

Action Project

Institution:	Indiana University Northwest	Contact:	Kwesi Aggrey
Submitted:	2007-04-09	Telephone:	219-980-6966
Email:	kaggrey@iun.edu		

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:

Contact Name: Robin R. Hass Birky, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Ac
Email: rohass@iun.edu
Phone: 219-980-7126 Ext.

Annual Update: 2007-09-12

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

The General Education/Assessment Committee of the Faculty Organization is on track with the original timeline for this Action Project. First, this committee has successfully moved beyond the revision of the General Education Goals into five (5) General Education Principles that have been approved by the Faculty Organization. Then, the group developed the courses, outcomes, and assessment measures for Principle 1: Foundations for Effective Learning. These have also been approved by the Faculty Organization. Next, work is now in progress on the outcomes and assessment measures for Principle 2: Breadth of Learning. At the same time, the co-chairs of this committee have developed a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education as part of the campus's larger assessment plan (described also in the Action Project focusing on the assessment of student learning outcomes).

Review (10-01-07):

Reforming General Education is a major undertaking. Your initial approach and your open-mindedness to change that approach in January 2007 provide strong evidence that you are taking this project seriously. It seems that the project is progressing nicely according to the revised timeline.

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

The General Education/Assessment Committee is necessarily comprised of representatives from each academic unit. Furthermore, the co-chairs consistently report the committee's work at the monthly meetings of the Faculty Organization and the meetings of the Deans' Council. The co-chairs also report to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs on a regular basis. The group has used an electronic project site to house related documents and conduct asynchronous conversations: any campus constituent can join this project site. Furthermore, from the onset of this reform effort, the co-chairs have taken the following approach: gain feedback from everyone at every stage of the process, and gain necessary approval for each step in the process rather than waiting for a final vote on the whole program.

Review (10-01-07):

The participation of faculty from multiple areas is an important step, as is the creation of an asynchronous project site. Give some consideration to adding a few non-academic

personnel to the assessment committee (IT director, institutional research, registrar's office employees); this may help with the logistics of implementing the data-gathering and analysis system, and it also helps the non-academic part of the college understand the importance of General Education and assessment. Good decision on the incremental approach to getting approval; it is often easier to move people in "baby steps" than "giant steps."

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

As described in the Action Project itself, the next steps involve repeating certain processes. In other words, the committee will develop the outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment measures for each subsequent Principle. Additionally, the co-chairs have discovered the need for a General Education website where approved policies and working documents can be housed so that they are more easily accessible for those individuals who may not make the effort to enter the electronic project site.

Review (10-01-07):

If you use a learning management system like Blackboard or WebCT, you might be able to use that system to house a "course" where you can store approved policies, working documents, and manage asynchronous discussions. The "students" in such a course are faculty members / assessment committee members. It may be that you are using a formative-summative approach as you develop the outcomes and assessment measures; you may want to run a small-scale trial on some of the assessment measures before you fully implement the measures. Your "repeating certain processes" approach makes perfect sense.

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

The most effective practices that have been used in these reform efforts include the wide spread inclusion of individuals, the feedback loops, and the step-by-step approval process.

Review (10-01-07):

While some of the changes that occur as a result of this process are difficult to document, it is important that you have recognized a most valuable part of this process is the conversations that the process causes. The wide participation will also help when it comes to implementation.

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

The length of this process presents the challenge of keeping people committed to the reform efforts. The step-by-step approval process has helped us meet this challenge as it keeps individuals informed and involved at every stage. However, it should be noted, that keeping the enthusiasm for the project high and maintaining steady leadership will continue to be a challenge.

Review (10-01-07):

You have recognized an important challenge. If you can find a way to celebrate small victories, it may help keep people motivated. Every so often, consider an informal session (or a part of a regular meeting) during which faculty share how the process has caused them to change some classroom practice, even if it seems like a minor 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 (10-01-07):