### Action Project

**Institution:** Missouri Western State University  
**Submitted:** 2007-04-13  
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**Timeline:**
- Planned project kickoff date: 04-12-2007
- Target completion date: 09-14-2009
- Actual completion date: --

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

Building Graduate Programs

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

Western will develop the infrastructure and curriculum for the Master of Applied Science and the Master of Applied Arts degrees. Students will be admitted beginning the fall semester of 2007. A continuous improvement model will be applied to the degree programs, the support services, and the administrative processes associated with graduate program offerings at Western. This Project has received external review from the Provost at Southeast Missouri State University. The Project will receive $100,000 Strategic Planning Implementation Funds (SPIF) for each of three years. The institution has also committed $100,000 in scholarship funding for graduate programs.

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

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

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

On August 28, 2005, Missouri Western State College became Missouri Western State University. The change to university status was strongly supported by students, graduates, faculty and staff, Western’s Board of Governors, regional businesses and industries, the St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce and local governments. Changing the status of Western from an undergraduate college to a university was a top priority for each of these groups. The legislation that authorized the name change also authorized Western to offer masters degree programs and gave the institution a statewide mission in applied learning. The Higher Learning Commission extended the accreditation of Missouri Western State University to include the Masters of Applied Science and the Masters of Applied Arts in December 2006. The visiting team that recommended that extension suggested that Western develop an Action Project in Graduate Programs. The Master of Applied Science degree with options in Chemistry, Information Technology Management and Human Factors and Usability Testing was approved by the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education in December 2006. With an established reputation for quality undergraduate programs that emphasize applied
learning for our students and faculty involvement in applied research, Western's graduate programs will continue to emphasize applied research and applied learning. The initial degree offerings, the Master of Applied Science and the Master of Applied Arts, are interdisciplinary professional masters degree programs designed to respond to changing workforce needs and to prepare graduates for present and future professional opportunities. The degrees will provide graduates with the appropriate knowledge and skills required by the professions and industries. These degrees have been developed in concert with practicing career professionals and will prepare graduates for work in various professional fields. The emergence of Western as an institution of higher education offering graduate programs will have a strong impact on the region. Through the development of graduate programs, Western is better able to share our intellectual resources and to respond to regional educational needs. Individuals, organizations and business/industry will benefit from the opportunities that advanced education presents. Western currently contributes an economic impact of about $161 million per year to the region; the economic impact with the expansion of graduate programs will be significantly greater.

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

The departments and units most affected by this project include: the academic departments offering the degree programs, support units (such as Admissions Office, Financial Aid, Grants and Sponsored Programs, Institutional Research Office, Instructional Media Center, Library Services, Registrar's Office, Student Development, Student Services), and the administrative offices of the Graduate Dean and the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. The Graduate Council at MWSU is responsible for developing and recommending University policy and procedures for graduate study; establishing standards and criteria, and approving graduate curriculum in accordance with existing University policies; and, through the Graduate Dean, for advising the administration on matters affecting the administration of graduate education. This includes graduate offerings, student policies, and graduate faculty appointments.

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

Processes for the administration of graduate programs at Missouri Western State University will be developed. These processes include Selection, Admission, Registration, and Progression of graduate students, Development of Graduate Curriculum, Functions of the Graduate Council, Graduate Student Support Services.

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

(April 2007 - September 2009). This project is designed as a three-year project with annual goals. Rationale for Length of Time: Three years will be needed to fully implement the assessment plan. Goals and Mileposts: April 2007 - September 2007 1. Form Graduate Council 2. Establish Graduate Council Bylaws 3. Form Graduate Council Standing Committees 4. Work with the support areas (admissions, financial aid, registrar, library, business office) to establish effective policies and procedures for graduate students 5. Secure sufficient resources for the graduate programs 6. Complete the development of the Graduate Web site 7. Develop a plan for publicizing the available programs 8. Develop a schedule of courses 9. Admit students to begin fall semester of 2007 10. Develop a comprehensive assessment plan for graduate education at Western September 2007- September 2008 1. Implement the assessment plan 2. Continue to respond to regional needs
in the development of additional graduate programs. 3. Secure funding for graduate scholarships and
graduate assistantships. September 2008  September 2009 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.

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

A Strategic Plan Implementation Team has been established to monitor and report on the progress
on Building Graduate Programs. This team will report quarterly to the Strategic Plan Steering
Committee. In addition, the Graduate Council and the Graduate Dean will have responsibility in
monitoring the quality of graduate programs and the associated policies and procedures.

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

1. Assessment plan will be fully implemented. 2. Students are enrolled in the degree programs,
progressing, graduating, and securing jobs. 3. MAA degree will be implemented.

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

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: Jeanne Daffron, Graduate Dean
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Phone: 8162714586 Ext.

