Project Details

Title: Improving Measurement and Assessment
Category: 1-Helping Students Learn
Timeline:
- Planned Project Kickoff: 04-12-2007
- Target Completion: 09-14-2009

Status: REVIEWED
Updated: 08-11-2009
Reviewed: 09-29-2009
Created: 11-24-2009
Last Modified: 01-12-2010

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

A: 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.

2: 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:

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

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

  A: 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.

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

  A: 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

- 7: 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:

  A: 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.

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

- A: 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.