**Action Project:** Student Engagement  
**Institution:** Missouri Western State College  
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**Annual Update:** 2004-09-13

### Form Navigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Areas Affected</th>
<th>Processes Affected</th>
<th>Process Measures</th>
<th>Related AQIP Criteria</th>
<th>Related AQIP Principles</th>
<th>Rationale for Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Measures</td>
<td>Performance Targets</td>
<td>Keeping Focus</td>
<td>Rationale for Action</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Related</td>
<td>Related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

The goals of this project are to: 1) increase applications, yield, and retention of student cohort groups identified in Western's Enrollment Management Strategic Plan; and 2) increase student engagement as directly measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and indirectly by improved retention. This action item involves many other of the seven components of Western's strategic planning processes, including branding and marketing and three national initiatives connected to student engagement, the National Learning Community Project, The American Democracy Project, and Foundations of Excellence in the First Year.

**Related AQIP Criteria**

- **Primary**  
  1 - Helping Students Learn

- **Related**  
  2 - Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives
  3 - Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs
  8 - Planning Continuous Improvement
  9 - Building Collaborative Relationships

**Related AQIP Principles**

- **Principle**  
  A - A mission and vision that focus on serving students and other stakeholders
  D - A learning-centered environment
  H - Planning for innovation and improvement
  I - Fact-based information-gathering and thinking to support analysis and decision-making

**Rationale for Action**

Western has strategically combined the academic and student affairs divisions to emphasize the seamless nature of the student learning inside and outside of the classroom as one means of increasing student engagement. The
Citizen-Scholar concept is employed to introduce first year students and other constituents to this holistic nature of the Western learning community—one that has two distinctive signatures—applied learning and service to the region. This action project combines components of the campus strategic plan and three national projects. Two of the three national projects are through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities: the American Democracy Project (ADP) and the Foundations of Excellence™ in the First College Year Project (Foundations). The third national project is participation in the National Learning Community Project (NLCP). Each of these projects has an engagement emphasis and is relevant for first year students. This action project will address student engagement as a developmental process beginning with the marketing/branding of an engaged learning community to prospective students and continuing with the intentional educational programs provided for enrolled first year students. Further, Western seeks to improve recruitment and retention of students through the deployment of a strategic enrollment management plan called Assets and Aspirations.

**Areas Affected**

Primary involvement is with the Academic and Student Affairs Division, including Admissions, Student Development, Academic Departments, and Student Services. Secondary involvement is with branding initiatives associated with the Image and Advancement sector of the strategic plan.

**Processes Affected**

The processes involved include engagement branding/advertising directed toward prospective students and their families, opinion leaders influencing college choice, recruiting activities, orientation programming, and curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular offerings related to engagement.

**Process Measures**

Western will employ existing strategic planning implementation teams and committees associated with the three national projects to establish process measures during the Spring 2004 semester.

**Outcome Measures**

With respect to outcome measures, Western will begin to use the NSSE survey to monitor changes in students’ expectations and attitudes toward their college experience, including: · Level of academic challenge · Student-faculty interactions · Active and collaborative learning · Enriching educational experiences · Supportive campus environment Both ADP and Foundations allow some peer group comparisons using NSSE results. In addition to NSSE, the College will employ the faculty version of NSSE from the Center for the Study of Higher Education or CSHE, which measures: · Background and demographic information · Professional activities (e.g., preferred teaching methods, research activities, advising duties, professional development activities, informal interactions with first-year students) · Perceptions of various aspects of their institution’s policies, practices, and values as they relate to first-year students and one or more of the Dimensions With respect to measuring enrollment management related engagement goals, application numbers, yield rates, and retention of student cohort groups identified in Western’s Enrollment Management Strategic Plan will be used as an indirect measure of student engagement for prospective and current students.
### Performance Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantitative and Qualitative Stretch Targets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Administer NSSE (March 2004) and CSHE instruments (February 2004) to establish baseline results for measuring student engagement improvements. Enrollment management measures of application numbers, yield rates, and retention of student cohort groups identified in Western's Enrollment Management Strategic Plan will be used as an indirect measure of student engagement for prospective and current students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Design, develop, and implement any campus specific measures using strategic planning implementation funding and participation in the ADP, Foundations, and NLCP national projects. Evaluate NSSE and CSHE results to establish stretch goals based on comparative results from other campuses. Reflect on results from campus measures and implement continuous improvement efforts as needed. Track progress of enrollment management measures such as application numbers, yield rates, and retention of student cohort groups identified in Western's Enrollment Management Strategic Plan for prospective and current students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Evaluate progress on NSSE and CSHE stretch goals. Reflect on results from campus measures and implement continuous improvement efforts as needed. Track progress of enrollment management measures such as application numbers, yield rates, and retention of student cohort groups identified in Western's Enrollment Management Strategic Plan for prospective and current students.</td>
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### Keeping Focus

Campus teams such as the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Strategic Planning Implementation Team and the Foundations committee continue to meet regularly to monitor progress on engagement initiatives. A series of student engagement community forums were initiated in 2004 to stimulate dialogue on engagement issues outside of campus teams and to disseminate information about the work of campus teams.

