1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: 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.

R: Missouri Western State is now completing the final year of this action project. The institution has successfully achieved all of the goals that were established at the beginning of the project. MWSU has also accomplished the goals established for the final year of the project: Goal 1: MWSU has added additional graduate programs as planned. Now that the new graduate programs are operational, substantial effort will likely be devoted to ensuring that the programs remain vital as they grow and mature. Faculty engagement in the evaluation of the effectiveness of new programs in achieving stated educational objectives will be critical. Graduate procedures and processes will be refined and perfected
over time and all associated institutional processes will likely be reviewed for effective implementation. (AQIP Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement; AQIP Category 6 – Support Institutional Operations) Goal 2: The graduate student organization was established. The future success of this student organization will require that faculty and administration establish measures of its effectiveness and that these measures be periodically monitored. Measures will likely be derived from the constitution of the organization. Measures may include periodic surveys of members and other organizational stakeholders in order to determine the degree to which the organization is achieving its stated goals. (AQIP Category 3 – Understanding Student’s and other Stakeholder’s Needs; AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness) Goal 3: Completion of Annual Program Assessment. Program assessment is viewed by many to be a critical element of any successful academic program. Future steps will likely include the effective documentation of the results of assessment activities, the communication of those results to affected program stakeholders, and the adjustment of academic programs as a result of reflective consideration of assessment results. The engaged leadership of program faculty in the assessment process will be critical to the success of the program. (AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness; AQIP Category 5 – Leading and Communicating) Goal 4: Development and Implementation of Plans for the Recruitment of students. Critical activities of associated institutional processes will need to be monitored. Applicant quality measures might include such information as student entrance examination scores and undergraduate grade point averages. Process quality measures might include such measures as the number of inquiries per information (advertising) source along with associated costs. Critical reflection on the results of those measures will be necessary to continue to improve the recruiting process. (AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness)

- **2: Institution Involvement**

- **A:** 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.

- **R:** MWSU continues to demonstrate good attention to the inclusion of all project stakeholders. The Graduate Council represents an excellent forum for ensuring that all stakeholder concerns are addressed. Ensuring ongoing and effective communications channels as the graduate programs continue to evolve will be critical. It seems likely that reflective assessment of the Council’s operations would occur on a periodic basis to ensure that associated functions supporting the graduate programs, such as the library, financial aid, and student affairs office continue to evolve and meet the needs of a growing graduate student population. (AQIP Category 4, valuing people; AQIP Category 3 – Understanding Student’s and other Stakeholder’s Needs)
3: Next Steps

A: 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.

R: The ongoing growth and expansion of the newly established graduate programs will doubtless consume a significant amount of institutional planning resources over the next several years. The addition of these programs represents a significant expansion of the mission MWSU and presents a tremendous opportunity for the institution to grow in serving the needs of its stakeholders. Ongoing planning, measurement and assessment of results, along with reflective examination of these measures will be an essential component of this effort. (AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness)

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: 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.

R: As the number of international students grows, it is likely that additional student needs will be discovered. Steps such as surveying other institutions for best practices and developing metrics for the evaluation of international student success may prove to be useful. (AQIP Category 3 – Understanding Student’s and other Stakeholder’s Needs; AQIP Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness)

5: Project Challenges

A: 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.

R: MWSU is to be commended for undertaking this project and for bringing additional educational opportunities to the citizens of its region.