Action Project

Title: Operationalizing the New General Education Goals
Version: 1

Institution: Illinois Central College  Status: Completed
Submitted: 2011-10-27  Category: 1-Helping Students Learn

Timeline
Planned project kickoff date: 2011-01-10
Target completion date: 2012-01-10
Actual completion date: 2012-11-01

Project Detail

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

This project's goal is to create a common set of definitions for our new general education goals to be used campus-wide for general education assessment purposes. This project will be a faculty-led process via the General Education Committee and the Outcomes Assessment Committee at the College.

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

This project is the next phase in preparing our seven new general education goals (these goals were established during an action project that was just completed) for assessment purposes. The operational definitions will allow faculty to assess the general education goals at the classroom and program level with a common understanding of each goal.

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

Eight academic departments (managing assessment of the general education goals), Curriculum Committee (reviewing updated curriculum), Faculty (assessing goals and adjusting curriculum), Instructional Services (implementing syllabi and program revisions), General Education Committee (managing the operational definitions task forces) and Outcomes Assessment Committee (overseers of the college's assessment plan). A representative sample of faculty from throughout the academic departments along with academic administrators and student services administrators comprise those most affected by this action project.
Key Organizational Process(es)
Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve

The key organizational process to be changed/improved is the faculty-driven assessment process at the college. The common definitions of the new general education goals will help drive assessment throughout the academic units of Illinois Central College.

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

Building community and laying a solid awareness of general education among faculty in a faculty-driven process takes time. Faculty discussions, roundtable discussions, academic department meetings, and committee and subcommittee meetings, all held in the course of an academic year, are driving the sense of community that is needed for operationalizing and implementing the new general education goals at the College. In addition, faculty are reviewing and updating all active syllabi at the College. All active syllabi must have the new general education goals integrated by the first part of April 2012 for implementation in fall 2012.

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

The monitoring process will include feedback from academic sub-committee meetings. This monitoring process will keep the voice of the faculty at the forefront of the project. The voice of faculty will be relayed through the general education committee, which is responsible for owning the project, creating the timeline, and making a recommendation to the Vice president for Academic Affairs (VPAA) regarding the operational definitions of the new general education goals at the College.

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

At the end of the project the faculty will have developed operational definitions for the new general education goals. These operational definitions will then be presented to the general education committee for approval. The overall outcome measure/indicator is acceptance of the operational definitions by the VPAA.

Annual Update

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

The goal of the project was to create a common set of definitions for the 7 revised general education goals. This faculty driven process is nearly complete, with completion scheduled for October 2012. The General Education Committee, a joint committee of faculty, staff, and administration, led the process which spanned the academic year. During the Celebration of Learning, an all-college event scheduled the week before fall 2011 classes

http://www.ncahlc.org/components/com_apdsearch/detailview.php
began, the Provost, during his address to the College, praised faculty and staff on their revision of the general education goals and charged the college community to continue the process by creating operational definitions for each general education goal.

Immediately following the Provost’s address, faculty, staff, and administration were encouraged to participate in a World Café session which allowed participants to begin the brainstorming process for operational definitions. The information from this creative process was collected and transcribed by the Academic Affairs Office, which includes the Provost and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

The General Education Committee reviewed the information from the World Café and created task forces aligned with each goal. Each task force, comprised of faculty, staff, and administration as membership, met to draft a definition of the assigned general education goal. This goal was then presented to the General Education Committee for a recommendation vote.

All tasks forces have completed their work, and the General Education Committee endorsed the operational definitions for 5 of the 7 general education goals. The remaining 2 operational definitions have been revised, per the General Education Committee’s request, and the definitions will be recommended at the October 2012 meeting.

In October of 2012, the 7 operational definitions will be recommended to the Provost for approval. It is important to note that both the Provost and the Vice President for Academic Affairs have encouraged the process and the dialogue which has led to operational definitions. The outcome has been positive, and the General Education Committee expects the Provost to approve the operational definitions. The Provost’s approval will complete the Action Project.

**Institution Involvement**

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

From the beginning to the completion of the AQIP Action Project, the Institution involved multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders included:

1) General Education Committee (faculty, staff, and administrators)

2) Task Forces (led by faculty and administrators who served on the General Education Committee who recruited faculty and staff across departments and disciplines to participate)

3) The Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs for heightening the awareness and importance of the process to define the general education goals at the campus Celebration of Learning in August of 2011

4) The college community by participating the World Café in August of 2011

**Next Steps**

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

The next step for the Action Project is for the General Education Committee to submit the
approved operational definitions for the 7 general education goals to the faculty-led assessment committee who will then follow-up with the assessment process, which will include mapping and aligning general education goals with courses. A team of faculty as well as the Provost and the Vice President for Academic Affairs are attending a Higher Learning Assessment workshop to continue working on this process. This team is currently meeting weekly to make sure the process continues and their work progresses.

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

Campus awareness and buy-in from multiple stakeholders are the effective practices that made this project a success. The lesson learned from this project is that the College is now adding student representatives to committees such as the General Education Committee and the Assessment Committee. Although the College believes multiple stakeholders were represented, the College recognizes that students will provide valuable input to the process and outcome.

Project Challenges
What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project? This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback and advice from our review process. Use this question to specify where your blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems are. If you have already fashioned strategies to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help beyond the review process, explain your need(s) and tell us whom to contact and when.

To date, the biggest challenge with the 7 general education goals is the broad context of some of the goals. Creating operational definitions that envelop three or more goals within one goal statement presents new definition and assessment opportunities. The College acknowledges that faculty are engaged and leading the process though.

Annual Update

Reason for completion
What is the primary reason for closing this project?

The project's primary goal, which was to create a common set of definitions for the seven general education goals, was met. The definitions have been approved by the Provost. The Assessment of Student Learning Committee will provide input assessing and measuring these goals, a step that is outside the scope of this project.

Success Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

The faculty input and sub-committees' input on composing and drafting the definitions allowed the faculty to familiarize themselves with the general education goals and consider how they could help in infusing them into existing and new curricula.

Unsuccessful Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?

The most difficult aspect of the project was keeping the discussions focused on definitions
versus assessments. Committee members realized that these goals have to be assessed; hence, discussions had to be refocused to definitions, and members had to be reminded that assessment is the next phase. The faculty also realized that the general education goals were too narrow versus too broad which led to discussions that questioned if the general education goals needed to be revised. The opportunity from these discussions is that faculty are anxious to continue discussing and revising general education goals.