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## Action Project

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**Institution:** Indiana University Northwest  
**Submitted:** 2006-03-29                      **Contact:** Kwesi Aggrey  
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### Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 04-01-2006

Target completion date: 01-01-2009

Actual completion date: --

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

General Education Reform: Enhancing Student Learning Outcomes

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

The purpose of this project is to revise 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 will complete its revision of the General Education Goals (Spring 2006); develop learning experiences, delivery formats, and assessment strategies for each new goal/principle (first goal/principle-Fall 2006, second and third goal—2007; and third and fourth goal-2008); and 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:

The rationale for 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.

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. Co-curriculum development: Co-curricular components of an effective General Education program will 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), Phase Two Develop Outcomes, Learning Experiences and Assessments for Principle (Goal) #1 (Fall 2006), and Phase Three Develop Outcomes, Learning Experiences and Assessments for Principle (Goal) #2 and #3 (Spring 2007—Spring 2008).

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

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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**Annual Update: 2006-09-12**

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

The joint General Education/Assessment Committee met bi-weekly throughout the Fall 2005 semester, creating a web site on Oncourse to serve as a depository for its documents and to

facilitate discussion and participation by the larger IUN community. This committee reviewed background documents, including current research on general education and student outcomes as described in the Shared Vision documents. Based on the research process described above, during the 2005/2006 academic year culminating in a document produced on December 9, 2005, the current nine IU Northwest General Education Goals were revised into five General Education Principles: 1) Principles for Effective Learning and Communication, 2) Breadth of Learning, 3) Critical Thinking, Integration, and Application of Knowledge, 4) Diversity, and 5) Ethics and Citizenship. The Co-Chairs of the committee presented the new General Education Principles to the Deans Council and the Faculty Organization in January 2006. The committee met three times in January and February to discuss the feedback received from the deans, faculty members, and staff members. Further communication throughout the process has occurred between the chairs of the committee, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and faculty through emails, presentations, and additional meetings. The five principles were adopted by a vote of the Faculty Organization at its meeting on March 24, 2006. The Committee has thus created the principles (which act as a frame for the whole General Education program) and is presently working on presenting the outcomes of and assessment for Principle 1 based on continued review of background documents, including current research on general education, student outcomes as described in Shared Vision and the General Education Policy Draft 04/05/2005, UFC Educational Policies Committee. In addition, the Co-chairs of the committee and Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs attended the "General Education and Outcomes That Matter in Changing Worlds" conference sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and have used the knowledge and practices learned there to inform subsequent discussions of a variety of General Education issues. The Co-chairs and the Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs announced, selected, and funded from Commitment to Excellence funds two types of faculty development grants. Four travel grants and six course development grants were awarded in May 2006 to individuals either traveling to a conference that focused on General Education or to individuals developing courses that would enhance our General Education offerings. We have also made preliminary arrangements for Barbara Waldvoord, a national speaker on General Education and Assessment, to visit our campus on October 19-20, 2006 at which point she will offer talks and workshops specific to our campus based on documents we provide her in advance. The General Education Committee has also created a framework for a dual approach to foundational skills: 1) a foundational course and 2) intensive coursework throughout the remaining college career. In addition, the group has developed a draft of outcomes for Principle 1, developed a draft of assessment methods and rubrics for Principle 1 outcomes, and developed drafts of criteria for intensive coursework in several domains of Principle 1.

***Review (09-12-06):***

Sounds like precisely the correct approach. The total involvement of a broad range of faculty cohorts portends the desirable aims of AQIP category (1). Moreover, the co-chair leadership model adds material dynamism and continuity to a very long-lead and farsighted Action Project. It is obvious that the AQIP overarching strategy for inclusive faculty (and other stakeholders) is alive and well at Indiana University Northwest.

**B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on 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. This is the faculty group primarily charged with curricular revision of this nature. At the same time, the Office of Academic Affairs has been involved in the reform, playing an advisory role as well as funding necessary faculty development opportunities and facilitating the development of courses. The Dean of Arts and Sciences also has

played an advisory role in this committee, and she has kept the issue of General Education reform and the specific progress of the committee on her Chairs' Council agenda throughout the year. On a broader scale, the campus is deeply committed to this reform effort, and this commitment is evidenced in Outcome 2 of our Strategic Plan, which focuses on general student learning outcomes and which acts as a frame to the more concrete articulation of those outcomes in the General Education Program. Outcome 2 reads: All academic programs and relevant support programs have implemented teaching and learning experiences that ensure they will prepare their 2014 graduates for lifelong learning, ethical practices, developing successful careers, and effective citizenship. The Strategic Planning Team focused on General Education at its November 2005 and its August 2006 retreats.

