Action Project

Institution: Kaskaskia College
Submitted: 2006-05-10
Contact: Nancy Kinsey
Email: nkinsey@kaskaskia.edu
Telephone: 618-545-3171

Timeline:
Planned project kickoff date: 08-31-2006
Target completion date: 08-31-2009
Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:
General Education Core Assessment

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:
This AQIP project will create and implement general education core curriculum standards and assessment of student learning. Necessary training will be provided as needed and deemed appropriate by the project committee to all faculty and involved staff. At the end of this project, full and part-time faculty will employ the core curriculum standards and its assessment in appropriate courses and equally as importantly will utilize the assessment results to enhance student learning as indicated by the assessment. A consistent and appropriate method of documenting assessment results and how these results have been used to enhance student learning shall be kept along with appropriate benchmarking and dashboards.

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:
• This project is in response to feedback from the HLC, the Illinois Lincoln Foundation for Performance Excellence, and the College’s Conversation Day. Because of its function as a foundational block in learning enhancement and because of the number of learners it will affect, it is a high priority project. The project will have the additional benefit of offering deeper education of assessment techniques for all faculty and should benefit learning beyond the general education core.

E. List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:
All Full and part-time faculty. Institutional Research Department College Assessment Team Student Success Center Teaching and Learning Excellence Center

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:
• Curriculum Design • Assessment and Teaching Redesign • Instruction • Tutoring • Student Placement

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):
Year 1- determine core standards, rubric, methodology and pilot. This will lay the foundation for the project and allow the project to be tested and retooled before it is fully implemented Year 2-revise and implement campus wide with full-time faculty and selected part-time faculty. Full-time faculty and some part-time faculty will become familiar with the process and can offer suggestions for improvement and act as mentors for year3 Year 3- Revise, Implement campus wide with all full and part-time faculty. The project requires extensive dialoguing and buy-in in order to be successful. The three year time
period allows this to occur and for the changes that will be made to curriculum to be designed and implemented in well-thought out and smooth manner.

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


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:

Core Curriculum Standards are defined and infused into appropriate general education courses. Core standards are regularly measured utilizing a variety of appropriate assessment tools and the results of this assessment is documented. Assessment results are utilized in revising teaching which results in improvements in student learning. Dashboards reflect improvements in student learning in core curriculum standards based upon changes made to curriculum as a result of assessment.

---

Annual Update: 2007-09-13

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

The General Education Core Project committee began meeting in September 2006 to discuss assessment of general education outcomes. The first task the committee tackled was revision of general education learning outcomes that already existed. No learning outcomes were cut from the original list, but some were reworded, and the entire list was reorganized so that six broader areas of general education standards are split into two (and in one instance three) more manageable outcomes. For example, critical thinking is divided up into three outcomes: being able to apply knowledge to solve problems, being able to evaluate information, and being able to draw inferences. The committee then began researching possible means of measuring these outcomes. Meetings were held almost every other week throughout the fall 2006 semester for this purpose. Among the measures discussed were the COMPASS test (which was already in use on campus for placement purposes), employers’ “entrance tests” for some vocational programs, existing assessment in those courses and programs that report general education data, and nationally normed standardized tests. The committee eventually decided that the best choice would be a standardized test, and the Collegiate Learning Assessment test was among those tests the committee investigated. The committee tried the CLA test and agreed that Kaskaskia should adopt the test as its measure of at least four of the six general education standards. The use of the test was proposed through the proper budgeting process, and funding for the test was approved this past summer by the Budget and Planning committee.

Review:

General education learning outcomes were developed through an inclusive process that involved benchmarking with standardized exams and employers. This process involved a review and revision of existing outcomes, to broaden their focus and to ensure their assessibility. Weekly meetings resulted in refining the outcomes. There were also intense discussions about the ways to measure student learning. A decision has been made to implement the Collegiate Learning Assessment test and to use this as a way to measure student learning of general education. In addition and very important, the AQIP project has been budgeted and supported so its importance is understood and communicated.

