
Action Project

Title: Comprehensive Evaluation and Improvement of Assessment Processes
Version: 4

Institution: Midstate College **Status:** Completed
Submitted: 2009-11-24 **Category:** 7-Measuring Effectiveness

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2004-09-20

Target completion date:

Actual completion date:

Project Detail

Project Goal

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

This Action Project seeks to develop a comprehensive review of all significant institutional and academic assessment measurements and processes and identify those measurements and processes that need to be refined or created. The College will develop a new model that offers a vision for an improved state of assessment whereby all vital aspects of the organization are measured through an effective process that completes the cycle of assessment through a well-established mechanism that is continual and consistent. The Action Project includes the creation of a plan to complete the implementation of the newly designed processes throughout the organization.

Reasons For Project

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

Faculty and administrators have worked to develop processes for measuring effectiveness and assessing student learning outcomes, but effective, comprehensive assessment continues to be challenging for the organization. The institution now needs to focus intensely on raising institutional and academic assessment to a higher level of effectiveness that will provide the necessary guideposts along the journey toward continuous quality improvement. The results of the *Examiner* assessment tool were part of the stimulus for this Action Project. Identified as a necessary area for improvement by the Higher Learning Commission's team of consultant/evaluators from the comprehensive evaluation visit of May, 2003, one of the highest priorities of the organization is improving the follow-through so that assessment processes complete the whole cycle of assessment. One of the goals of the *Illinois Commitment* require Illinois colleges and universities to hold students to even higher expectations for learning and to be accountable for the quality of academic programs and the assessment of learning. This Action Project supports the continued improvement of assessment processes and the alignment of institutional initiatives with the State goals.

Organizational Areas Affected

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

The organizational areas most affected by this Action Project include academic program departments, college administration, student services, support staff, student records, institutional research, assessment, strategic planning, and placement.

Key Organizational Process(es)

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

The development and improvement of processes for assessing student achievement and institutional effectiveness is at the core of this Action Project. The processes for assessing student retention, departmental curricula, overall effectiveness of functional departments, and accomplishment of organizational goals will be reviewed and improved. Strategic planning will dramatically improve through the development of an effective system of measurements and reporting that is fed into the strategic planning process continually. Collection, analysis, dissemination, and storage of key institutional data will be greatly improved as the backbone of this Action Project.

Project Time Frame Rationale

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

The Action Project committee is a cross-functional team with members from administration, admissions, faculty, retention, institutional research, student services, academic administration and support services. The organization will stay focused on this Action Project through the regular efforts of the Action Project committee, continued efforts of the assessment committee, strong support from administration, and continued engagement from faculty and staff. Because the whole organization will be affected by the improvement of assessment processes, the committee will work to keep the organization involved in all stages of the Action Project.

Project Success Monitoring

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

This Action Project will track the number of effective assessment processes that complete the cycle of assessment and deliver the desired information through completion of the Action Project. The Action Project committee will identify stakeholders' perceptions of process effectiveness, initially and through process improvement. The level of employee involvement in assessment processes will be evaluated throughout the Project. The committee will also evaluate the extent of faculty's understanding and execution of key processes to effectively assess student learning.

Project Outcome Measures

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 Action Project will incorporate the comparison of assessment data with identified benchmarks in key performance areas, which is not a current practice of the organization. Upon completion of the Action Project, a comprehensive data center will be developed that offers relevant and timely assessment data that is easily accessible and usable. An assessment systems portfolio will provide process maps outlining assessment processes throughout the organization. The Action Project will determine the most significant measurements to track and evaluate in support of organizational effectiveness. The amount of significant and relevant data that is fed into the cycle of assessing student learning in

academic departments will be quantified and analyzed. The degree to which assessment data is fed into planning and decision making processes will be measured.

Annual Update

Project Accomplishments and Status

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

In the final year of this action project, the committee was able to create a follow-up form that is to be completed at the end of each assessment tool cycle. The form gathers information needed for review of the assessment results, actions taken, areas of concern to be addressed, adjustments needed, and goals for the next cycle. This step will complete the "act" portion of the "plan, do, check, and act" assessment cycle, by providing comparative data on an annual basis, and bringing the cycle back to the planning stages. The College hired a Director of Assessment to keep the institutional assessment plan moving forward and to provide the College with the results of the data for evaluation. In the final year, a sub-committee finalized the review form, started the planning process for the pilot program for the academic departmental assessment, and established the purpose and goals of the Information Committee.

Institution Involvement

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

In addition to the hiring of the Director of Assessment, the committee has formed a standing Information Committee. The committee includes all departments of the Institution that are involved in the collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data for the College. A few examples of the Information Committee's goals include: verifying and correcting the data utilized within the College's institutional data system (CampusVue); organizing the College's shared storage drives to ensure that the personnel of the College have access to all data, information, and materials needed; the flow of information from admissions, financial aid, student records, etc. are accurately disseminated in a timely manner, and much more. The committee meets every two to four weeks with specific targeted goals to accomplish between each meeting. The College conducted several all-school in-services to give all employees the opportunity to have input into the Action Project.

Next Steps

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

The action project has provided the College with the plan necessary to maintain and evolve the assessment of the Institution. The follow-up review process will allow the Institution to start providing annual comparative data for each area of the College and to annually review the effectiveness of the tools utilized to measure the data and determine where changes are necessary. The Director of Assessment will be a key factor in keeping the College's assessment project on track. The results of the project will be documented in the next Systems Portfolio update. As this Action Project is finalized a new Action Project will focus on implementing a revised assessment evaluation, reporting and feedback cycle.

Resulting Effective Practices

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

This project was of great benefit to the College. First, assessment functions were identified in each department of the Institution (who, what, where, when, why); then an annual assessment calendar and database of this information was developed; and finally we created the review form to evaluate the results, plan goals, and keep the cycle of assessment in motion. Being able to compare annual data throughout the College to determine areas of strength and areas of concern is extremely helpful. This practice is a key tool in measuring the effectiveness of the Institution. The most effective part of this practice was the implementation of the team approach to create a systematic evaluation of functional areas.

Project Challenges

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

Assessment is a crucial element in the success of the Institution. Hiring a Director of Assessment to facilitate its success will ensure the process is maintained. Although the Director is a key element in the process, the entire faculty and staff will be held accountable for their responsibility for assessment activities. Assessment in itself is a challenge and, although the project itself will be closed, assessment will continue to be at the forefront of the College's strategic planning process.