### Contact Person Information:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>David</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Annual Update: 2004-09-13

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

The goals of this Action Project are to: 1) increase applications, yield, and retention of student
cohort groups identified in Western’s Enrollment Management Strategic Plan; and 2) increase student engagement as directly measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and indirectly by improved retention rates. With funding from the Strategic Planning Implementation Fund, Western engaged the national firm of Noel-Levitiz to assist the college with the development of a tactical/operational annual recruitment plan from June 2004 to December 2004. These planning efforts focus on formulating a recruitment plan, based on market research, for the matriculation class of 2005. To date, three site visits by Noel-Levitiz consultants have involved more than sixty faculty and staff and resulted in a draft plan that is currently being reviewed. Western continues its active involvement with three national initiatives connected to student engagement, the National Learning Community Project (NLCP), The American Democracy Project (ADP), and the Foundations of Excellence™ in the First Year Project. NLCP involved a site visit in fall 2003, ADP involved attending two national meetings, and the Foundations of Excellence™ in the First Year Project involved two site visits during the spring 2004 semester.

Review (10-31-04):
This Action Project involves two distinct initiatives, increasing enrollment and retention and increasing student engagement through a variety of campus and curricular initiatives. The two initiatives seem to be related through the use of the culture of engagement as a marketing/recruiting tool. Since the effectiveness of the engagement initiatives is unmeasured at this point, it might be wise to separate the retention initiative from engagement until results are known. Separating these two initiatives might allow for more focused work on each.

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

Between 100 and 200 faculty, students, and staff attended a series of five forums held during AY 2003-2004. One forum was associated with the a site visit and workshop about the National Learning Community Project; two sessions involved guest speakers from the Foundations of Excellence Project, John Gardner and Edward Zlotkowski, who addressed first year programs and service learning respectively; and two involved identifying student engagement strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at Western. The fourteen member Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Strategic Planning Implementation Team continues to be the primary vehicle for addressing recruitment and retention issues. The membership of the committee includes members from the faculty, deans' council, admissions, athletics, the registrar, and the directors of financial aid and public relations/marketing.

Review (10-31-04):
The significant participation of students, faculty, and staff in the engagement initiative positions the College to be able to move the Learning Community, service learning, and first-year program initiatives forward. The fourteen members of the Enrollment Management Committee result in a less widely participated in initiative. More participants in this initiative would provide a wider perspective and less campus buy-in.

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

Assessment data for the ten implemented learning communities will be collected this fall. Consulting with Noel-Levitiz will result in an annual operational/tactical recruitment plan for the matriculation class of fall 2005. This plan will include specific enrollment management targets. Early in calendar year 2005, Western will develop an annual operational/tactical retention plan parallel to the operational/tactical annual recruitment plan. In fall 2004, Western will begin to
analyze its first set of NSSE survey results, monitoring changes in students’ expectations and attitudes toward their college experience, including: Level of academic challenge Student-faculty interactions Active and collaborative learning Enriching educational experiences Supportive campus environment The college also will examine the survey designed by the Center for the Study of Higher Education for the Foundations of Excellence™ in the First Year Project, which measures faculty activities and perceptions of various aspects of policies, practices, and values as they relate to first-year students and one or more of the Dimensions. The capstone meeting for the Foundations of Excellence™ in the First Year Project will be held in October 2004—the President, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the campus project Director, and Institutional Research Analyst of Western all will attend this meeting.

**Review (10-31-04):**

The report is not prefaced by an Action Project Plan. The absence of this three-year early planning component makes it difficult to determine the full intention of the Project. Completing the planning process will give the College the opportunity to think through final goals and target measures of successful achievement of the goals as well as defining the process that will be followed. The second year plan does identify areas in the engagement initiative for which baseline data will be collected and analyzed. It also provides for recruitment and retention planning with specific enrollment targets. These targets will give the College clear enrollment and retention goals by which to measure success.

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

The college participates in national enrollment management benchmarking efforts through Western’s involvement with Noel-Levitz and its participation in the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE). Participation in the ADP, Foundations, and NLCP national projects provides access to best practice models from other colleges and universities. After the college evaluates NSSE and CSHE results based on comparative results from other campuses, faculty and staff will reflect on results from campus measures and implement continuous improvement efforts as needed.

**Review (10-31-04):**

Using benchmarking will help the College set realistic enrollment goals. The College will also be helped in the development of its enrollment management and retention plans by studying and adopting appropriate best practices of peer institutions.

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

The richness of the NSSE data will require substantial internal analysis and reflection to determine which areas to prioritize in terms of action items related to continuous improvement efforts.

**Review (10-31-04):**

The challenge of analyzing NSSE data provides the College with the opportunity to use data-based decision making which will enhance its quality processes.

**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 (10-31-04):**

The College has not requested any help from AQIP with this Project. The College does now seem to have a plan for the second year of the Project. Taking this opportunity to get help with developing a complete three year
plan would enable the College to better set targets for measuring quality improvement and better analyze processes. Such planning might also help the College clearly define the two initiatives currently under this one Project and either separate them or clearly integrate the two sets of outcomes.