The goal of this project is to improve student retention:

1. Develop a consistent set of metrics summarizing UMC's retention and graduation rates compared to identified peer institutions and other campuses of the University of Minnesota.
2. Summarize retention rates within groups of UMC students including:
   1. New high school students who have declared a major
   2. New advanced standing
   3. New high school students who are undecided
   4. Non-traditional students
3. Analyze potential factors involving retention and leading to high risk of not being retained
4. Implement trial programs directed at improving retention among high risk groups identified through this analysis

UMC's retention and graduation rates appear to be relatively low compared to other campuses of the University and to our peer institutions. We need to develop a consistent set of metrics to measure these rates and make improvements. The U of M has given UMC a challenge to improve the rates and has provided goals to achieve. Improving retention and graduation rates is also an all University priority.

The Admissions department, the Admissions Committee, the Retention Committee and the Academic Assistance Center.

This will impact primarily:

1. Admissions criteria and type of admission
2. Support services provided by the Academic Assistance Center

Completing this project in April will allow time to track fall semester data along with initial retention data for spring semester.

The project leader will report to the AQIP Steering Committee on a regular basis with:

1. Objectives 1 and 2 completed during the first 3 months of the project
2. Objective 3 completed by the end of month 6 of the project
3. Objective 4 completed during the last 6 months of the project
Project Outcome Measures

A: Short term measures of success at the end of the project will be:

- Development of associated metrics along with easy access
- Analysis of metrics to determine high risk groups
- Implementation of programs to address retention for students in high risk groups

Long term measures will be:

- Increase in retention rates
- Increase in graduation rates

Project Update

Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Metrics associated with this project concentrated on year 1 retention (students returning for their second year) since we were able to do initial analysis, make some changes, and perform initial analysis of results within the one year length of the project.

A variety of analyses were performed including:

1. Retention and graduation rates for UMC, our designated peer institutions, and other campuses within the U of M system.
2. Investigation of potential factors (such as high school background, ACT scores, participation in athletics, etc.) in an attempt to identify a group of high risk students.
3. A variety of statistical methods including logistic regression were used.

Out of this fairly wide analysis, there were several useful conclusions:

1. The UMC year 1 retention rate for NHS (new high school) students ranged between 62% and 69% over recent years. This was near the bottom compared to our peer institutions which were typically between 66% and 73%.
2. The CA (conditional admit) students had a lower retention rate than any of the other groups we considered. Typically the year 1 retention for this group was between 50% and 56%.
3. Although there has been a common perception that our NAS (new advanced standing) students are typically very successful, their year 1 retention rate has only been about 68%.
4. The most important single factor in predicting student retention is the high school rank which is a better predictor than ACT scores.

As a result of these conclusions:

1. The UMC Admissions Committee is using high school rank as a more significant factor in determining students selected for the CA program.
2. There is a new action project being developed addressing orientation/retention issues related to NAS students.
3. There have been significant changes to the CA program. A description of these changes and the results follows.

Prior to this action project, UMC had in place a one semester program for CA students. Changes had been made in this program which resulted in higher grades and semester 1 retention. As a result of this action project, the CA program was expanded to three semesters with extensive support and requirements during the first semester and a gradual reduction in support during semesters 2 and 3. As a result of this program, we have seen an improvement in both student GPA’s and retention rates as shown in the following tables which compares:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>CA Fall’09</th>
<th>CA Fall’10</th>
<th>RA Fall’10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Fall Term GPA</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Spring Term GPA</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Fall Term GPA</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention Data</th>
<th>CA Fall’09</th>
<th>CA Fall’10</th>
<th>RA Fall’10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Student Number: first fall</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Student Number: first spring  71  81  155  
Retention Rate: fall to spring  83%  87%  85% 

Total Student Number: second fall  49  68  132  
Retention Rate: fall to fall  56%  73%  73% 

Total Student Number: second spring  
Retention Rate: fall to 2nd spring  57%  65%  66% 

Descriptions: CA are Conditionally Admitted Students, RA are Regularly Admitted Students.

