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## Action Project

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**Timeline:**

Planned project kickoff date: 04-09-2007

Target completion date: 12-31-2010

Actual completion date: --

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

Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement

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

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.

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

Primary Category: Planning Continuous Improvement

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 and the AQIP Team has realized the opportunity the campus has for developing a culture of continuous improvement. In many of the AQIP Categories, opportunities related to continuous improvement exist: for example, • "IUN demonstrated initial efforts to become a continuous improvement organization through submission of the November 2005 Systems Portfolio. The institution has not incorporated the presentation and use of results for improvement across all of the units on campus. More widespread use of results to drive continuous improvement will be necessary to move IUN to the next level. Additionally, the absence of benchmarking with other institutions compromises IUN's ability to view itself comparatively." • "The process used to set targets is provided but there is considerable opportunity here to collect more data and directly address how results and improvement priorities are communicated." • "Some new processes are listed, but no results of these changes are given." Thus, we concluded that we need to examine our current structures and processes (specifically Strategic Planning and AQIP structure and processes) in order to find ways to integrate data-based decision making and continuous improvement into our planning as a matter of routine campus operation.

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 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 processes of using data for continuous improvement and decision-making in every unit.

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 relates to both the breadth and depth

of the project as well as its relationship to Action Project “Increasing our Capacity for Measuring Institutional Effectiveness.” Together, these two Action Projects will make up one of our campus’ AQIP “campaigns” that is focusing on becoming a continuous improvement organization. • Strategic Planning Team develops and approves a plan for its stated role in the continuous improvement process for the campus, better integrating AQIP with the current planning processes—2007-06-31; • Analysis and revision of structures and processes related to continuous improvement for major administrative units—2007-12-31; • Analysis and revision of structure and processes related to continuous improvement for the next unit level—2008-12-31; • Analysis and revision of structure and processes related to continuous improvement for remaining units—2009-05-31; • All units have implemented continuous improvement processes—2009-12-31; • All units assess their continuous improvement processes-2010-05-31; and • All units demonstrate that decisions are data driven—2010-12-31.

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 and systematic plan for continuous improvement and the creation/revision and implementation of the processes related to continuous improvement.

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 and implementation of a systematic plan and process to measure institutional effectiveness and provide continuous improvement, • the development and implementation of a plan and process to disseminate assessment results, and • the use of assessment results for continuous improvement.

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

Note: This Action Project is part of a previous Action Project that we revised and reposted because we determined that it was too broadly conceived; 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.

**\*\*Quoting from the IU Northwest Quality Highlights document submitted to AQIP in August, 2008:\*\***  
 In a special meeting of the Strategic Planning Team in April 2008, the Strategic Planning Team examined its Strategic Outcomes in terms of meting its time goals and the number of outcomes as related to the campus’s ability to meet the completion goals as well as the units’ ability to align their goals and outcomes with those larger Strategic Outcomes. [This was done, in part, due to feedback received from our Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and our AQIP Quality Check up Report]. Based on this analysis, the Strategic Planning Team has determined that sufficient progress has been made on some of the Strategic Outcomes, thereby making them viable in the daily operations of the campus without having them be a specific strategic focus. At the same time, the Strategic Planning Team determined that the activities/processes involved in the remaining Strategic Outcomes could successfully be folded into four larger focus areas (much like AQIP ‘campaigns’), providing the campus with greater focus and the ability to better align unit goals and outcomes with the larger strategic foci. The four focus areas are: Continuous Improvement, Budgeting, Enrollment, and Emergency Preparedness. Specifically addressing the area of continuous improvement, the Strategic Planning Team determined that, “continuous improvement” (including measuring effectiveness and “assessment” broadly defined to include both student learning outcome assessment and the general assessment of other institutional areas and processes) at the strategic planning level means targeting campus-level continuous improvement initiatives, determining performance measures, monitoring progress, and ensuring relevant change responsive to data. Key activities (or concrete outcomes) that fall within the category of continuous improvement include but are not limited to: 1) AQIP accreditation, including

maintenance of the four (4) Action Projects, 2) General Education reform, 3) Human Capital and succession planning, 4) Student learning outcome assessment planning, and 5) Key performance measures. Rather than having specific Strategic Planning Committees responsible for the Strategic Outcomes, the Strategic Planning Team has operationalized the efforts necessary to achieving each of the Strategic Outcomes, thereby placing the responsibility for the completion within the respective units/constituent populations. This approach will be maintained:

- The AQIP co-coordinators will facilitate the necessary work related to accreditation, working with the members of the Category Working groups, collaborating with other groups as necessary;
- the co-chairs of the General Education/Assessment committee will continue to lead the faculty work on the revision of the General Education components, working with the faculty committee, the larger Faculty Organization, the Deans' Council, and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs;
- the Director of Human Resources will coordinate the campus efforts to produce a Human Capital Plan, and the Category 5 Working Group will continue its work on succession planning;
- the Assessment Coordinator will work with individuals in each academic unit to realize the various aspects of student learning outcome assessment as detailed in the Campus Assessment Plan; and
- the Director of Institutional Research will lead the campus efforts related to implementing key performance measures.

