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## Action Project

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**Timeline:**

Planned project kickoff date: 04-16-2006

Target completion date: 05-31-2009

Actual completion date: --

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

General Education Reform

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

The purpose of this revised project is to reform Indiana University Northwest's General Education program to provide a coherent educational experience leading to the following student learning outcomes: preparation for lifelong learning, preparation for ethical practices, preparation for successful careers, and preparation for effective citizenship. The General Education/Assessment Committee completed its revision of the General Education Goals (Spring 2006), and it will develop learning experiences, delivery formats, and assessment strategies for each new goal/principle (first goal/principle completed Fall 2006, second and third goal—2007-2008; and fourth and fifth goal-2008-2009) and will seek the appropriate constituency approval at each stage in this revision process.

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: 

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, the AQIP Team, and faculty reaffirm our commitment to the comprehensive revision of General Education and will use these feedback mechanisms to capitalize on effective practices we have already incorporated into our process. In the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, the reviewers note the following in relation to IU Northwest's General Education (the 2006 feedback was received as we were already well into the first phase of revision efforts) and the Criteria for Accreditation: "IUN mentions nine general education goals which align with program-specific outcomes, academic units, and campus mission. The broad general education goals/statements fail to supply an outcome-oriented basis to allow IUN to demonstrate the pattern of knowledge and skills acquisition expected of students upon program completion. Without specific, measurable common student outcomes, IUN will experience difficulty providing direct measures of effective teaching and learning within the university and among peer institution comparisons. Results of student outcomes attainment will help IUN identify and focus areas of improvement to set the stage for continuous improvement processes surrounding Helping Students Learn" (6). As the reviewers were preparing this apt feedback, the General Education/Assessment Committee was in the midst of producing such outcome-based goals for the General Education program; however, that is just the first phase of an extensive process. The rationale for the centrality of this project is that the General Education program influences the learning of all IUN students. This project and its focus are vital at this time because the General Education program has not been revised in a decade, the IU system is revising its General Education program (and we are steps ahead of this larger process), and the IUN Strategic Planning process has identified academic excellence as an area of focus. The underlying rationale is to provide an education responsive to the needs of a 21st-century student in a global environment by providing experiences that lead to the achievement of the learning outcomes identified in the Vision. However, after attending the January 2007 Strategy Forum, we concluded that the General Education Project was too large and broad; therefore, we separated the assessment piece and developed it into an additional Action

Project under the AQIP "campaign" of "Helping Students Learn."

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

Academic Affairs, all academic units and departments, and student services

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

Program design and implementation/ Curriculum development: General Education Program will be revised, and those revisions will be implemented. Other programs may be revised to implement innovative general education initiatives; Course preparation: New courses will be designed and implemented, and faculty development opportunities will be offered; Budgeting: Funds will be provided for faculty development, course/program revision, and conference travel related to General Education; Planning: Faculty Organization General Education/Assessment Committee will develop drafts for faculty input and approval. As initiatives are approved by the Faculty Organization, they will be presented to the appropriate curriculum committees. The institution will also be planning at a strategic level to accommodate the necessary changes in such a revision process; Faculty development: The Academic Affairs office will make resources (funds, opportunities, speakers, etc) for faculty development available. The Faculty Organization General Education/Assessment Committee will help to coordinate and design necessary faculty development opportunities; Advising: As the faculty revises the General Education program and the campus implements these revisions, advisors will be informed and oriented to these revisions so that students can be appropriately and effectively advised; and Co-curriculum development: Co-curricular components of an effective General Education program will be designed and implemented.

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

The rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project is related to the natural progression through the following phases and the length of time necessary to effectively accomplish them: Phase One: Revise General Education Goals (Spring 2006--completed), Phase Two: Develop Outcomes, Learning Experiences and Assessments for Principle (Goal) #1 (Fall 2006--Spring 2007), Phase Three: Develop Outcomes, Learning Experiences and Assessments for Principle (Goal) #2 and #3 (Spring 2007--Spring 2008), and Phase Four: Develop Outcomes, Learning Experiences and Assessments for Principle (Goal) #4 and #5 (Fall 2008--Spring 2009).

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

We will monitor the following processes to assess our progress: Faculty Organization decision-making and approval process, Curriculum committee(s) processes, Process of faculty input, Academic Affairs processes, Deans' Council processes, Processes of Faculty Development, and Processes of implementation of learning experiences and assessment.

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 measure will include the approval of the revised goals and the implementation of learning experiences and assessment measures. Ultimately, the outcome measures that will indicate the success of this Action Project will be the result of stages slightly beyond the revision and implementation when we begin to assess the individual and specific student learning outcomes. See also Section G above.

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

We will keep our institution's attention and energies focused on this Project and its goals in the following manner: \* locate this project in faculty-driven committees and structures, \* provide funds for faculty development and course development, and \* provide institutional/administrative support of project. Note: This Action Project is a revision of one that we had previously posted. We needed to divide and revise the project; therefore, we retired it, we created two new related projects, and we are posting both.

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.

The Faculty Organization's General Education/Assessment Committee (comprised of representatives from units across the campus) has completed the bulk of the work on General Education at Indiana University Northwest. The Committee (<http://www.iun.edu/~genednw/>) has completed the development of five principles of General Education and related student learning outcomes. The Faculty Organization has approved all of the principles and the related outcomes for the first three principles. The outcomes for the last two principles are scheduled as an approval item on the agenda for the September 2008 meeting of the Faculty Organization. Finally, the co-chairs of the General Education/Assessment Committee collaborated on the overall campus "Assessment Plan," providing a General Education Assessment Plan that includes a timeline, recommendations for methods of assessment, and a matrix of classroom-based and institution-wide assessment of General Education principles. These principles and outcomes are to appear in the 2010 IU Northwest Bulletin whereupon they take effect in terms of student requirements.