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

The General Education Core Project committee was composed of two co-chairs, one representing the vocational and career programs and the other representing the baccalaureate departments. The
committee had one adjunct, one staff member, and one other faculty member from the vocational side, and two other faculty members from the baccalaureate side. Committee members were kept informed via a WebCT “course” shell that served as a type of bulletin board for postings and discussion. Meetings were held approximately twice a month during the fall semester and at least once a month during the spring, until the decision about the measurement tool was made. The college at large was kept informed about the committee’s progress via staff and faculty workshops, particularly one at the beginning of the spring semester in which a formal report concerning all the action projects was made to the entire college community. An inter-college website was also constructed during the spring semester as another means of keeping the entire college up to date on the action projects.

Review:
The makeup of the General Education committee was intentionally representative of different college constituencies. It included administrators and faculty from the vocational and baccalaureate sides of the college, as well as part time faculty and staff. Information was shared through reports and websites, and through faculty and staff workshops. Results and discussions were shared not only internally among committee members but externally throughout the college so that there would be engagement of stakeholders and so that a consensus in support of the work could be facilitated.

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

The next immediate step is to administer the standardized test. A stratified sample of one hundred students will need to be developed, and arrangements will need to be made for them to take the test via the Internet. Motivation, such as a gift certificate at the college bookstore, will also need to be arranged for the students. At this point, the project committee is about to meet to discuss the logistics of administering the test. The Office of Planning, Grants and Institutional Research will provide technical support in identifying the stratified sample and in processing and analyzing data as needed for the survey project.

Review:
The next steps mentioned here indicate the immediate work ahead. The immediate work involves administering the CLA and ensuring that a representative sample of students takes the exam. The extensive work involved in the project, as itemized above using the 3-year timeline, suggests additional next steps which may involve reviewing test results, possibly revising general education outcomes, possibly reflecting upon and revising the learning activities in the courses that lead to those outcomes--and other steps that develop in the effort to use assessment results to facilitate and improve student learning. It will be interesting to note patterns in student success rates. Will vocational and baccalaureate students perform equally well? Will students who began in the developmental program reveal assessment results that differ from those who began at college level? Analyzing the patterns and trends visible in the results will likely lead to additional tasks and more next steps. This work is key to the goal of helping students learn and illustrates the institution's commitment to its students.

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

The most effective practice that has resulted from this project so far has been the formation of an effective, diverse committee. Having committee members from both baccalaureate courses and vocational programs, along with an adjunct and a staff member (who worked as a math tutor) enabled us to discover the need for general education assessment that would be all-encompassing in some fashion and not just geared toward our particular areas of expertise. We also learned how general education standards are integrated into a diverse range of courses, and we are a bit daunted in how to measure these standards in ways that will be relevant to students.

Review:
The effective practices include the development of an inclusive working committee and the determined focus on general education in both the baccalaureate and vocational programs. Challenges include the complexity of measuring general education knowledge in a way that is relevant and helpful to students.
However, the focus on student learning and student success puts the organization in a strong position to address those challenges.

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

The main challenge being faced by our committee right now is getting the testing set up and underway. Our project lost both of its sponsors this year (both were deans), and one of the co-chairs has left the college as well. Funding was approved as a new budget initiative for Fiscal Year 2008. A new co-chair is being added, and some new members may need to be recruited so that there’s a better balance of vocational and baccalaureate faculty. In addition, a new position, that of assessment coordinator, has been created and a person has been hired, with a start date in October. Co-chairs for this project will be meeting with their committee soon to arrange for testing and recruiting students.

**Review:**
Additional challenges come from significant leadership and personnel changes. These need to be carefully addressed in order not to derail the work. The loss of a project sponsor can cause projects to go off-track and to lose focus. The committee will need to commit to the project to ensure that it remains on course.

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?

Since this project is making progress according to our timeline, assistance from AQIP is not requested at this time.

**Review:**
This ambitious and important project is moving forward. Continued progress, despite leadership turnover, will be important to success. The results of the CLA will be important to analyze in order to determine if revision or new steps are needed to facilitate student success in general education. The commitment to engaging stakeholders' needs, involving the entire organization, and helping students learn is clear.