is also an Excel spreadsheet and includes the following data and is the cumulative data used by instructors and described more fully in the next section. (Tool was not available until Spring 2008)

   a. Student Last Name
   b. Student First Name
   c. Role Name
   d. Student Email
   e. Login ID
   f. Phone
   g. Course Code
   h. Course Title
   i. Submitter Name
   j. Submitter Email
   k. Other Explanations
   l. Term Name
   m. At-Risk Date

Analyzing our Data: 2007–2008

Pearson eCollege Study (PIM)

In 2006 the ICCOC participated in a study conducted by our Learning Management System (LMS), Pearson eCollege. Using data points within the LMS faculty and student interactions were measured against retention and success standards. It was a real 'ah-ha' moment for the consortium. The ICCOC saw areas that could be improved by using data to make decisions.

Data from this 2007 study was used to confirm the direction of the consortium's NGLC grant application. The two key findings that informed our decision making for the NGLC project are listed below.

1. Students taking math and communication courses were less likely to succeed. It demonstrated an area where the ICCOC could improve student success. These gatekeeper courses are an area that both the ICCOC and the NGLC are concerned about.

2. Another new concept was that students and faculty need to be actively engaged in an online course from the very beginning if students are going to be successful.

At-Risk Notification Tool

Faculty communication to advisors and others involved in student retention is another key to student success. Instructors see things before it shows up on a grade report, but knowing who to contact is a challenge for online faculty who may rarely (if ever) come to campus, and who are teaching students from other colleges.

The ICCOC Faculty Trainer and the Student Services Manager worked with faculty and with the Learning Management System (LMS) to develop an embedded reporting tool for faculty. The Title III grant paid for this customized tool which provides faculty with an easy, direct reporting tool.

This tool provided one-way communication from an instructor to the student's college. It was a very important first step in closing the communication loop with faculty and advisors.

Supporting Documentation

J. Summary of Findings from Pearson eCollege Study

I. Success/Retention rates

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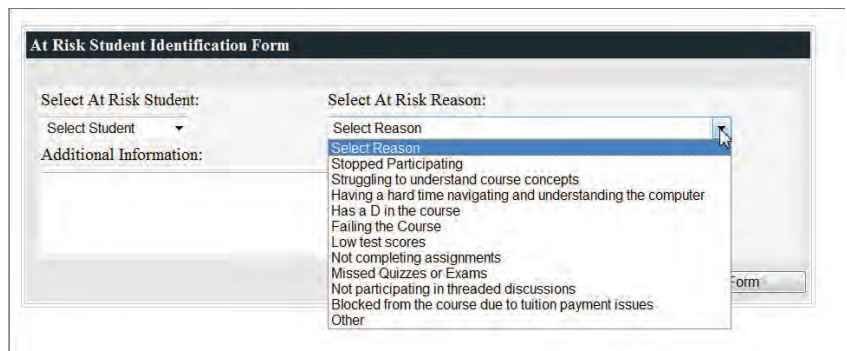
At-Risk Notification Tool

The at-risk notification tool is hidden to students and can't be removed by faculty members. Training is provided by faculty trainers at their home campuses, and there are videos on YouTube that can also be watched.

Students names are pulled from the course roster, and do not have to be entered by the faculty.

There is a simple pull-down menu with common concerns about students, and there is room for free typed text under Additional Information.

The information goes directly to the Student Services Manager, and is included in the weekly data to each college.

The major problem here is that the information goes out to Student Services, but there isn't a way for faculty to hear back about what is being done with those students. The NGLC grant is helping the ICCOC to try and close the communication loop. This will be discussed later, but even after this project there will still be more work needed in this area.

Accessing More Data: 2009–Present

Adoption of Enterprise Reporting (ER)

In 2009 the ICCOC LMS (Pearson/eCollege) provided clients with the ability to start generating some of their own data/reports through the LMS in a tool called Enterprise Reporting (ER). It is included here as a note because it was a tipping point for the ICCOC colleges. As they began to understand what 'timely data' could mean, in making informed decisions. The colleges of the ICCOC started integrating information in new ways. Through the new reporting tool an individual college could request customized reports, and then could pull data on demand.

What is important is that for those living in the information age, data is needed to make informed decisions. Anyone wanting to use data must find a way to get it into the hands of key stakeholders so that it can be used. You may need to work with your LMS to deliver reports, or your IT to deliver reports – but you must get data!

As you can see in the attached Case Study from Pearson Learning Studio and the article from *Educause* the ICCOC has used data effectively to increase student success.

