A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Communicating Quality

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The goal of this project is to enhance effective communication of Western's quality initiatives to stakeholders, such as community leaders, parents, counselors/teachers, prospective students, alumni, faculty/staff and students. Communicating quality will focus on sharing the achievements of Western's faculty/staff, alumni, students and programs, especially in the areas of student engagement and applied learning. Western will communicate its quality message through a variety of ways including public relations, special events, advertising, and publications. By telling Western's story, focusing on quality, Western can better attract targeted student cohorts, build stronger connections with alumni, and build pride of the greater community.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goal are high among your current priorities:

This project is derived from Western’s five-year strategic plan. Through this strategic vision, it has identified a focus on quality outcomes, applied learning, and student engagement as differentiators that set Western apart from others. Communicating all of these quality initiatives in an effective manner is critical to Western's future. As the college moves forward with our strategic vision, it is essential to communicate this message to stakeholders so they can support and understand our mission. For example, communicating about the quality of Western's student engagement initiatives will help attract the targeted student cohorts and retain both students and faculty.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Institutional Advancement; Admissions; Western Institute; Academic and Student Affairs; Executive Administration; and Governing Boards
F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

Public Relations and Marketing; Recruitment; Partnership Creation; Alumni Relations; Donor Relations; Scanning and Assessing the External Environment; Scanning and Assessing the Internal Environment; Evaluation; and Governing Board Relations

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

The institution has identified the need to communicate Western's strategic focus. To work to achieve this goal the campus has identified an Image and Advancement Implementation Team as well as a Public Relations and Marketing Committee. These groups represent faculty, staff and student involvement across campus. Over the past year a consultant worked with the campus community to identify ways to communicate Western's message of quality. This process was embraced by campus and recognized as a need. This project will build on that momentum. As we are using alumni, faculty, staff and students to share the impact of Western's quality initiatives, it will create an ongoing sense of interest and excitement. In addition, the PR and Marketing Committee will continue to involve the campus in this initiative and create a sense of collaboration and excitement.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

For the process measures, the committee plans to track information to determine the effectiveness of communication strategies as well as campus involvement with them. Specific examples of process measures that will be used include: tracking media relations placements and stories attempted; tracking event attendance/impact; tracking advertising budget/placements; audit of internal publications including tracking frequency of quality messages in publications, communications, etc.; and measuring involvement by faculty/staff students, alumni in the project.

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

To determine the effectiveness of communication, the college plans to track internal, quantitative and qualitative measures. Internal measures include tracking all types of recruitment inquiries from the primary service area, and alumni involvement and giving rates. The college is in the process of completing baseline quantitative studies regarding student, faculty/staff, prospective student, and community perceptions of Western's quality initiatives. This information is also supported by qualitative studies such as interviews and focus groups of students, alumni and community members. These quantitative studies will be completed again in year three to measure the effectiveness of the communication to targeted stakeholders. The qualitative studies will be completed in year two and three to determine effectiveness.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

Complete remaining baseline surveys with prospective students and community members. Determine baseline alumni giving and recruiting numbers. Create specific levels of increase for year three stretch goals. Finalize the mix of tactics to communicate Western's commitment to quality. Use broad-based support of the campus community to communicate Western's quality initiatives. Identify key faculty, staff, alumni, and students to communicate the impact of this focus on quality. Expand communication, including focused quality messages in existing publications and communications. Review process measures and adjust communication strategy. Complete all
K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2005-08-01

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

Western made significant progress on the objectives outlined for Year Two. Western placed extensive advertising in the five county service area in a variety of mediums, including movie theatres, radio, television, and high school and community college newspapers. Western also worked with other areas, especially Admissions, in incorporating the key messages of quality in all publications. The Public Relations and Marketing Office (PRMO) is working to create brochures, websites, and other tools for all academic departments to assist in recruiting. These pieces communicate Western's quality messages of academic excellence and applied learning. Also, a new graphics standards manual was created and included guidelines for incorporating strategic messaging in college publications. Western hosted a large community event, Experience Western, with more than 1,500 in attendance that featured Western's programs; research projects; quality faculty, staff, and students; and facilities. This gave the community an opportunity to have a good time and view the campus and the programs all at the same time. In addition, PRMO conducted surveys and focus groups of incoming students at registration events this summer to evaluate the past year's advertising strategy. This data will be used to adjust the advertising purchases for the next year. Stretch goals were set for the project. Many of these activities were funded with Strategic Plan Implementation Funds.

