The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory
Ohio University

Project Details

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<td>Planned Project Kickoff</td>
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1: Project Goal

A: This project will focus on creating guidelines for modification of courses based on the conceptual plan for the new General Education Curriculum. It will provide a set of funding options for departments participating in general education. It will also prepare faculty development programs for faculty who need to develop content, skills, strategies, and resources to successfully implement the new curriculum.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Ohio University’s current general education program was developed and implemented more than 20 years ago. Although it served the University well, there are aspects of the program that have not been functioning as well as we would like. In order to revitalize that program and the entire undergraduate program an effort was initiated three years ago to design a new general education program that better fits the mission of the University. The new program has several features that make it consonant with the University’s goal of having students more actively involved and engaged in their education. We now enter a major phase that involves working out all the curricular approval detail, working with units to articulate the program with their major, providing funding to units to assist in delivering the program, and providing faculty development opportunities to allow them to successfully implement the program. It is expected to take a full two years to be ready to initiate students into the program. Success in implementing this program will play a major role in defining the University as a model learning community. Faculty and staff involvement in the program is high (it passed faculty senate unanimously), and in spite of deep cuts in funding, resources necessary for successful implementation have been identified and earmarked for the next 3 years.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: • Academic affairs • Colleges and departments/schools • Registrars office • Faculty Senate • Center for Innovations in Technology and Learning • Center for Teaching Excellence • Center for Writing Excellence • University College • General Education Council

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: • Meetings with all departments and schools to answer questions and present options for how the department or school can best be involved in the general education curriculum • Curricular approval process at the department, college, and university level • Guidelines for proposals for funding will be developed and distributed • Scheduling process • Faculty development process • Planning and budgeting processes • Admissions and student recruiting

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: • Provide campus-wide forums like the Spotlight on Learning where faculty can come together and exchange ideas • Provide funding for faculty and staff to attend conferences and invite noted speakers linked to engagement, faculty development, and general education to attend campus events • Involve the senior
leadership in frequently reaffirming the institutional commitment to a successful implementation of the new program • Have in place assessment mechanisms that allow for continuous improvement of existing strategies involved in this action project • Recognize and reward exemplary efforts on the part of individuals/groups who contribute to the success of the new program • Provide adequate budgetary and administrative support for faculty

6:  Project Success Monitoring

A:  • Tracking the progress towards the creation of new guidelines, through committee minutes, reports, and active participation of faculty and staff • Tracking the participation in faculty development programs that prepare faculty for revising the curriculum • Tracking the adequacy of resources to accomplish goals in this area • Monitoring the changes in the Student Information System necessary to implement the program

7:  Project Outcome Measures

A:  • The submission and approval of new guidelines for modification of courses • Proportion of faculty who are trained in redesigning courses with the new guidelines • Proportion of courses revised for implementation of the new General Education Program • Meeting of time-lines for implementation by 2004-2005

8:  Other Information

A:  • Guidelines for revision of courses will be developed and approved • 50% of the General Education courses will be revised under the new guidelines • Begin the designing of the assessment of the new curriculum • The remaining 50% of the General Education courses will be revised and approved • Continue designing of the assessment of the new curriculum; initial assessment is implemented to provide a pre-implementation comparison • All materials prepared for the Undergraduate Catalog • Implement the General Education program and General Education assessment plan

Project Update

1:  Project Accomplishments and Status

A:  Implementation of the proposed general education program upon which this action project was initially based proved to be difficult. The Faculty Senate suggested alternatives to the proposed program but faculty consensus could not be achieved so the proposed program was abandoned. Faculty Senate recognized the immediate problems with the current general education program and worked throughout the year to specifically address these concerns. The Senate agreed that the core of the current program was effective and a benefit to students. The Senate decided rather than recreate a curriculum, the Educational Policy and Student Affairs (EPSA) subcommittee would assess the current program, address the immediate problems, and evaluate its future viability. The result of this study was the acceptance of capstone courses to fulfill Tier III (Synthesis) requirements and the restructuring of Tier II (Breadth of Knowledge) requirements. Strategic plan implementation teams discussed development and assessment of common learning outcomes for general education and whether our current program would be capable of achieving these goals. These groups recommended the creation of a team to develop a set of common learning outcomes, methods to assess these outcomes, and a complete analysis of our current program’s ability to achieve the desired outcomes.

