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:

Contact Name: Cindy Heider, Associate Professor, Department of Educa
Email: Heider@missouriwestern.ed
Phone: 8162714234  Ext.

Annual Update: 2008-08-27

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

The Using Measurement and Assessment (UMA) Action Project has two goals: 1) Develop the framework to support institutional research and assessment and 2) Create and implement a comprehensive University assessment plan focused on student learning and mission effectiveness. This project is designed for three years of implementation (2007-2010) with this first year focusing on initial steps toward goal attainment. In relation to the first goal, the UMA Committee drafted a position description for a fulltime institutional research director, moved that position description through the internal steps to classify and establish the position, and conducted two searches. The first search resulted in offers to candidates that were not accepted (salary was not the issue); the second search was recently closed with the intent to refine the posting for a new search in the fall of 2008. Regarding the physical space for this office, the Committee is recommending an office utilization plan to determine the best placement of the IR/Assessment office. The intent is to have long term space capacity. Next, the UMA Committee established an informal relationship with six peer institutions for the purposes of benchmarking performance data. An updated and comprehensive complaint process was instituted. Finally, a review of assessment instruments resulted in the development of better administration processes. For example, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (sample of freshman/seniors) was changed to a time not in conflict with classes and incentives for participation were
offered to students. Regarding Goal 2  The UMA Committee in conjunction with the Dean’s Council and all academic Chairs/program directors are continuing to work toward an updated, comprehensive university-wide assessment plan. A revised annual report format focused on program and institutional data needs was instituted. Academic departments and schools as well as all service units were asked to review goals and objectives for alignment with the University Strategic Plan (tightly aligned with AQIP categories). The revised annual reports were due on August 1, 2008 and will be posted electronically for campus use as well as reviewed to determine the impact of the new format. A summary report will be posted electronically to provide information on mission effectiveness. This information is provided to the Board of Governors as evidence of our focus on student learning and mission effectiveness. Support for developing or improving the use of assessment data tied to student learning and mission effectiveness included offering professional development funding for all faculty and staff. A Professional development application form was provided to all faculty and staff. All campus employees were invited to a webinar on Assessment and Accountability: Reasonable Approaches for Higher Education, numerous faculty attended state meetings focused on curriculum and assessment changes in general education courses, administrators were involved in the Missouri Assessment Consortium activities, faculty and staff attended conferences focused on assessment (Business, Foreign Languages, Center for Academic Support and Student Services).

Review (09-20-08):
Congratulations to Missouri Western State University. MWSU’s campus leadership puts its fiscal and human resources squarely behind this AQIP action project (5P2, 5P4, 5P8). The University embraced the concept of building collaborative relationships (AQIP Category 9) by benchmarking with several peer institutions with regard to performance data and has engaged a number of internal constituents in planning and critical dialogue. The 2007 review of this project suggested developing a charter with measurable outcomes for this project. Though measurable goals were not directly stated in this year’s report from MWSU, the implementation of a revised annual report containing goals and outcomes suggests that progress has been made in this regard. One suggestion to consider carefully is the importance of establishing measurable core indicators of effectiveness, and assessing progress annually. One useful resource is Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges by Alfred, Shults, and Seybert. Also consider Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning by Huba and Freed.

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

To support the progress of this Action Project, a cross-sector (faculty and staff) UMA Committee was created from both volunteers and those with specific interests in the Action Project. To better focus on goals, Committee members were invited to participate in sub-committees working on one goal/objective within the project. To maintain progress, committee meetings were held every two weeks with reports to the larger Strategic Plan Steering Committee every two months. Some Committee members attended the AQIP Strategy Forum (October, 2007). As we begin the new academic year, faculty and staff will again be invited
to join Committee in an effort to expand the involvement of the campus.

**Review (09-20-08):**
What is the role, if any, of students and alumni in the process of establishing the comprehensive assessment plan? This suggestion was made in last year’s review; the 2008 report does not specify whether this suggestion was followed. Understanding the concerns of these stakeholders could shift the University’s planning to some degree, and they are an important constituency to consider (3P3, 3P4). How is involvement in the assessment project connected to the performance goals of staff and faculty at Missouri Western State University (4P10, and what are the incentives to contribute (4P11)?

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

- Revising the position requirements to allow for a successful fall 2008 search process for a fulltime IR director.
- Finding a permanent office space adequate for IR and assessment needs.
- Establishing formal relationships and communications with our six peer institutions.
- Continuing to work toward finalizing a comprehensive university assessment plan.
- Continuing to offer faculty and staff professional development for all faculty.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the revised annual report format.
- Increasing the number of faculty and staff involved in assessment professional development.

**Review (09-20-08):**
Missouri Western State University is making solid progress. Long after this AQIP action project is retired, the resulting efforts related to assessment should continue at MWSU. Perhaps the next step in MWSU’s continuous quality improvement efforts will be to integrate the results of its assessment effort with its strategic planning efforts (8P4, 8P5). Valencia Community College has accomplished this, and the result is a high performing organization committed to making data-driven decisions which inform a culture of competence and ultimately ensure institutional effectiveness.

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

- Clear and consistent communications and an involved cross-sector of the campus community allowed the UMA Action Project to support a better understanding of assessment instruments, assessment plans, assessment reporting and use of data for informed decisions about programs, people and future opportunities.

**Review (09-20-08):**
This is important learning—clear and consistent communication can determine the success or failure of any initiative. The University has clearly embraced the importance of leadership and communication as a critical component to success (AQIP Category 5), as mentioned in the response to Item A. Perhaps MWSU should consider presenting at the AQIP Strategy Forum! One outcome not mentioned is the collaborative relationships (AQIP Category 9) that have likely resulted from this action project.

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

- Challenges facing this Action Project generally fall into the following categories: time, expertise and competing interests. These are not insurmountable but require careful planning to best utilize faculty and staff time so duplication of effort is
avoided and to continue to develop faculty and staff expertise in the areas of assessment and use of institutional data. Our goal is to have assessment data available and used by all faculty and staff in decision making situations.

**Review (09-20-08):**
MWSU’s campus leadership has done an admirable job of committing fiscal and human resources to this action project. It is now imperative that the campus leadership also consider alterations that may be necessary to the workloads of key personnel to ensure that institutional assessment and effectiveness is successful. If not, employee burn-out and turnover could impair the University’s progress, which is promising at this point. Continued benchmarking with other institutions will help in garnering any expertise which the MWSU may lack, and the continued ability to collaborate and benchmark with these institutions in the future will be an important commodity.

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 (09-20-08):**
Great progress. 9827.