As a result of the increase in CA retention rates, the overall UMC year 1 retention rate has increased to 73% which is higher than in any preceding year.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The initial work began with the University of Minnesota, Crookston, First Year Experience Coordinator and a communications faculty member. Experimenting with skill building courses, the duo helped create the GenEd 1000 course which became a requirement for all CA students. Afterward, the Admissions Director developed an Admissions Committee to evaluate the potential success of UMC applicants with low ACT scores or high school grade transcripts.

These changes occurred in an environment of open communication. Periodically, the Executive, Retention, and AQIP Steering Committees requested an updated presentation on the progress of UMC's Conditional Admit Students. The weekly Admissions Committee meetings stimulated conversations among faculty members, admissions representatives, and AAC staff members over particular students or program modifications. This sustained dialog among individuals and departments supported an awareness of the importance and progress of the project.

As CA students continued to display academic success, momentum for the program grew. Former CA students began working as tutors in the AAC because they understood the connection between peer tutoring and academic success. The Admissions Committee looked closer at a prospective student's high school ranking because data gathered from this AQIP project suggested a greater correlation between high school rank and college success than previously thought. Consequently, the combination of campus members working together to improve processes created a program that helped At Risk students achieve comparable academic grades and retention rates as regularly admitted students.

3: Next Steps

A: 1. Continued tracking of each year's cohort of CA students measuring retention and graduation rates.
2. Based on metrics associated with this project, development of a new action project related to retention of NAS students.
3. Consideration of other high risk groups and development of programs for those groups. The most apparent group consists of the undecided students who have not declared a major. The common perception has been that most of these students are local and using UMC as a community college; however, GIS analysis has demonstrated that this is not the case.
4. Continued analysis of UMC retention and graduation rates including comparisons to our peer institutions.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The Student Retention and Success AQIP Project arose from modifications of the Conditional Admit program. After appointing one person to supervise the program, committee members experimented with strategies to help CA students become academically and socially integrated on campus. These experiments produced a three-level system of assistance that started with close monitoring of student progress during the first semester, less regulation during the second semester, and "hands off" guidance during the third semester.

This method of care gave AAC staff members the chance to know individual students. Beginning with the first day on campus, CA students learned that they were highly valued and would be watched closely. Students were introduced to professional staff and resources available to help them academically succeed. As the semester progressed, students discovered that AAC staff members quickly responded to notification of mid-term alerts and helped students find peer or group study sessions to navigate successfully...
The discovery of personal care through a three-tiered level of assistance resulted from observations and conversations among AQIP project participants. Committee members met regularly to discuss program strengths and weaknesses. The continued feedback from these discussions distilled processes and improved delivery. Ultimately, the results of this project created a framework to better serve a population of At Risk students and proved that students with academic liabilities can persist in college at a similar rate as regularly admitted students.

5: Project Challenges

A: The current situation still presents challenges with students, the GenEd 1000 (Freshman Seminar) course, and the Academic Assistance Center facilities. To address the challenge of assessing college preparedness, the Admissions Committee used supplemental data collected from this AQIP Action Project to make more informed decisions. After several years of developing a model for evaluating applicants, the Admissions Committee continues to upgrade the criteria for accepting or denying entrance to the University of Minnesota, Crookston.

Wanting to provide the best care for students admitted conditionally, leaders from UMC require CA students to enroll in GenEd 1000 to build study skills. The data showed a direct correlation between grades in GenEd 1000 and term GPA: students who received a “C” or better in GenEd 1000 also achieved the minimum GPA as stated in the university policy. Earlier course developers of GenEd 1000 recommended that class size be limited to a student: teacher ratio of 16:1 and not exceed 20:1; yet in the fall of 2011, the class sizes averaged 30:1 and CA student failures exceeded any preceding year. When considering the rate of CA failure in relation to the class size of GenEd 1000, investigators recommend that course administrators return to smaller class sizes.

The final area of challenge is the AAC facility and its personnel. Students occasionally complain that the Center is too noisy when filled to capacity. During busy times, staff members suggest alternate times to study in the AAC or help students find an available testing room. Moreover, some of the students using the AAC have documented disabilities. Although the investigation did not track the numbers of students with mental and physical disabilities, disabled students often qualified for the CA program because of low high school grades and/or a low ACT score. This phenomenon creates the need for experienced personnel to work with disabled students so the well-being of the Conditional Admit program relies heavily on the administration’s continued financial and philosophical support of professional counseling.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The University of Minnesota, Crookston is now nearing completion of this action project. The project involved the analysis of retention and graduation rates for various student groups. Based on this analysis, the institution has implemented a new program for conditionally admitted students and formulated a follow-on action project focusing on the development and implementation of new interventions. The institution is making reasonable progress in completing the project and in the development of an institution-wide quality improvement culture.