2:  Institution Involvement

A:  The Faculty Senate, through the EPSA subcommittee, was involved in the evaluation of the current general education program and creating policy changes to solve the immediate problems identified with the program. The University Curriculum Council (UCC) was responsible for reviewing and approving the capstone courses which may be completed to fulfill the Tier III requirement. Discussions of student learning outcomes and general education reform involved the implementation teams, created to develop action items for implementation of the
During the course of the year the faculty senators and members of the implementation teams were encouraged to communicate and discuss issues related to learning outcomes and general education reform with their department/school constituents. Information related to these issues was discussed publicly during regular Faculty Senate meetings and also posted on the Faculty Senate and strategic plan web sites for the university community as a whole to review and post comment.

**Next Steps**

The institution will focus on developing common learning outcomes for general education and assess the ability of the current curriculum to achieve these goals. It is felt that the current general education program will provide the adequate framework to achieve the outcome goals but it is expected that some changes in the common curriculum will be required. A committee, composed mainly of faculty from different disciplines has been created and will be charged with developing the common learning outcomes for Ohio University students, creating an assessment program for general education and making recommendations for reforms in the current general education program to achieve the outcome goals. This committee is expected to complete its charge by the end of the 2006-07 academic year. The institution plans to refocus this Action Project away from the creation of a new general education program and on the development and assessment of common learning outcomes for Ohio University students and reform of the current general education program to achieve these outcome goals.

**Resulting Effective Practices**

Through the work of several groups on campus related to this action project, the institution has made a serious commitment to reforming the existing general education program to solve the short term curriculum problems but more importantly to focus our attention on what we as an institution want the general education program to accomplish. Development of common learning outcomes for all Ohio University students will in the future dictate, as it should, future reforms in the institution’s general education program.

**Project Challenges**

Obtaining consensus among the faculty on the identity and assessment methods of the common learning outcomes for Ohio University students. Making progress on the necessary general education reform needed to achieve the desired learning outcome goals. Obtaining significant faculty “buy in” for not only the importance of developing the common learning outcomes but the curriculum and pedagogical changes which will be required to achieve these goals. Creating the necessary faculty development opportunities to realize the goals of the general education program. Providing the funding to achieve the needed general education reform.

**AQIP Involvement**

 wanting to achieve the institutional goals.

**Update Review**

**Project Accomplishments and Status**

Ohio University has undergone a thorough series of steps to get to the current stage. Original goals were not met, but the learning that the institution has experienced during the process appears to be significant - demonstrating a principle of high performance organizations. Additionally, OU has persevered through a difficult process and continues its commitment to helping students learn in the currently described plan.
Broad-based faculty, staff, student, and administrative involvement (another principle of high performance organizations) was used to design and implement strategies. Attention was paid to feedback and communication. Diligence on this project exemplifies integrity and responsible institutional citizenship.

3: **Next Steps**

OU has refined the focus of this project to the development of common learning outcomes and will build assessment into the new process. The timeline for this next step seems ambitious in light of the past history of this project, however OU seems to be fully committed to the ultimate goal of helping students learn with the results of this project. In some respects, the project seems to have involved more people through its detours than it may have involved had things gone as initially planned. Perhaps the growth OU will experience because of this project will extend beyond the original goals and include bringing together new collaborations and institutional resources.

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

OU is commended for the focus they have maintained throughout this project. This project demonstrates the patience required to move past obstacles to get to a quality outcome. While some projects target small, more easily accomplished objectives; OU took on a monumental task and is seeing it through.

5: **Project Challenges**

Each of these challenges is a real part of the institutional learning that will accompany this project. Obtaining buy in/consensus among faculty on common learning outcomes is facilitated by spending the time and effort it takes to really hear what is being said and respecting diverse opinions. It is never easy but it's crucial to remain committed to making this happen. Pedagogical changes are sometimes resisted by those who feel most threatened by proposed changes. OU is encouraged to acknowledge these dynamics if they present.

6: **AQIP Involvement**