Each of these individuals will report progress to the Strategic Planning Team (in either the form of a report or an oral presentation at the regular meetings), gaining feedback from the Strategic Planning Team and acting in an advisory role to the Strategic Planning Team on matters related to the respective work. Specific continuous improvement initiatives that have been undertaken include the following: the Director of Financial Aid has led his office in mapping the financial aid processes for students, resulting in streamlining the process and allowing students to receive their aid in a more timely manner; the AQIP Category 5 Working Group completed mapping of the hiring process; and the Category 5 Working group has designated processes in the following areas as those to be mapped next and assigning particular individuals to ensure the completion of that mapping: Event Planning/Scheduling, Budget Planning, Student Services, Physical Plant Process for Repairs, and Publicizing Events.

**Review (10-05-08):**

IU Northwest continues to make progress toward completing this extensive project of strategic importance. Sufficient progress has been made on some Strategic Outcomes so they can be cascaded down through the organization. Evidence exists that continuous quality improvement is being accomplished in the mapping of the Financial Aid processed. The campus has also included administrative units in the assessment process, which is positive. It is not clear whether any key performance measures are currently in place and being utilized. This important element of the project has been assigned to the Continuous Improvement focus area. The Continuous Improvement focus group is encouraged to develop and implement the key performance measures before the next annual update. It appears that the large nature of the project caused the Strategic Planning Committee to delegate much of the work to four focus areas. This decision should allow the campus to continue to make reasonable progress toward completion. It will be important that the focus groups develop strategic outcomes in the remaining area identified by the project and have them in place by the next annual update to continue to make reasonable progress toward completion. Has the Strategic Planning Committee communicated deadlines to the focus groups and are they being held accountable for outcomes?

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

The campus has maintained its Strategic Planning Team structure as one that includes broad representation from all areas on campus. Additionally, the AQIP Coordinating Committee and Category Working Groups structure is maintained—these groups also include broad representation by faculty and staff stakeholders.

**Review (10-05-08):**

Keeping the original project structure in place reinforces its commitment to implementation. Project-related communications by focus area groups to the Strategic Planning Committee can be oral or written. Having all communication to the Strategic Planning Committee being written may strengthen

the communication flow of the project. It remains unclear how final decisions based on constituency inputs are made. It appears that the focus area groups serve in an advisory capacity, but it is not clear how the Strategic Planning Committee makes decisions and communicates them through the organization.

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

At its November 2008 Strategic Planning Team (SPT) meeting the team will be further defining and refining the continuous improvement processes that are relevant and appropriate at the campus/strategic level and how to best achieve alignment of strategic initiatives “down” to the unit level. Significant overlap exists between this Action Project and the Action Project “Measuring Institutional Effectiveness” and it is probable that the SPT will undertake a discussion of the viability of maintaining both as Action Projects.

**Review (10-05-08):**

To provide the best opportunity for a successful project outcome, it will be important for the Strategic Planning Committee to remove the confusion associated with overlapping Action Projects. If the Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement project continues in its present form, the campus will benefit from putting in place a process for all stakeholders to make public the deadlines, lead persons, and accomplishments of the project. Additional benefit will be received by creating an historical document that records the accomplishments of the project.

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

Again, the most effective practice has been the broad-based representation on committees and projects, as well as our extreme efforts at communication across campus.

**Review (10-05-08):**

The project continues to be a good learning experience for the campus. Even though some difficulties have been encountered and overlap exists between projects, the Strategic Planning Committee seems to be learning and responds to developments as they occur.

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

As reported last year, it remains a challenge to separate in the minds of the campus community the commitment to becoming a continuous improvement institution (i.e., one that systematically collects and analyzes data and uses that data for improvement) from the AQIP accreditation process. This probably remains our single biggest challenge.

**Review (10-05-08):**

Culture changes take time, persistence, and patience. What the campus is experiencing is normal. Clarifying the overlap between action projects will help the campus. Additionally, involving administrative units, as the campus has wisely done, will speed the culture change.

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 (10-05-08):**

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