Supporting Documentation

K. Screenshots of current reports

I. Success/Retention rates

H. Case Study by Pearson/eCollege

L. *Educause* Quarterly Article

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Updates to Student Reports

Four more fields were added to the Student Participation Reports in 2009. Time in an online course does not equal success, so it was important to see a lot of what students were doing online. This also helped colleges to meet the changing Federal Regulations for Title IV. The following fields to the Student Participation Reports were added:

a. Activity Submission Count
b. Course Points Earned
c. Course Points Possible to Date
d. Course Average To Date

J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Course Name	Course First Login Date	Course Last Login Date	Activity Minutes	Activity Submission Count	Course Points Earned	Course Points Possible to Date	Course Average Grade To Date
Course Nar	1/1/1970	1/1/1970			0	130	0.00%
Course Nar	1/1/1970	1/1/1970			0	395	0.00%
Course Nar	1/18/2010	1/18/2010	5.348		0	20	0.00%
Course Nar	1/18/2010	1/18/2010	12.067		0	670	0.00%
Course Nar	1/19/2010	1/19/2010	11.4	1	5	170	2.94%
Course Nar	1/19/2010	1/19/2010	14.666	1	100	1800	5.56%
Course Nar	1/19/2010	1/30/2010	311.7		0	0	
Course Nar	1/18/2010	1/31/2010	142.567	9	51	115	44.35%
Course Nar	1/31/2010	1/31/2010	1.268		0	0	
Course Nar	1/18/2010	1/31/2010	233.871		0	0	
Course Nar	1/18/2010	1/31/2010	176.119	1	8.5	50	17.00%
Course Nar	1/27/2010	2/1/2010	48.885	8	10	10	100.00%
Course Nar	1/21/2010	2/1/2010	6.519		0	350	0.00%
Course Nar	1/20/2010	2/1/2010	669.472	11	40	286	13.99%

NGLC and Beyond

Next Generation Learning Challenges Grant

"Using Learner Analytics to enhance student success as measured by completion and content mastery outcomes" through gathering and using specific timely data is the focus of this grant project.

The colleges of the ICCOC have taken seriously the challenges of improving course completion in the online environment. Through the years the Consortium has gathered any and all data available, asked for more data, and tried to find ways to easily disseminate that data to the key decision makers at partner Colleges. It has influenced the way that students are advised, the way that students are taught, and the way that communication strategies that are used. The results indicate that the work we have done has been profitable for students. Course completion rates for students enrolled in ICCOC courses are higher than the national averages. While the success rates are good, they are not as good as the Consortium colleges want them to be.

Since 2007 at-risk student completion has increased from 77% to 82%, and at-risk student success has increased from 57% to 68%. This increase in student success was the result of utilizing data to intervene with students demonstrating at-risk behaviors. While the data is not yet in for the innovations outlined in the NGLC project, the goal is to increase retention completion and success in the gatekeeper courses.

Faculty Dashboard

First, NGLC grant funds were used to build a dashboard to alert faculty to students who are at-risk of failing. Until the dashboard was built, faculty could only see easily see student grades. Now in a single dashboard faculty can see student log-in information, course activity, student assignment submissions, and grades to date.

Supporting Documentation

A. NGLC Grant Executive Summary

M. Dashboard Data

N. Summary of Best Practices/Workflow

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The dashboard was piloted with the key stakeholder courses in the fall of 2011. Faculty used the tool as they were able, but also identified complicating factors that lead to a redesign. In the spring term of 2012 it will be re-piloted to the key stakeholder courses for review. It is scheduled to go live in all online courses by the end of 2012.

4. Screenshot – New Dashboard View

Retention Alert (Datatel and POISE)

The second part of the NGLC grant is to automate the at-risk report from the LMS and then to upload that information directly into the SIS at each college. The grant provided the funding to purchase the necessary modules from the SIS and then to build the integration between systems. It was tested in the fall 2011 term with two colleges, and will be rolled out to the other colleges in spring 2012.
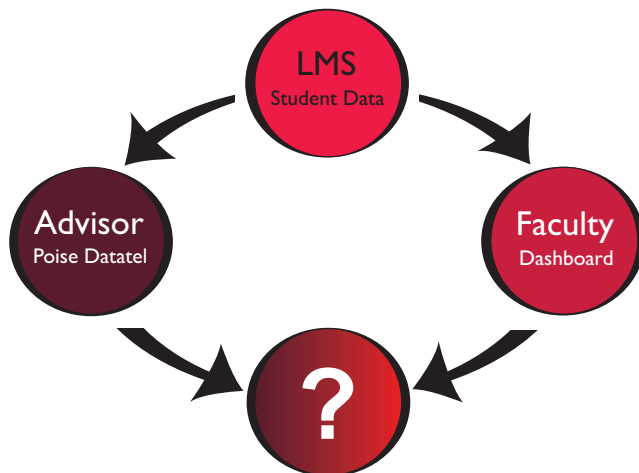
Six of the Colleges use Datatel, and one uses POISE. In the Datatel tool, rules can be written so that it will automatically create a 'case file' on an at-risk student and then be directed to the appropriate advisory for follow up.

The result will be near real-time data, on a daily basis, and automated reporting to appropriate personal at each college. With this in place we will be able to intervene with at-risk students in a timely manner, and thereby help them to overcome the problem and be successful.

Future Initiatives/Challenges

The ICCOC will continue to work on student completion, and student success. There are several things ahead for us in the next few years.

1. Closing the communication loop: Information from faculty goes to student services personnel, but we do not yet have an effective way for student services personnel to directly contact faculty members. Therefore, each group may be working with a student, but not able to inform the other directly. This is especially true when the student and the faculty member are from different colleges.

2. Measuring student learner outcomes (LOM): Pearson eCollege has a tool for faculty to use to record student performance on measureable outcomes. Implementing this will be a significant challenge, but will provide ICCOC with essential information on what students are learning, what they are not learning, which instructional strategies work well, and which ones do not.