

5-2005

AQIP Project Academic Affairs General Education

Faculty Senate

Action Project Worksheet Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI	<i>Challenging</i> _ _ <u>X</u> _ _ <i>Easy</i> <i>Simple</i> _ _ <u>X</u> _ _ <i>Complex</i> <i>High Payoff</i> <u>X</u> _ _ _ _ <i>Low</i>
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Action Project Idea: Create assessment frameworks for the foundation writing course (first-year writing) and for the upper-level writing-intensive course of the new General Education Program. The intent will be for these frameworks to be modified for use in assessing the other foundation courses in the General Education Program (speech and mathematics). The frameworks, initially, will involve collecting data from multiple constituencies (students, faculty, and potential employers) about the writing competencies students need in order to be successful both in their undergraduate studies and eventually in the workplace. The data will be used in conjunction with the outcomes for the first-year writing and writing-intensive courses to develop assessment instruments for measuring the effectiveness of these courses.

AQIP Criterion in which this primarily relates:	Primary	Helping Students Learn
	Related	Measuring Effectiveness
	Related	Planning Continuous Improvement
	Related	

Briefly describe what you would like this Project to accomplish:

Eastern Michigan University has never had systematic means for collecting and assessing data about the success of its General Education Program, either as a whole or in its parts. The new General Education Program is an outcomes-based Program that calls for ongoing assessment and evaluation at all levels. The proposed Project, though initially limited to the writing courses in the Program, will serve as a model for the creation of instruments for assessing the other foundation courses as well as other parts of the General Education Program. [The new Program has five sections: Effective Communication (this includes two of the foundation courses, speech and writing, in addition to the writing-intensive courses); Quantitative Reasoning (this includes the third foundation course, mathematics); Perspectives on a Diverse World (this includes courses in diversity and global perspectives); Knowledge of the Disciplines (this includes courses in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences); and Learning Beyond the Classroom (this includes both curricular and co-curricular experiences that may or may not be part of a class).] The proposed Project will allow us to begin collecting the kinds of data that we need to ensure that the foundation writing course and the writing-intensive courses in the new Program are fulfilling the outcomes set for them. It will also allow us to determine whether the outcomes for these courses are indeed what students need, or whether they should, at some future date, be altered.

Where did the idea or stimulus for this Action Project originate?

The idea that we needed ongoing assessment of the new General Education Program originated in the discussions of the General Education Reform Committee as the Committee carried out its research and then developed the new curriculum. Further, the outcomes-based nature of the new curriculum supports ongoing assessment and evaluation. The University deans recommended that at least a part of this assessment become an Action Project. The specific plan was developed by the Director of First-Year Writing and Interim Co-Directors of the General Education Program.

Which specific needs of your students or other external stakeholders would be better met if you accomplished this Project? How?

First, this Project will enable us to better know just what our students need in regard to writing. This means both what they should bring with them to the university, as well as what they will need in future courses and in the workplace. Second, the assessment we are proposing will enable us to modify the outcomes for these courses to ensure that they meet these needs. Third, this Project will provide us with

ongoing data about both the strengths and weaknesses of our students with regard to writing. This knowledge will make possible effective periodic enhancements in the General Education Program requirements.

Currently, we do have some data regarding the needs and general abilities of students in the area of writing. The proposed Project will provide much more detailed information about student needs and about student learning in response to the General Education writing courses. Further, with data collected from courses the students take after they complete the first-year writing course (all students must complete this and the other required foundational courses for General Education within their first 45 credit hours), we will be able to determine whether the outcomes for this course are adequate and whether students are actually learning what is expressed in the outcomes. Further, data from the first-year writing course can be compared with that from writing-intensive courses to determine how well students have learned and how effectively they can apply the competencies acquired through their the first-year writing course. Finally, these assessments will help us determine and monitor whether what our students are learning in their first-year writing and writing-intensive courses is what they need for future education and employment.

How would doing this Project allow you to better meet your employees needs? Which, specifically?

The Project will help the directors of the General Education Program and of the First-Year Writing and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs to understand the effects and to measure the success of the General Education writing courses. It will also help the instructors who teach these courses. With reliable data on the effectiveness of these courses in achieving their outcomes, instructors can more effectively design assignments and class activities that prepare students for their future course work and employment.

The new General Education Program includes a subcommittee charged with evaluation of the Program. The data produced from this Project will be very useful to them.

How would accomplishing this Project change or affect your institution's culture?

There have been sporadic attempts to assess the current General Education Program; however, since it was not constructed with such assessment in mind, these attempts, for the most part, have not really been successful. This Project would be the first step in regularizing the ongoing collection and evaluation of data in order to make research-driven, ongoing modifications of the General Education Program. This has never before been done at our institution. Further, it would be consistent with other shifts toward ongoing assessment at the institution, and it will assist in establishing a strong foundation for the continual assessment of the new Program.

What leadership and employee enthusiasm and support is there for doing this Project now?

All those working on the implementation of the new General Education Program are very enthusiastic about this Project. Ongoing assessment is a part of the new Program and this Project would be the first step in the implementation of that aspect of the Program.