**Review (09-12-08):**

Congratulations on meeting your project goals ahead of schedule for AQIP Category 1 "Helping students Learn." You have demonstrated the AQIP principle of focus, by keeping you project on target. You have completed the work on all of your general education principles and assessment plan. You have described your new Principles on the AQIP website. It would be helpful to have an outline of the assessment system as well. You might consider describing it in your next project update or posting on your web site. You may also want to focus on the learning experiences and delivery formats as you outlined in your original goals for this project and discussed briefly below in C.

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

Most importantly, the General Education/Assessment Committee has representatives from academic units across campus, helping to ensure necessary communication between the committee and the faculty in the units. Additionally, at each step of the process the necessary feedback and approvals are obtained from the Faculty Organization; information and/or approval items for some piece of the new general education program appeared on most, if not all, Faculty Organization meeting agendas this past year. The Office of Academic Affairs has played an advisory role in the process, has made sure that the Deans and Directors are kept informed and have had a chance to have input and provide feedback, and has also funded necessary faculty development opportunities and facilitated the development of courses. For instance, several \$1,000 course development grants were awarded last year (Fall 2007/Spring 2008) for the development of intensive writing courses in the various majors (re: Principle 1, Advanced Coursework). The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences also has played an advisory role in this committee, and she kept the issue of General Education reform and the specific progress of the committee on her Chairs' Council agenda throughout the year. The process is working as designed in the Action Project, and the efforts of the General Education/Assessment Committee have achieved real results.

**Review (09-12-08):**

You have involved members from the academic departments, i.e. faculty, Deans and Directors. It might be helpful to involve your admissions staff also, so they can learn about the new changes in your general education curriculum. Then they will be adequately prepared to assist you with the student advisement process.

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

The outcomes for the last two principles are scheduled as an approval item on the agenda for the September 2008 meeting of the Faculty Organization. These principles and outcomes are to appear in the 2010 IU Northwest Bulletin whereupon they take effect in terms of student requirements. Specific next steps include: \*Review /creation of possible advanced courses in all domains of principles 1 and courses in all domains of principle 2 with stipends/funds for course development, \*Create a matrix of courses that satisfy four domains of Breadth of Learning – Principle 2, \*Pilot baseline assessment of oral communication, mathematical, and scientific reasoning with stipends/funds for participation, \*Plan

Intensive Writing year activities, \*Assess Intensive Writing courses/outcomes, \*Pilot baseline assessment of student learning outcomes in domains of Breadth of Learning, \*Review /creation of possible courses in principles 4 and 5 with stipends/funds for course development, \*Review of possible new positions in all divisions to offer courses in all principles of general education, \*Review and make changes in assessed outcomes, \*Publish in the 2010-2012 catalog the narrative with the list of all advanced courses in principle 1, \*Publish in the 2010-2012 catalog the requirements and outcomes for principles 1-5, \*Require all fall 2010 new undergraduates admits to achieve new outcomes, \*Assess student learning outcomes in advanced courses in domains of principle 1, and \*Start assessing student learning outcomes in principles 3, 4, and 5 according to the developed plans.

**Review (09-12-08):**

You have plans to develop courses and learning experiences for Principles 1 and 2 and pilot assessment measures. You plan to develop courses in Principles 4 and 5. The consideration of the addition of new positions that may be required with your curriculum change demonstrates the AQIP principle of foresight. The use of foresight will enable the institution to innovate, make meaningful changes and improve the academic process. You are working on courses for principles 4 and 5. You have also assured integrity of the curriculum by publishing the curriculum changes in course catalogs. You have plans to assess student learning outcomes in Principles 3,4,5. You might consider a new or follow on project to review the assessment data and fine tune your learning experiences. A table outlining the principles by course and the assessemnt measure would also be helpful and assure that you do not have wholes in the newly revised curriculum. The table would also assist you in streamlining the new assessment system and assuring that you are measuring learning outcomes at the beginning, specific points and end of the system. You have chosed generic principles and outcomes that can be tracked through each course and measure. You may want to consder adding some more specific measures that address the uniqueness of your specific general education curriculum.

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

As previously described, our approach is not really unique but a major strength lies in the broad participation of faculty from all academic units, the incremental approval of pieces of the new program, and the strong commitment and support from the Office of Academic Affairs.

**Review (09-12-08):**

Your involvement of all members of the academic department demonstrates the AQIP principle of "involvement" and encourages better decisions and strengthens individual and group ownership of the new general education initiative. See B comment above for ideas on how to further enhance involvement.

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

The next major challenges will be: a)the approval of new courses or redesign of existing courses to reflect approved learning outcomes, b)revision of existing general education requirements based on new general education principles and student learning outcomes, c)faculty resource issues related to implementation of required general education courses, and d)enculturation of continuous quality improvement of the new program once fully implemented.

**Review (09-12-08):**

The use of change theory might prove helpful in assisting with the approval process. Try introducing the curriculum changes in advance of the committee meeting date with time for questions and answers. Consider taking a moment to celebrate your success by advertising the changes to the curricula and involving students and admissions staff. Publishing the tables suggested on your website would also be another way to communicate and celebrate the accomplishments achieved in the project thus far.

**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 (09-12-08):**

NIU is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture. The division of this type of project into two separate projects has facilitated the completion of the project goals.