
Action Project

Institution:	Indiana University Northwest		
Submitted:	2007-04-09	Contact:	Kwesi Aggrey
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 04-09-2007

Target completion date: 12-31-2009

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Centralizing Student Learning Outcome Assessment

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

The primary goal of this project includes creating a centralized assessment system to conduct descriptive analysis of current practices and policies, collect current data from divisions, develop and implement direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes, and analyze the data for these outcomes. In addition, the goal of this project necessarily includes the development of processes that utilize the data for continuous improvement related to student learning outcomes. As a part of this system, a website should be created to archive the data, analyses, and assessment documents related to student learning outcomes. The data collection necessary to reaching these goals includes the campus-wide collection of General Education and discipline-specific practices, policies, and student learning outcome assessment data as well as data on student learning outcomes in co-curricular programs and benchmarks for incoming students.

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:

IU Northwest has been committed to revising its General Education Program, it has made significant progress in this effort, and the assessment of student learning outcomes is a part of this reform effort. At the same time, discipline-specific units have been assessing student learning outcomes and collecting their data for some time. In IU Northwest's System Appraisal Feedback Report (April 11, 2006), reviewers noted the need for centralization of data collection and analysis as well as some gaps in our documentation in this area and in our implementation of such assessment: "IUN's portfolio reveals considerable variation in the approach to learning assessment by the different colleges across the university. Centralized deployment of a learning assessment model could serve to guide more uniform quantitative and qualitative development of aligned measures in this critical area. IUN should consider a strategic initiative to reach agreement across the institution on a unified conceptual framework and approach for learning outcomes measurement" (7). And "Although IUN does obtain some discipline-specific information within the various units, it does not currently have a system documenting common outcomes across the units. IUN has an opportunity to provide results for the common and program-specific learning outcomes"(15). We are committed to continuous improvement in all facets of the University, and we feel that this project is integral to our success at our most fundamental function, helping students learn. Based on IU Northwest's Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (April 11, 2006) and the information gleaned at the 2007 AQIP Strategy Forum, the Strategic Planning Team and the AQIP Team has realized the opportunity the campus has for developing centralized student learning outcome assessment and using the data collected to improve student learning.

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

Academic Affairs and every academic unit, department, division, and program as well as Student Affairs (co-curricular outcomes) will be affected by this Action Project, as our efforts will extend across the

campus.

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

This Action Project will change and improve the process of collecting, analyzing, and assessing data related to student learning outcomes.

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

- Create a centralized assessment system to conduct descriptive analysis of current practices and policies (2007-09-01),
- Create a website to archive the data, analyses, and assessment documents related to student learning outcomes (2007-09-01),
- Collect current data from divisions (2007-12-31),
- Develop and implement direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes, collecting and analyzing the data for these outcomes (ongoing; 2008-01-01 to 2009-12-31 and beyond), and
- Develop processes that utilize the data for continuous improvement related to student learning outcomes (2009-12-31).

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

We will monitor the campus's progress in terms of the creation of a centralized system and plan for assessing student learning outcomes and the construction of a data and assessment archive.

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 outcome measures include • the development of a centralized plan, • the development of a web-based archive, • the implementation of centralized data collection, analysis, and assessment of student learning outcomes, and • the use of this assessment data to continuously improve our efforts to help students learn.

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

Note: This Action Project was a small component of a retired Action Project that was too broad. In addition, the assessment of student learning outcomes deserved the attention of its own Action Project.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2008-09-11

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

While we are still in the preliminary stages of developing a culture of assessment, significant progress includes the development of a campus assessment website (www.iun.edu/~caslo/), posting of each major academic unit's assessment plan, development of the "Campus Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes," the first wave of coordinated data collection, the development of a reporting template, and the temporary placement of a faculty member in the position of Assessment Coordinator (with a course release) until the campus can permanently fill this full-time position. The first wave of data will be reported broadly in the Fall of 2008 with the expectation that necessary targets for improvement be identified based on the results. Another major accomplishment (made possible after the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research) has been the analysis of the NSSE data from the years 2004-2006 in the context of the newly approved General Education Principles. This will serve as excellent baseline data as the new General Education Program is implemented. This data can be viewed at http://www.iun.edu/~oir/nsse/gened_principles.shtml.