UMC is to be commended for the thoughtful approach taken during this project. It is evident that care has been taken to understand the issues associated with the various student populations, that there was engagement of institutional stakeholders, and that the initial results of the program are being carefully reviewed. The initial improvements in retention are noteworthy.

(AQIP Category 3 – Understanding Students’ and other Stakeholders’ Needs; AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness)

As the project nears completion, and transitions to general implementation within the normal institutional processes, additional measures of effectiveness will likely be developed. UMC will want to continue to assess the effectiveness of the program in meeting its stated goal of improving student retention and academic success. As the new CA program evolves over time, the retention rates of the various cohorts of students who have progressed through the program can be measured. These measures can then be used to inform future enhancements to the program.

(AQIP Category 6 – Supporting Institutional Operations; AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness; AQIP Category 5 – Leading and Communicating)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td><strong>Institution Involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>UMC demonstrated good attention to the inclusion of project stakeholders. The inclusion of admissions representatives and faculty should facilitate ongoing communications as additional retention results become available. The inclusion of former CA students as tutors is noteworthy. Ensuring ongoing and effective communication channels as this effort moves to an integrated part of overall UMC institutional processes will be critical. It seems likely that reflective assessment of the operations of the retention team, or any future coordinating group, would occur on a periodic basis to ensure that oversight continues to remain effective. In addition, UMC may wish to consider benchmarking its student support programs against those of peer institutions and working with peer institutions to define broader best practices in this area. (AQIP Category 4, Valuing People; AQIP Category 3 – Understanding Students’ and other Stakeholders’ Needs; AQIP Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td><strong>Next Steps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>The timeline represents a logical plan of action. The identification of other at risk groups will have some impact on the timing of future activities. Ultimately, the sustainability of the effort could depend on the continued implementation of effective institutional processes and the effective maintenance of those processes. UMC is well on the way, having developed meaningful experiences for students and enhancing the participation of students in the program. As time progresses, the ultimate academic success of the students who have participated in the program can be measured and adjustments to the program made based on those measures. Measures are likely to include retention, graduation rates, academic performance and perhaps even success after graduation. (AQIP Category 6 – Supporting Institutional Operations; AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:</td>
<td><strong>Resulting Effective Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>The capability to compile data measuring student cohort success rates, developed as a part of the program, will be very useful in subsequent efforts. As the results of this program become available, UMC is encouraged to share them with the broader academic community. UMC may also wish to collaborate with peer institutions as the program matures. (AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness; AQIP Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:</td>
<td><strong>Project Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>It appears that the initial success of the project has uncovered broader issues of student readiness, challenges with the GenEd 1000 course, and with the ACC facilities. This should be viewed in the positive light of continuous improvement. The negative correlation of student success with class size in GenEd 1000 is consistent with other published results. UMC is encouraged to maintain the 16:1 student/faculty ratio, even recognizing that budget realities represent a constraint. Similarly, UMC is encouraged to continue to focus resources on the ACC facilities and staff. The ultimate collective result of these efforts will be a much more effective set of student support initiatives. UMC is to be commended for its work to date, and for the commitment to student successes evidenced by these efforts. (AQIP Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Outcome</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td><strong>Reason for completion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>The goals as proposed in the action project declaration have been accomplished as outlined in the project update. A project update has been submitted and reviewed. Reviewers suggestions have been shared with the project committee and are being considered as we continue to modify and use the results of this project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Success Factors

The most important successes of this project include:

- Development and refinement of analytics methods used in accessing and analyzing student data from the university data warehouse
- Determination of a high risk student group
- Implementation of a program to increase retention rates among this group
- Increase in year 1 retention (percent returning for their second year) from 56% to 73% for this high risk group

Full details are given in the project update.

## Unsuccessful Factors

All parts of this project were successful.