

**Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP):  
Information, Processes, Projects, Feedback, and Checkups**  
Robin Hass Birky and Linda Delunas  
Fall 2007

On the Indiana University Northwest's AQIP web page ( [www.iun.edu/~aqip](http://www.iun.edu/~aqip)), you will find the following: AQIP Overview/Update, Systems Portfolio, a summary of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, 2007 Action Projects, Retired 2006 Action Projects, Retired 2002 Action Projects, and a timeline that we will update as changes occur.

**AQIP Timeline**

April 1 <sup>st</sup> & September 14 <sup>th</sup> (annually)	Update Action Projects [Update or retire old ones, and add new ones] **must have 3 at all times**
Fall 2007	Category Group Work and prepare for Quality Check-up
March 26-28, 2008	Quality Check Up (have revised Portfolio, developed documentation of campus response to feedback, and Compliance Packet prior to this date)
2009	Formal Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**AQIP General Process:** The general process involved in AQIP is one of continuous assessment and reporting to improve in focused areas. The concrete components of that process are a systems portfolio (revised every four years) with related feedback and Action Plans that receive updates biannually. The AQIP Team attends Strategy Forums, collects data from campus, reports on it, and leads in the area of achieving the Action Plans. The system is one that specifically involves Action Projects, Strategy Forums, Systems Portfolios and Appraisals, Checkup Visits, and Reaffirmation of Accreditation. The cycles and process are clearly defined on the AQIP website ([www.aqip.org](http://www.aqip.org)) as follows:

**Action** — This *one-year cycle* drives continuous improvement by having every AQIP college or university tackle three or four **Action Projects** that it has chosen, committed to completing in a few months or years, and published in AQIP's on-line **Action Project Directory**. Organizations can complete Action Projects and begin new ones at any time. Each fall, they provide **Action Project Updates** to AQIP on the progress of current projects, and AQIP provides written feedback on these reports. Improvements in the processes an institution employs or the performance results it achieves are incorporated into its published **Systems Portfolio**.

**Strategy** — This *four year cycle* drives improvement by having every AQIP organization create and maintain an up-to-date **Systems Portfolio** describing key systems and processes the organization uses to achieve its goals and the performance results it obtains from them. A **System Appraisal** of the Systems Portfolio provides institutions with written, actionable feedback they can use to create strategies and actions that will move them quickly toward achievement of their goals. Participation in a **Strategy Forum** drives organizations to use this feedback in shaping new strategies, aligning systems, and creating specific Action Projects.

**Accreditation** — This *seven-year cycle* reviews evidence from both the action cycles and strategy cycles, evidence that demonstrates that an AQIP organization continues to comply with the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation – and that continuing its participation in AQIP will result in measurable performance improvement. A **Check-Up Visit** to the institution a year or two before its **Reaffirmation of Accreditation** review confirms the improvements it is making as well as the accuracy of the evidence it has provided to AQIP while providing helpful feedback and consultation on specific issues of its choosing.

New AQIP institutions concentrate their first Strategy Forum on selecting initial Action Projects that will launch their quality initiative with energy. In the three years following this first Strategy Forum, they create their Systems Portfolio. Subsequent Strategy Forums concentrate on using the feedback from the Systems Appraisal to identify broader institutional improvement strategies, while continuing to use Action Projects to implement these strategies. ("How AQIP Works," n. pag.)

The AQIP web site, likewise, explicates the specific processes related to the various components delineated above as follows:

**Improving Quality: Strategy Forum, Action Projects, and Annual Updates**

- Prior to each Strategy Forum, an institution proposes 3 - 4 specific Action Projects. Participation in a Strategy Forum allows the institution to receive analysis and counsel from peers before initiating planned Action Projects and formulate

implementation steps.

- Action Projects are shared through the AQIP website to promote collaboration and communicate self-improvement efforts of higher education to the public. Every institution updates AQIP each September on its progress or completion of Action Projects.

### **Taking Stock: Systems Portfolio and Systems Appraisal**

- Crafted during the first three years of AQIP involvement, the *Systems Portfolio* is a concise public description of participating institutions' major systems. Each institution's Portfolio addresses the *Commission's Five Criteria for Accreditation*, and the nine AQIP Categories, describing context, processes, results, and improvement in each system.
- Reviewers provide formal evaluation through a *Systems Appraisal*. Analysis is presented in a *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.