Review (09-20-05):
A.Missouri Western State College is to be commended for the comprehensiveness of this Action Project. This Action Project clearly reflects AQIP Category (2) Accomplishing Other Distinct Objectives, while also touching on Categories (3) Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders Needs, (8) Planning Continuous Improvement, and (9) Building Collaborative Relationships. The marketing plan and measures employed to enhance communication concerning college initiatives are very strong. The institution has made a commitment to enhance relationships between the college and its key stakeholders. The results of the surveys to be done
during the 2005-06 academic year should provide some interesting and useful data to the college that will continue to develop this quality improvement plan.

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

In planning the implementation of this project the Director of Public Relations and Marketing made a concerted effort to share information on this project and involve Public Relations and Marketing Committee, and the campus community in the project. Two of the projects completed this year involved extensive campus involvement. The first project, Experience Western, boasted the participation of every department on campus, either as a participant or in support of the event. More than 300 volunteers helped make the day possible by hosting booths, children’s activities or serving as volunteers in one of the areas. In fact 18 departments on campus were involved in more than one area of the event. The project to create recruiting and retention materials that reflect the communicating quality messages impacts every academic program on campus. A faculty and staff committee assisted in working out the details of the project. The department chairs appointed representatives to work with the PRMO to complete the project. Faculty worked with the staff to complete photography shoots, complete a comprehensive survey, and edit completed pieces. This has been a very positive partnership that is resulting in the creation of many new pieces that directly reflect the college’s strategic messages.

**Review (09-20-05):**

B. This institution has included a wide array of faculty and staff to implement this action project. Experts have been used to spearhead the project, but more importantly, the institution has utilized extensive campus involvement to carry out this action project. Again, the institution should be commended for their broad-based inclusion of individuals throughout the college. The end result, as indicated by Missouri Western State College has been a very positive partnership between faculty and staff. The partnerships developed through this initiative will likely continue to develop both inside and outside of the institution.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

There are several steps to complete as the Western moves into Year 3 of this Project. Also, the PRMO will monitor the advertising plan to ensure maximum effectiveness. A community event, like Experience Western, will be considered. The staff will conduct several quantitative studies with students, faculty/staff, and community members to determine if perceptions have changed over the three-year time period. A new publication focusing on Western’s impact in the community will also be created and distributed to community leaders.

**Review (09-20-05):**

C. Several additional steps for this action project were proposed. Results of the first Experience Western event should provide the college with further ideas to develop a second similar event. Additionally, the new publication that highlights Western’s accomplishments and impact on the community will be both an excellent marketing tool for the college, and a means to continue to work towards understanding the needs of students and other key stakeholders (Category 2).

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.
In this Action Project, many of our processes are just being developed. Reflection at the end of the project may reveal benchmarks and processes used that can be shared with the broader higher education community.

**Review (09-20-05):**
D. The college should be commended for its efforts to date. The variety of activities initiated by the college should be shared with other AQIP institutions who are working on similar projects. When the results of ongoing evaluation and benchmarking are known, the college should consider presenting their project at AQIP’s annual meeting, or through other venues available through AQIP.

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

The continuing challenge is to determine ways to involve students in this Action Project. By working with other departments on events and publications directed at students, staff has begun to get the message to students. However, there is still room for expansion. This year, the staff and strategic planning committees worked to expand this project to faculty/staff. Continuing to maintain a high level of involvement may also be a challenge in the upcoming year.

**Review (09-20-05):**
E. The primary challenge faced by Missouri Western State College in implementing this action plan focused on securing student involvement in the project. The college’s mission statement is in line with assisting students to be involved as members within their community. Suggestions for enhancing student involvement might include working with various departments at the college to establish projects i.e. service-learning projects that students could do to be both actively involved in making a difference while reaping additional benefits from their work. By expanding the project outward to faculty and staff, a nature connection with students may result.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

**Review (09-20-05):**
F. Missouri Western State College is encouraged to seek out additional information for this project by reviewing similar action projects on the AQIP website. Congratulations on a project what was well-developed and executed.