

AQIP Action Project: Building Graduate Programs

#1. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Missouri Western State University graduated its first masters degree and graduate certificate students at the May 2009 commencement exercises. Eleven students received their masters hoods as graduates of the Masters of Applied Science degree. Nine of the eleven completed the Masters of Applied Science degree with an option in Chemistry, two completed the Masters of Applied Science with an option in Information Technology Management, and one completed the requirements for a Masters of Applied Science in Assessment with an option in Writing Studies. Five students completed the requirements for the Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing.

As stated in the Building Graduate Programs Action Project proposal, the goals for the third year of this action project included: 1) Develop additional graduate programs that respond to regional needs, 2) Develop a graduate student association, 3) Continue to assess and improve the quality of graduate education at Western and 4) Develop and implement program-specific recruiting strategies. These four goals were met along with many other accomplishments.

Results for Goal 1: Western is now approved to offer five graduate programs with nine options and one graduate certificate. Over the past year, Western received approval from the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education for a Masters of Science in Nursing, submitted a proposal for two additional options in the Masters of Applied Science in Assessment, and completed the campus approval process for a Masters of Applied Science in Forensics Studies program. The two additional options in the Masters of Applied Science in Assessment include an option in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and an option in Autism Spectrum Disorders. The proposal for a Masters of Applied Science in Forensic Studies will be submitted during the fall semester of 2009 to the Missouri Department of Higher Education for approval.

Results for Goal 2: The graduate student organization was established during academic year 2008/2009. The constitution was approved, officers were elected and the organization has been officially recognized by the university.

Results for Goal 3: Western's graduate policy requires that all new programs complete an assessment for each of the first three years of implementation. Following the first three years, each graduate program will be assessed as part of the five-year assessment that is completed by each academic unit. All graduate programs at Western are completing annual assessments. Faculty and administrators have reviewed assessment data and have made minor adjustments in processes, scheduling of courses and curriculum.

Results for Goal 4: Each existing graduate program has developed and implemented plans for the recruitment of students. Recruitment strategies include the development of print and web-based materials, mailings to alumni of undergraduate programs, radio,

television and newspaper advertising and the strategic use of scholarship dollars to recruit and enroll appropriate students.

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

The Graduate Council includes a voting representative from each academic unit with a graduate program or course and the academic deans, a faculty senate liaison and the graduate dean as non-voting members. The Graduate Council at MWSU is responsible for developing and recommending University policy and procedures for graduate study, establishing standards, criteria, and approving graduate curriculum in accordance with existing University policies and, through the Graduate Dean, for advising the administration on matters affecting administration of graduate education. This Council has been very active in establishing graduate studies at Western.

In addition to the faculty members who serve on the Graduate Council, other faculty members have assisted with the establishment of graduate programs through course and program development. Other individuals and departments who have contributed significantly include staff members from admissions, the Registrar's office, the library, financial aid, the business office and student affairs. Graduate students have provided valuable feedback about processes, scheduling and curriculum. Scholarships for graduate students have been acquired from private gifts through the work of individuals in University Advancement.

#3. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

The planned next steps for this project include the following:

1. Develop additional graduate programs that respond to regional needs
2. Continue to assess and improve the quality of graduate education at Western
3. Continue to work to increase the resources available for graduate student scholarships and graduate assistantships.

#4. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

This past year we hired an international student coordinator who has been very helpful in developing policies and processes for the admission and support of international students.

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

This has been one of the most exciting action projects initiated at our institution. We look forward to future opportunities to provide programs and meet graduate student learning needs.