### **Re-affirmation of Accredited Status through AQIP**

- When AQIP admits an institution, the formal date of its next *Reaffirmation of Accreditation* is scheduled in seven years, but interactions with AQIP begin immediately and continue regularly.
- The Higher Learning Commission formally reaffirms its decision to continue accreditation every seven years based on evidence that the participating institution is meeting the *Commission's Five Criteria for Accreditation*, and a pattern of commitment to continuous improvement.
- A *Checkup Visit* is required as part of the evidentiary pattern leading to re-affirmation of accreditation.
- If indications surface that an institution is no longer committed to a process of continuous improvement or has ceased making reasonable progress in improving its performance, AQIP will review the institution's participation and recommend it return to the standard accreditation process. ("AQIP Processes," n. pag.)

**Quality Checkups:** A Quality Checkup is a condensed site visit that occurs a year or two before each AQIP institution's Reaffirmation of Accreditation. The Quality Checkup is conducted by AQIP Reviewers, who visit the campus for two or more days. The goals of these Checkups include system portfolio clarification and verification, systems appraisal follow-up, accreditation issues follow-up, federal compliance review, organizational quality commitment, and institutionally unique goals.

As IUN submitted the Systems Portfolio in November (2005) and received our Systems Appraisal Feedback Report in April (2006), IU Northwest is at the appraisal stage of the AQIP process. We now need to analyze and use the feedback from this report and attend a Strategy Forum in the Fall of 2006. Our analysis of the feedback we receive on our Systems Portfolio should involve a continuous improvement plan.

## **2007 Action Projects**

### **Campaign One: Helping Students Learn**

**Action Project A : General Education Reform** 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.

**Action Project B: Centralizing Student Learning Outcome Assessment** 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.

## Campaign Two: Measuring Effectiveness and Planning Continuous Improvement

**Action Project A: Increasing Our Capacity for Measuring Institutional Effectiveness** The goal is to begin laying the groundwork for a coordinated and centralized approach to measuring effectiveness on our campus by establishing key measures of effectiveness (what to measure and how) at the university level, campus level and in some cases the unit/department level. The project objectives are: to identify key measures and benchmarks and to develop a structure, plan and process for 1) gathering data, 2) conducting analysis and 3) communicating results to the campus. The end goal is to begin to develop a culture of measuring effectiveness.

**Action Project B: Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement** The goal of this Action Project is to increase Indiana University Northwest's capacity to use data derived from institutional measures of effectiveness for continuous improvement. Additionally, the work to be done relative to this Action Project will help integrate the continuous improvement process into all relevant processes on campus, making it a "driver" rather than a separate process. This, in conjunction with our Action Project titled "Measuring Institutional Effectiveness" will greatly improve the coordination of assessment and improvement efforts in a centralized manner and will assist units across campus with unit efforts to measure effectiveness and continuously improve.

### AQIP's Systems Appraisal Feedback Report in response to the Systems Portfolio of Indiana University Northwest (April 11, 2006)

#### Initial Notes:

- The "opportunities" and "outstanding opportunities" can be grouped into three categories: assessment (including benchmarking), processes, and leadership.
- AQIP asserts that we should not focus solely on the two categories; instead, they suggest that we also note areas designated as strengths and capitalize on those, too.
- AQIP offers questions that the campus can use in analyzing the data (pages 8-9).

#### Issues Affecting Compliance with Criteria for Accreditation:

- learning outcomes assessment (page 6)
- leadership—succession planning (page 7)

#### Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies:

- stakeholder analysis (data collection and analysis)—assessment (page 7)
- learning assessment model (centralized data collection and analysis)—assessment (page 7)
- strategic alignment (centralized)—processes (pages 7-8)
- process documentation (data collection, data-driven decision-making, and process-driven improvements)—assessment and processes (page 8)
- results (continuous improvement campus-wide and benchmarking)—assessment and processes (page 8)

**Category Feedback** (Categories = the nine AQIP Categories)—feedback designates areas and aspects as an outstanding strength (SS), a strength (s), an opportunity (O), or an outstanding opportunity (OO).

1. Helping Students Learn
2. Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives
3. Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs
4. Valuing People
5. Learning and Communicating
6. Supporting Institutional Operations
7. Measuring Effectiveness
8. Planning Continuous Improvement
9. Building Collaborative Relationships