Annual Update: 2007-09-04

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

In August 2005, the Missouri legislature gave Western university status and the
authority to offer masters level programs. A Graduate Task Force was appointed
to develop policies, processes and procedures for graduate programs and faculty
began to develop proposals for graduate level programs that fit within the
university's mission of applied learning, research and service. Goals and
Mileposts for the first year of this action project included: 1. Form Graduate
Council, 2. Establish Graduate Council Bylaws, 3. Form Graduate Council
Standing Committees, 4. Work with the support areas (admissions, financial aid,
registrar, library, business office) to establish effective policies and procedures for
graduate students, 5. Secure sufficient resources for the graduate programs, 6.
Complete the development of the Graduate Web site, 7. Develop a plan for
publicizing the available programs, 8. Develop a schedule of courses, 9. Admit
students to begin fall semester of 2007, and 10. Develop a comprehensive
assessment plan for graduate education at Western. These goals have all been
accomplished with the exception of the development of a comprehensive
assessment plan for graduate education at Western. A plan is in place for
assessing individual programs, but the comprehensive plan is not yet complete.

Review (09-21-07):
Missouri Western State undertook a large-scale, complex, and aggressive action project in their
pursuit of realizing their new mission of offering graduate programs. They wanted to begin planning for graduate programs in April 2007 and admit the initial group of students in the Fall 2007. This organization has made reasonable progress toward their goals. This is the first time that Missouri Western State will offer graduate degrees, so the planning process through implementation is extremely important for helping students learn (AQIP Category 1) in a rigorous curricular experience. In less than one year, Missouri Western State completed important milestones in creating an internal governance structure, policies and procedures, and curriculum. The university set the goal of admitting students for these two initial graduate degrees for the fall term of this year. They continue to strive toward a comprehensive graduate education assessment.

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

Upon being granted university status by the Missouri legislature, a Task Force of fourteen faculty members and administrators was formed to plan for the development of graduate programs at Missouri Western State University. The Task Force held three faculty forums to gather information on faculty interest in developing graduate programs, to provide information on possible timelines and procedures and to encourage continued communication. Approximately sixty faculty members attended the forums. The Task Force released a request for initial degree proposals. Faculty members from a variety of disciplines worked together with representatives from regional business and industry to develop proposals for programs modeled after professional masters programs. Over forty faculty members completed the process for graduate faculty appointment and a graduate council composed of faculty members and administrators was formed. The strategic planning process at Western involved over 400 individuals from campus and from the region. As a result, the development of graduate programs was selected as one of the seven areas of focus for the plan and as one of our three AQIP Action Projects. Nineteen faculty, staff and administrators serve on the Strategic Plan Implementation Team.

Review (09-21-07):

A task force was appointed to develop policies and procedures, but it is unclear who participated on this task force. However, based on the cited collaborations listed in the original action project submission, multiple internal and external stakeholders have been included in the development and decision-making of these graduate programs. This action project was created based on a suggestion from the Higher Learning Commission. This, along with the details of how this idea was crafted with multiple stakeholders and how an outside expert was recruited, shows a responsiveness to outside opinions, involving stakeholders, valuing opinions, and willingness to engage in systematic and scrutinizing reviews of internal processes.

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

The planned next steps for this project for September 2007 through August 2008 include the following: 1. Develop a comprehensive assessment plan for graduate education at Western. All programs/units offering graduate programs will develop assessment plans including goals to support Opportunity 2 (Enhancing Academic Quality) in the Western strategic plan. 2. Develop additional graduate programs in response to regional needs. 3. Develop the structure and processes to support
international students in graduate programs. 4. Collaborate with the Using Measurement and Assessment Implementation Team to collect, analyze and interpret assessment data for the continuous improvement of graduate programs at Western. 5. Collaborate with the UMAT committee to support the professional development of graduate faculty in developing student assessments.

Review (09-21-07):
The next set of goals that are identified propel this institution forward in their attempts to fully integrate the graduate programs into the university's operations. The goals to collect, analyze, and interpret data provides the foundation for continuous quality improvement which connects to AQIP Category 7) Measuring Effectiveness.

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

We believe that the most valuable component in the process of developing graduate programs at Western has been the quality of the work that has been done by the faculty. Under the leadership of Jason Baker, the Task Force maintained effective communication with faculty, staff and administrators across campus, developed recommendations for policies and procedures, managed the appointment of graduate faculty and reviewed initial graduate program proposals. They assisted with the transition to management of graduate studies by the Graduate Dean and the Graduate Council.

Review (09-21-07):
This past year's activities and future goals reflect effective and inclusive communication which supports AQIP Categories 5) Leading and Communicating and 4) Valuing People.

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

We recognize that there is still much work to be done, especially in establishing an effective assessment system for graduate studies. With the commitment from the administration, faculty, staff and students, we are confident that we will be able to complete our goals for the next year.

Review (09-21-07):
The efforts of this institution have included open communication and systematic assessment and improvement from before the legislation change allowing graduate education, through this past year and every indication is given that these positive processes will continue. The committees have accomplished measurable tasks and they have built relationships. In this next year, Missouri Western State will be working on systems that will support student learning (AQIP Category 1) and other distinct objectives (Category 2). This reviewer finds that this university has made real progress on the goals of this action project in the last year, and documentation reflects an institutional culture seeking continuous quality improvement.

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 (09-21-07):
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