**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:
   Improving Measurement and Assessment

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:
   Western will create and implement a comprehensive University assessment plan focused on student learning and mission effectiveness. Measurement and assessment should play a critical role in Western strategic planning, policy and decision making, external accountability, and institutional quality. Western is committed to continuous quality improvement and institutional assessment. It is committed to establishing a comprehensive, University-wide assessment plan, policy and procedures, online databases, and the infrastructure necessary to accomplish these goals.

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:
   The current assessments should be systematic and centralized; Western needs better and more accessible data for decision making processes. Improving measurement and assessment has been identified as one of seven areas in the Five-Year Strategic Plan (2007-2012), Building the New American Regional University.

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: all academic departments and 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 Western Institute), the Office of Institutional Advancement, and the Financial Planning and Administration Office.

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:
Directly or indirectly all processes identified in the Nine Categories of the Western Systems Portfolio will be affected, especially Category 7 Measuring Effectiveness. Western’s new five-year strategic plan identifies Using Measurement and Assessment as an opportunity for focused continuous improvement. Goal three and related objectives in this plan address assessment. Assessment processes across all units will be published on an assessment web page. Goal 3.0: Create and implement a comprehensive assessment plan focused on student learning and mission effectiveness. Objective 3.1: Establish a University-wide assessment plan. Objective 3.2: Establish data use policies and procedures. Objective 3.3: Establish an online database and assessment web page. Objective 3.4: Show evidence of data-based decision-making and assessment effectiveness.

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

The development of the infrastructure to support institutional research reporting and assessment and the development of campus-wide assessment plans and a comprehensive institutional assessment plan requires at least two years. Western funds AQIP Action Projects at the level of $100,000 per year through its Strategic Planning Implementation Funds (SPIF); at the end of the Project, Western puts the funding into base and moves the Project to a Strategic Planning Opportunity entitled Sustaining Institutional Accreditation Priorities. Goals and Mileposts: April 2007 - September 2007 1. Develop, declare, and begin implementation of an AQIP Action Project in assessment. 2. Identify personnel and other resources necessary to accomplish the Action Project. September 2007- September 2008 1. Establish a comprehensive University-wide assessment plan. 2. Assure that all units (academic and non-academic) have assessment plans. 3. Establish a University assessment management system. 4. Develop a package for program-specific data for departmental use in constructing the five-year self-study and accreditation reports, current and made available in a timely way. 5. Establish systems-wide data use policies and procedures. 6. Identify and establish effective methods of storing historical and current assessment data, interpreting, reporting, and improving assessment. 7. Establish an online database and assessment web page accessible to the campus community, communicating what is kept, why, and how it is used. 8. Manage the information flow of data, interpretation and reporting. September 2008-September 2009 9. Show evidence of data-informed decision-making across the University. 10. Close the improvement loop and set priorities and targets for continued improvement. 11. Communicate these priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders.

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

A Using Measurement and Assessment Team (UMAT) has been established to monitor and report progress on action items for goals. The Assessment and Benchmarking Committee (ABC) will assist units in developing or refining assessment plans. University units will make annual reports on goal achievement progress which will be reviewed by the administrative units, UMAT and ABC administrative structure and published in an annual Strategic Planning Progress Report disseminated widely across the University and region. These data are also key to updating Western’s System Portfolio. Assessment Director - UMAT Administrative Unit Strategic Plan Committee

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:

The Office of Institutional Research has been expanded and adequately staffed. Personnel who can work with department and know how to improve them have been identified. Acceptable assessment
plans from all university units have been implemented. The current IRD website has been expanded to include links to assessment plans for all units. The data specified by the assessment plans have been collected. The use and analysis of data in making continuous improvement decisions can be demonstrated. Examples of the use of these data in decision making across the university can be provided. A comprehensive university assessment plan has been implemented. Policies and procedures for data collection, interpretation, distribution, and use have been developed.

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

Western maintains a strategic planning webpage to disseminate strategic plan goals and to follow the implementation of specific strategic planning actions. In addition, annual printed progress reports, community forums, and University meetings provide for feedback and dissemination. The Institutional Research Data page provides important institutional data and assessment links, including links to unit assessment processes. Western representatives attended the Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy workshop (March 21-23, 2007) and received perspective and feedback from our workshop mentor and team relative to this Action Project.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2007-09-04

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

Our AQIP Action Project has two goals for the first year of implementation: 1. Develop the framework to support institutional research and assessment. 2. Create and implement a comprehensive University assessment plan focused on student learning and mission effectiveness. For our first year our action items were to: 1) Develop, declare, and begin implementation of an AQIP Action Project/Strategic Plan Implementation Fund project in assessment August 30, 2007. 2) Identify personnel and other resources necessary to accomplish the AQIP Action Project/Strategic Plan Implementation Fund project August 30, 2007. These action items were completed by the end of the first year of implementation.