Review (09-30-08):

IUN continues to make considerable progress towards developing a culture of assessment and continuous improvement. Establishment of a part time Assessment Coordinator position and Office of Institutional Research demonstrate the institution's commitment and willingness to create a centralized student learning outcome assessment system. Significant progress is also demonstrated through the development of a reporting template and the first coordinated data collection to be reported to the campus community this fall. The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment Coordinator and the

Office of Academic Affairs will need to work collaboratively to collect and analyze data as well as set targets for improvement to continue to move the action project forward. Development of a campus assessment website, posting of each academic unit's assessment plan and development of the "Campus Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes" also aligns with Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness and Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement.

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

The Office of Academic Affairs has provided funding for faculty development activities (attendance of faculty at the Assessment Institute at IUPUI each year, sponsoring a national speaker on assessment of writing on campus), has invested in a part time Assessment Coordinator, and has played an advisory role in the development of the Campus Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. The campus funded the positions of Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Associate Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, both of whom have coordination/oversight responsibility related to student learning outcome assessment in their respective units. Additionally, the creation of the campus assessment website (www.iun.edu/~caslo/) has increased the visibility of assessment activities and progress, and is beginning to serve as a resource for faculty for assessment-related information, information related to timelines, as well as a repository for assessment data where it will be available for use by faculty for curricular and instructional improvement efforts and initiatives.

Review (09-30-08):

IUN administration continues to demonstrate its commitment to developing a culture of assessment by funding faculty development activities such as faculty attendance at the Assessment Institute at IUPUI each year, investing in a part-time Assessment Coordinator, and establishing the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Associate Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences positions. The campus assessment website is serving as a resource for faculty for assessment-related information and may encourage faculty to become more involved in assessment activities and initiatives. It is unclear if the taskforce commissioned by the Strategic Planning Team is still active. Continuation of the taskforce may provide for additional opportunities for employee involvement and dissemination of action project activities and accomplishments. It is also unclear how involved the General Education/Assessment Committee of the Faculty Organization has been in the project to date.

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

The first wave of assessment data is being collected and analyzed and will be reported this fall (2008). A next major step is to refine the campus-wide process for continuous improvement related to student learning outcomes, particularly as it relates to outcomes of general education. The General Education/Assessment Committee of the Faculty Organization will play a big role in refining this process, implementing assessment priorities, and suggesting improvement initiatives. A more specific "next step" also includes the 2009 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to students as part of a regular 3-year cycle of administration.

Review (09-30-08):

Gaining faculty buy-in is critical for successful development and implementation of any assessment system. IUN acknowledges the critical role of the General Education/Assessment Committee of the Faculty Organization in gaining faculty support, refining the process, implementing assessment priorities and suggesting improvement initiatives. If the General Education/Assessment Committee has not been actively involved in the various activities of the action project, it is imperative that it become engaged immediately. Administering the National Survey of Student Engagement in 2009 will provide an opportunity to benchmark student responses to level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student – faculty interaction with other similar institutions as well as measure improvement from the last NSSE survey that was conducted three years earlier.

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

The Barbra Walvoord approach and advice of "not re-inventing the wheel" has certainly been helpful in increasing acceptance by faculty of the necessity and utility of a centralized approach to learning outcome assessment. Ensuring that each academic unit has a person, position, and/or structure in place

to oversee and coordinate assessment initiatives at that level is also helpful. It has also been helpful to dovetail our efforts on this initiative with those of reforming our general education program. This is helping us build in assessment as a natural part of general education reform.

Review (09-30-08):

Ensuring that each academic unit has a person, position and/or structure in place to oversee and coordinate assessment initiatives is essential to ensure consistency within the academic unit as well across the institution. This model also provides an opportunity for enhancing communication structures, networks and processes (Category 5: Leading and Communicating). Dovetailing assessment with an institutional reform such as the general education program will help faculty and staff to view the action project as integral to the institution's mission and culture and not just "another AQIP project."

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

Although the culture of assessment is still evolving at IU Northwest, we have made significant progress. We will be continuing to refining our centralized approach to the collection, analysis, and reporting of campus-wide assessment data, and our approach to using the data for improvement.

Review (09-30-08):

IUN has made significant progress in developing a culture of assessment. One challenge may be keeping assessment in the forefront as the institution undertakes other initiatives.

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 (09-30-08):

Global Judgment: IUN is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture.