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

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.

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:

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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:

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.

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

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. 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.

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.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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**Annual Update: 2005-08-01**

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

Implementation of the recruitment plan has begun. Of the 230 action items in the plan, 128 have been fully implemented and work has begun on an additional 70 action items. The National Survey of Student Engagement was administered in the spring of 2005. Results will be analyzed and compared to results from 2004. Ten learning communities were offered during 2004. Assessments revealed very positive responses and a retention rate eight percent higher than that of a comparable group matched for ACT scores. The final report from Western's participation in the Foundations of Excellence® in the First College Year Project, including an assessment of Western's status related to benchmarks and recommendations for improvement, was completed. The faculty survey designed by the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University was administered. The survey measures faculty perceptions of institutional policies, practices and values related to first-year students. Western's score was statistically higher than the mean score of the six comparison institutions on the following factors: o Assessment for Improvement o Organized Approach o Active and Coherent First Year o Faculty Development o Importance Placed on First Year o Importance Placed on Teaching o Supporting Faculty Work with All Students.

_Review (08-29-05):_

Student Engagement is a core Action Project and one that relates well to AQIP Categories (3) Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders Needs, (5) Leading and Communication and (7) Measuring Effectiveness. The University has focused its efforts on several distinct initiatives:
imple­menta­tion of the Recruitment Plan; analy­zing sur­vey results (NSSE and Faculty Survey de­signed by Penn State Uni­ver­sity); analy­sis of learn­ing com­mu­ni­ties out­comes; and, analy­sis of over­all in­for­ma­tion learned from its par­ti­ci­pa­tion in the Foun­da­tions of Excellence - the First College Year Project. Mis­souri West­ern is keenly aware that stu­dent learn­ing and stu­dent re­tention are cor­re­lated strong­ly with stu­dent en­gage­ment and ac­tively striv­es to en­gage stu­dents with col­lege fac­ulty and staff, with oth­er stu­dents, and with the sub­ject mat­ter being learned. With this ap­proach, they are demonstrat­ing that stu­dents are more likely to persist in their col­lege stud­ies and to achieve at higher lev­els. Of par­tic­u­lar note is the fact that West­ern has am­bi­tiously fully imple­ment­ed 55% of its re­cruit­ment ac­tion it­ems and begun to work on an­other 30%.

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

Many in­divi­duals at West­ern have been in­volved in this Ac­tion Project. Imple­menta­tion of the learn­ing com­mu­ni­ties ini­tia­tive has in­volved over 40 fac­ulty and staff and ap­prox­i­mately 240 stu­dents. The Foun­da­tions of Excel­lence® in the First Year Task Force was com­posed of ap­prox­i­mately fif­teen in­di­viduals; how­ever, our par­ti­ci­pa­tion in the proj­ect actu­ally in­cluded many more in­di­viduals. The rec­ruit­ment plan was de­vel­oped af­ter in­put from over six­ty fac­ulty and staff at the ini­tial work­shop last fall. The Acad­emic Affairs and En­roll­ment Man­age­ment Com­mit­tee (AAEMC) is com­posed of al­most twenty in­di­viduals that rep­resent all areas of cam­pus and has respon­sibil­ity for over­see­ing the imple­menta­tion of en­roll­ment man­age­ment ac­tiv­i­ties. The AAEMC was ex­panded this past year to in­clude the Di­rec­tor of the Honors pro­gram, the Finan­cial Aid Di­rec­tor, and the Di­rec­tor of Res­i­den­tial Life. On De­cember 8, 2004 the Hot Col­lege En­roll­ment Sum­mit was pre­sented in two ses­sions. These ses­sions were de­signed to in­form the cam­pus of the chal­lenges fac­ing West­ern and to re­port on the pro­gress of the new re­cruit­ment plan.