Review (09-10-07):
Congratulations on the successful launch of Missouri Western’s AQIP Action Project! The university appears to be supportive of the project as evidence of meeting the first year objectives. A helpful resource to the strategic planning committee is a charter that describes the objectives of the project with measurable goals. The project charter would also aid in narrowing the focus of the project to the most critical aspects of student learning and mission effectiveness. Other project tools that may be helpful are a communication plan and project plan for each opportunity area.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.
At Missouri Western during the last year 2006-2007, we invited administration, faculty, staff, students and community members to attend strategic planning forums where goals and objectives for our strategic plan were developed. We also invited administration, faculty and staff to serve on strategic planning committees for each of the opportunity areas. Many of those committee members were asked or volunteered to serve on the development of and the implementation of this AQIP Action Project. This Action Project Team consists of sixteen members made up of administration, faculty and staff. Additional participants will be included as the project proceeds.

Review (09-10-07):
The strategic planning forums were an excellent example of building collaborative relationships. You may leverage the administration, faculty and staff by including students on the strategic planning committees. In addition to providing students with a developmental experience, the committee will gain the voice of the customer.

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

The planned action items for our second year of implementation (2007-2008) include: 1. Identify and establish effective methods of storing historical and current assessment data that provides for analyzing, interpreting, and reporting assessment data. 2. The Using Measurement and Assessment Team (UMAT) will collaborate with the Critical Thinking Steering Committee to develop an assessment plan for student learning outcomes for critical thinking. 3. The UMAT will collaborate with the Graduate Council to develop the plan to collect, analyze and interpret assessment data for graduate program and student learning outcomes as evidenced as a draft assessment plan. 4. Assure that all units (academic undergraduate and graduate, administrative/service) have assessment plans that align with the Western Strategic Plan goals and unit assessment plan objectives. 5. Establish a University assessment management system. 6. Establish systems-wide data use policies and procedures. 7. Provide professional development experiences in assessment for undergraduate and graduate faculty. 8. Establish lines of communication and formal liaisons between the three AQIP Action Projects. 9. The UMAT will collaborate with the Critical Thinking Steering Committee to collect, analyze and interpret assessment data for the Critical Thinking project outcomes as evidenced by a draft assessment plan.

Review (09-10-07):
The Strategic Planning Committee and its sanctioned sub-committees has detailed an aggressive plan for 2007-2008. Effective project management will be required to ensure collaboration between sub-committees and adherence to the project plan. The use of measurement tools to collect and analyze assessment data will be important to this phase of the project. Some tools that may be helpful are: Measurement Plan with operational definitions document that clearly communicates what will be measured and how. Measurement plans that requires continuous data (any variable measured on a continuum or scale that can be infinitely divided) is preferred over discrete or attribute data (count, proportion, or percentage of a characteristic or category). Continuous data can provide more meaningful statistical analysis that will assist with the committee’s objective to use data to make decisions. Measure System Analysis (MSA) a
statistical tool that indicates if you are consistently collecting data. If the MSA does not meet statistical requirements, the operational definitions of the measurement plan may need to be improved. Data Analysis—historical data and current data should be analyzed separately before combining the data to understand if the data represents different populations.

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

Western administrative and academic units are developing effective practices in the following areas: refining lines of communication, policy development and implementation procedures, and effective use of resources

Review (09-10-07):
The effective practices may be more evident once continued progress against the AQIP action plans is achieved.

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

One challenge during the first year has been the institutional time line related to strategic planning and the AQIP reporting time line. The institutional time line provided for the development of the AQIP Action Projects during the late spring and summer (2007). The first year AQIP Action Project update was due by September of 2007.

Review (09-10-07):
The challenge of the institutional timeline related to the AQIP reporting time line is common for the first year of the AQIP Action Projects. You have done an excellent job of setting and achieving realistic goals for the shortened first year of the project plan. Continue to assess project risk during the 2007-2008 plans in order to identify and address issues that may interfere with the Strategic Planning Committee’s project plan.

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 (09-10-07):