**Review (09-12-06):**

Although this project is in its infancy, the impressive breadth of involvement seems to be matched by vertical complementarity through the inclusion of faculty leaders (Deans, Committee Chairs, Office of Academic Affairs, etc.). The implementation goal to affect graduates in the Class of 2014 suggests possible need for an interim (or transitional) plan for the earlier application of certain elements of the "master" General Education Strategy which may emerge prematurely pursuant to the obvious and commendable extant activities.

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

The committee is currently seeking, receiving, and collecting feedback on outcomes, the framework, criteria for intensive coursework, and the assessments. As the Co-chairs of the committee recently received funding approval for a package of faculty development opportunities, they will be announcing those opportunities and implementing the processes associated with them: 1) a team of individuals will attend the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis (October 29-31, 2006), deliberately placing individuals in specific pre-conference workshops and having specific individuals attend particular sessions throughout the Institute so that the group can meet upon its return and use its new knowledge to spearhead an informed approach to assessing General Education, 2) the committee plans to offer incentives to pilot assessment processes in the Spring of 2007, and 3) the committee will offer another round of course-development grants. The committee is also exploring a concept of clustered courses on commuter campuses based on the model at Northern Kentucky and Radford Universities. The Co-chairs will present the proposed general education curriculum changes associated with Principle I to the Faculty Organization at its September meeting. By October 1, 2006, they will have developed a suggested design for assessing the Principle 1 outcomes. Furthermore, the General Education and Assessment Committee will repeat the steps of the process followed above, developing the outcomes, delivery methods, and assessment tools for each of the Principles. While it will be approximately a year before the committee will reach the activities related to Principles 4 and 5, the American Democracy Project group and the Global Leadership Group will be working on the outcomes, delivery methods, and assessments for those two principles, providing the committee with preliminary ideas and drafts to further them along in their work and to fulfill the mission of these two groups, both of which had the revision of General Education and curriculum in their original objectives.

**Review (09-12-06):**

Logical, thorough and coherent! Great start in only the first few months in a long curricular project.

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

The "effective practices" that have resulted from IU Northwest's work on General Education

reform are as follows: • The entire process began with a review of the literature on “best practices,” and the committee has used the research findings to inform its analysis of the specific instances of General Education at Indiana University Northwest and within its various divisions; • Research on the nature of effective working committees in the area of General Education has informed the structure of our specific committee: the General Education/Assessment Committee is a committee that is embedded in the faculty governance process and the members of that committee are representative of the various units on campus; • The committee’s process has been to blend national research, local practice, IU documents, feedback from campus constituents, and novel approaches from the committee members to form the drafts of its work; • The committee has used feedback loops at every stage of its work from brainstorming ideas to revising documents; • The campus has provided administrative support in terms of resources to fund faculty and course development; and • The campus has consulted external experts as necessary.

***Review (09-12-06):***

Multiple effects already in evidence, even this early in the program. The obvious challenge will be to maintain the positive momentum in evidence. The feedback mechanisms being appropriately applied will further that goal so obviously congruent with the AQIP process.

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

The challenges IU Northwest is still facing in regards to this Action Project include: • faculty buy-in to the nature and format of suggested revisions, • formal faculty approval of the documents produced by the committee in the meetings of the Faculty Organization, • development of delivery methods and assessments, • producing viable changes that can be used in every unit on campus, • gathering course data on student learning outcomes, and • centralizing the data collection and disseminating that data and the results of analysis for broader use in continuous improvement of student learning.

***Review (09-12-06):***

Well said! Even with the great start so very well described, the challenges you cite will become equally apparent, and require the application of several of the AQIP process categories (already clearly in practice). Good start! It is worthwhile considering a few "pats on the back" where earned ,even in this early stage of a longterm project---AQIP category (4).

**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 (09-12-06):***

These possibilities may become more obvious as the project matures after these first few months.