Re­view (08-29-05):
Internal in­volv­ment in this proj­ect is both ex­tensive and rep­re­sen­ta­tive. This con­nects well with AQIP cat­e­gory (4) Valuing Peo­ple. Has the Col­lege con­sid­ered add­ing mem­bers from any ex­tern­al groups such as the alumnus or com­mu­nity? This might bro­den par­ti­ci­pa­tion through­out the univer­sity fa­mil­y and local com­mu­ni­ty and fur­ther sup­port AQIP cat­e­gory (9) Build­ing Co­lar­ra­tive Re­la­tion­ships. The fact that the Col­lege has ex­panded the Acad­emic Affairs and En­roll­ment Man­age­ment Com­mit­tee to in­clude oth­ers in 2005 is both vision­ary and commen­da­ble. The De­cember Sum­mit was an ef­fec­tive means for in­form­ing the entire cam­pus about the Col­lege’s up­com­ing chal­lenges as well as the on­go­ing pro­gress of the new re­cruit­ment plan. This was an ef­fec­tive mecha­nism for pull­ing the cam­pus to­gether to share in­for­ma­tion, dis­cuss or­gi­na­tion­al change, and, rein­force AQIP cat­e­gory 8, Plan­ning for Con­tin­u­ous Im­prov­ment.

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

We are con­tin­u­ing to work with con­sult­ants from Noel-Levitz to im­prove stu­dent en­gage­ment at West­ern. In ad­di­tion to imple­ment­ing the re­cruit­ment plan, the focus of fu­ture con­sult­a­tions will be on our finan­cial aid pro­cesses and pro­ce­dures and on de­vel­op­ing a com­pre­hen­sive re­tention plan. Ap­prox­i­mately thirty fac­ulty and staff at West­ern will at­tend a work­shop in Sep­tem­ber to begin the ini­tial steps in de­vel­op­ing the plan. We will use data from the Na­tion­al Sur­vey of Stu­dent
Engagement (NSSE), the Faculty Survey from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), the Faculty Survey from the Center for the Study of Higher Education, the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), institutional data and recommendations from the consultant to decide on appropriate goals and actions items for the plan. The plan should be completed by December 2005 with implementation to begin immediately. A comprehensive new student orientation program for parents and students is being implemented during the summer of 2005. This orientation program will serve as the beginning of the overall approach to excellence in the first college year.

Review (08-29-05):
From all accounts, Missouri Western will make good use of its multiple data sources in conjunction with retained consultants to develop a comprehensive retention plan. This evidences AQIP category (7) Measuring Effectiveness. Approximately 30 faculty and staff will meet to begin the initial steps of the retention plan. Might you consider including student, parents or alumni in any subsequent such planning sessions? By so doing, AQIP category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships can be intensified. Since preparing the Annual Update, the College has begun the development of a comprehensive retention plan and initiated a new student orientation program. The College has a carefully considered plan and is exceeding its predicted progress.

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

A unique orientation course, Griffon Edge, has been designed to give incoming freshmen and transfer students a head start with their college experience at Western. The program introduces students to Western facilities, services, activities, traditions, and academic experiences. A common reading program is an integral part of the course. All students in the course are required to read a book that has been specifically selected because of content that deals with diversity and diversity issues. Small group discussion sessions are lead by various faculty, staff and administrators and the students complete a short paper relating their own experiences with the content of the reading. The 2004 NSSE results show that Western scored significantly better than the other institutions in our comparison groups on the Diverse Interactions factor. We believe that the common reading program has helped Western to improve in this area.

Review (08-29-05):
As part of the unique orientation course, students participate in a common reading program centering on diversity and diversity issues. As a result, its students score significantly better than their comparison group on the Diverse Interactions factor of the NSSE. This is commendable.

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

The results of measures of student satisfaction (SSI) and student engagement (NSSE) identify several areas for further attention in the process of improving student engagement. Plans will be developed to address those areas.

Review (08-29-05):
The College reports that areas for further improvement have been isolated from the SSI and NSSE surveys. Just what are these areas and the preliminary thoughts on how to discuss
addressing these? The college is wise to note these now and pledge to dedicate efforts to address these in the upcoming year.

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 (08-29-05):