
Action Project

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: 04-01-2008

Actual completion date: --

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

Student-Centered Decision Making: Implementing a Service Philosophy

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

The primary purpose of this project is to craft IU Northwest's decision-making processes to follow and support applicable IUN student-centered principles. The first goal is to collect unit service philosophies as they relate to IU Northwest's student-centered principles. The next goal is to determine which student-centered principles are relevant to each unit's decision making and identify the key decisions made by each unit that are applicable to the student-centered principles and unit service philosophies. The final goal is to develop and implement administrative policies and practices at all levels consistent with relevant student-centered principles and unit service philosophies.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

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 this project's main premise is that the academic programs and co-curricular activities are here to serve student needs. A viable IUN must meet the changing needs of its students in the competitive environment in which it exists. The student-centered principles are at the heart of our Strategic foci on Excellence and Campus Climate.

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

Every unit, department, and division

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

Planning: Strategic planning in academic and academic support areas should reflect the needs of students and stakeholders. Budgeting: Budgets should reflect the allocation of resources to meet student and stakeholder needs. Measuring: The opinions, ideas and thoughts of students and stakeholders should be collected and measured. Scheduling: The scheduling of classes should take into consideration the needs of students. Advising: Students should have timely access to quality advising.

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

The length of time planned for this Action Project results from the nature of time it takes to

ultimately develop policies and put them into practice in a higher education institution. The phases of the project are as follows: Phase One : Collect Service Policies and Develop Unit and Individual Measures of Performance, Phase Two: Collect Data on Measures and Analyze, and Phase Three : Develop Administrative Policies and Implement Administrative Practices.

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

We will monitor our efforts in the following processes: Scheduling processes, Advising processes, Budgeting processes, and Planning processes.

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 that will indicate the success or failure of this Project in achieving its goals include: Student satisfaction with services survey, Evaluation measures for advising, Program scheduling analysis, and Co-curricular offering satisfaction survey.

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 by ensuring administrative support and the funding necessary to have an institutional researcher.

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.

Progress has been made with regard to provoking thought about decision making consistent with relevant student-centered principles and unit service philosophies. A template was designed and titled "Template for Outcome Reporting." This was distributed in March, 2006 to all units with an established service philosophy. It incorporated unit philosophies and institutional principles for student-centeredness in a reflection project that required unit leaders to record their key decisions for the year and indicate which principles were being upheld by each decision. A mid-semester follow-up for this project was scheduled in June of 2006 for purposes of keeping on the table the importance of upholding the principle of aligning decision making with service philosophies and reflecting upon the ease or difficulty of aligning those key decisions with principles and philosophies. However, campus leadership believed that the method of recording-reporting might not draw out the significance of principles and philosophies in the most profound way. A change in the process will require a more hands-on reflection (i.e. Q & A visitation/discussion with unit leaders) from within division ranks as opposed to submission of a written document by the unit leader reflecting personal sentiments. A final report will result from division leadership, but there still remains a real need for a data-based analysis of connections made between key decisions and principles established to govern institution behaviors.

Review (09-22-06):

Addressing AQIP Criterion Three: Understanding Stakeholders is a most worthy Action Project, and analyzing decisions made regarding students and matching those decisions with service philosophy is a brilliant approach to assessing effectiveness. This approach can not only serve as an assessment practice, it can serve to eventually assess actual service philosophy; since this project assumes service philosophies are currently appropriate. Is it possible an outsider

perspective will be necessary to assist with reviewing whether or not actual philosophy is according to best practice? Leadership's process orientation to assessment is wise. It allows for interaction among staff members that can lead to consensus on needed change. Perhaps the project could address both process and data needs by inviting every staff member to fill out a document listing their individual decisions and then while in the group list the service philosophy on a screen. Individuals could then discuss together each decision in the context of the philosophy. The list of decisions is data and the 'gist' of the dialogue recorded on newsprint can be data.

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

Instructions and templates were distributed in March, 2006 by the Chair of Strategic Outcome #7. These were sent to the twelve umbrella units on campus that submitted a service philosophy in the year of 2005. Decisions of unit leadership collectively affect the entire campus. Unit leaders were engaged in this project, which asked them to reflect upon key decisions to be made for the year and indicate which student-centered principles each decision supported. Some ambiguity arose as unit leaders looked for guidance about what was considered a "key decision." Discussion at meetings with campus leadership and the campus Strategic Planning Team helped to determine that key decisions were those that were relevant to the vision and direction of a particular unit. After the campus clarified this term, leaders were to complete the project and hold this information for future reference and for documentation of difficulty or ease in implementation. Mid-semester follow-up dates to remind unit leaders of the importance of documentation and reflection were determined by campus leadership as June 19th and September 11th. Verbal reports were given by the Outcome #7 Chair at meetings of campus leadership as part of the follow-up process.

Review (09-22-06):

This Action Project has done a very good job of including all the appropriate stakeholders within the institution in this project.

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

To ensure the most in-depth reception of key decision alignment with relevant student centered principles and philosophies, each leader of the twelve umbrella units will work with directors and departmental chairs to ensure that everyone has had opportunity to weigh in on the difficulty or ease of key decision alignment. A review of information gathered by leaders of the umbrella units is scheduled for October 16th to sustain attention to the alignment and devise a method or instrument to ensure that all university units are action-oriented with relevant student principles and philosophies.

Review (09-22-06):

It is a good idea to meet with leaders to weigh in on difficulty or ease of key decision alignment. Who will make decisions regarding any disagreement regarding this alignment and regarding whether or not a specific element of service philosophy is appropriate? It is crucial that the project follow through with assessing student satisfaction with your decision/service philosophy alignment.

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

A template that provides space for and focus on decision making that affects people, symbolism and direction of all units has resulted as a product of this project. It asks unit leaders to (1) identify key decisions they are making or expect to make in the calendar year and (2) review each decision for its applicability to relevant student-centered principles. Although simple in structure,

the template seems to cause contemplation of leadership decision making patterns that construct the vision and direction of units and support the general value system of the institution. It was used to help further align leadership decision-making with principles and associated unit philosophies.

Review (09-22-06):

The template developed for unit decision assessment sounds like one that could be shared with other institutions exploring this issue. Are there other results from your work? For example, what about the resulting relationships within and among units, or student satisfaction?

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

The most immediate challenge of this project is deriving an instrument to compliment the template that will reveal ongoing, data-based evidence that all units are adhering to decision making that supports institutional values found within their student-centered principles and philosophies. At present the project is highly qualitative in nature and has little means to produce criteria that identifies what supports or does not support university principles and unit philosophies. No strategy has been derived to deal with this challenge. However, there is initial thought that dealing with a more quantitative instrument will solidify institutional needs for accountability in this area. An October meeting will address this challenge. Addressing this challenge may not have significant setbacks of the original timeline for this project. However, conversation about satisfying the goal of this project ["Units who submitted a service philosophy make decisions consistent with relevant student-centered principles and unit service philosophies"] will likely center on (1) developing criteria for accomplishing alignment of decisions with principles and philosophies and (2) future collection of data on this criteria for purposes of evaluation, promotion and rewards.

Review (09-22-06):

The challenge identified is an appropriate one. It could be at least partially addressed by combining a survey with a process (qualitative) dialogue as described above. One way to produce criteria that identifies what supports service principles and philosophies is to focus on those times when decisions are judged by groups (units and leaders) to be in alignment. Then invite units to use key words or themes to describe that alignment. A cross-unit team could then take the key words or themes and use them to craft criteria to be approved by all units.

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 (09-22-06):