
Action Project

Institution: Stark State College of Technology
Submitted: 2007-02-23 **Contact:** Dr. Lada D. Gibson-Shreve
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 02-20-2007

Target completion date: 09-10-2008

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Consistency of Policies in Internal and External Publications, including the Web

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

The purpose of the project is to correct current policy inconsistencies in College publications and to develop a process to ensure that the policies remain consistent in future publications.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Leading and Communicating

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:

The Academic Concerns Committee of our Faculty Association identified the inconsistencies in our publications and the need to have a process to ensure that the publications are consistent. The project would ensure consistency in publication documents in support of communication to internal and external stakeholders. It supports our intellectual climate and our institutional values and expectations. It also supports teaching and learning effectiveness and addresses concerns with legality.

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

All departments and divisions of the College Stark State College students

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

There would be consistency in communication to students and other stakeholders. It would clarify all Stark State College policies. It will communicate our shared mission, vision, values, and high performance expectations of the College. It will improve customer service. It will also assist with systematic communication both internally and externally.

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

The project will require several steps in order to be completed. All documents that contain college policies must be identified. The policies in those documents must be compared in order

to identify inconsistent language or incorrect location in the document. The language approved by the President's Cabinet will need to be identified in order to correct all documents and ensure consistency. If the correct language of a policy cannot be determined, the policy will go to the corresponding standing committee of President's Cabinet. The standing committee will recommend language for the policy to the members of President's Cabinet. The members of President's Cabinet will vote on the language and all publications containing the language will be updated accordingly. The list of publication documents will be maintained and will serve as a checklist. The checklist will be used to ensure that all policies, including language, approved by President's Cabinet are updated and remain consistent.

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

The team will submit monthly reports to our AQIP Liaison, who in turn will report to the AQIP Steering Committee. The AQIP Liaison will also provide updates to the College community via the AQIP webpage, department/division meetings, Academic Leadership Council meetings, Academic Deans Council meeting, Executive Council meetings, and President's Cabinet meetings.

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:

Having consistent policy language in all College publications is one step towards success. We also need to develop a process to ensure that policy language remains consistent in all future College publications. The process will require departments working together as a system to ensure continued success.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

The members of President's Cabinet approve the language for all College policies. Once that language has been approved, it needs to be forwarded to the Director of Marketing and Communications. The Director of Marketing and Communications will update all College documents, including the Web, with the language approved by the President's Cabinet. Developing a list of College documents and a process to ensure they remain current will improve our efficiency in communicating policies to our internal and external stakeholders during a time of continued growth.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2007-09-06

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

The committee met on a monthly basis beginning in February. One of the first tasks of the committee was to identify all documents that contain college policies. Over 150 documents were identified through this process. The next step for the committee was to identify inconsistent language or incorrect location of policies in the documents. The committee broke into subcommittees to begin this task, which will continue this semester. As the subcommittees began

identifying inconsistencies, the committee discovered that guidelines were needed to determine the policies that should go through our President's Cabinet for inclusion in our Policies and Procedures Manual and policies that did not have to follow this process of approval. The Action Project Chair, AQIP Coordinator, and chair of our Academic Standards and Procedures Committee met with our Executive Council to discuss the guidelines. It was decided that in support of our shared governance process, the Action Project Committee would refer the policies in question to one of our Standing Committees. The Standing Committees would bring the policy to President's Cabinet for discussion. The President's Cabinet would then decide if the policy needed to go through the formal approval process for inclusion in our Policies and Procedures Manual. Each of the respective Vice-Presidents was charged with reporting any changes in policy to their divisions and ensuring that documents are updated accordingly. We are also in the process of switching to Luminis as our portal. With the use of Luminis, we will be able to automatically send policy updates to all employees at Stark State College. In addition, the Office of Marketing and Communications can cut and paste the policies from our Policies and Procedures Manual to ensure that they are consistent in the College Catalog, Student Handbook, Web site, etc.

Review (09-10-07):

It is impressive that you were able to identify more than 150 documents and that you have been meeting monthly! Also, that you have been able to adapt and change as you implement this process. For example, in addition to forming subcommittees to identify the inconsistencies, you adjusted your procedure and evaluation process by initially wanting to set up guidelines for determining what policies should go through your president's cabinet and which should not! However, you decided that in order to support your shared governance process, the policies should be referred to one of your standing committees, etc. This shows that you are recognizing and responding to issues that will arise during this Action Project process. It is also noted that you are taking the time and making the effort to produce the best product possible. Also, as you noted, your future use of Luminis should significantly help you.

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

The AQIP Coordinator asked for volunteers for the project. Nine faculty and staff members, as well as one dean, volunteered to serve on the project. A chair was elected from the ten members. The chair scheduled monthly meetings so the committee could stay on task. The chair provided monthly updates to the AQIP Coordinator. The AQIP Coordinator passed the updates on to the AQIP-Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Updates were also provided to the Executive Council, Academic Dean's Council, and President's Cabinet on a monthly basis. In addition to supporting communication, providing updates to the various committees allowed the committee to gain answers to questions that were needed in order to move forward.

Review (09-10-07):

The number of faculty and staff who volunteered for this project is significant and these nine volunteers appear to have been very productive so far during this project. It is especially noteworthy that you provided monthly updates to many stakeholders which allowed for the two way communication (e.g., receiving answers to questions) that was needed to move forward!

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

The committee needs to continue its work to identify inconsistent language or incorrect location of policies in college documents. When inconsistent language is identified in documents, the

correct language needs to be provided to the person responsible for maintaining the document in order for it to be corrected. If the policy has been incorrectly placed in the document, the person responsible for the document will be notified of the need to make the change. Any policy that has not gone through President's Cabinet for approval needs to be referred to the Standing Committee that is responsible for that policy so that it can be brought to the President's Cabinet for approval. If the policy is a college-wide policy, it will need to go to Executive Council.

Review (09-10-07):

This sounds like a good plan. One thing that might become an issue is the need for a specific timeline for completing future steps. For example, would it benefit the committee to have a target date for completing the identification of inconsistent language and/or the incorrect location of policies? Likewise, how long does the person who is contacted about inconsistent language and/or an incorrect location have to correct it? How soon during this process is the president's cabinet involved for approval or disapproval of each correction? How long will the executive council have to address a college-wide policy, etc.? You have done very well so far; and, it might be helpful to set up tentative timelines for completing the different steps...some people (and committees) work better and produce more when they have deadlines.

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

When we began this project, we didn't realize that we had over 150 documents that contained college policies. We quickly realized that we needed to discuss the process to ensure that policies that required formal approval were brought to President's Cabinet. Clarifying this process and making the policies in our documents consistent were steps towards improving our communication with internal and external stakeholders. The process that must be followed is that any policy that is college-wide must be brought to the Executive Council and then to the President's Cabinet. Any policy that relates to the charge of one of our Standing Committees must go to the respective committee and then be brought to President's Cabinet for approval. Having consistent language in all documents also supported our teaching and learning effectiveness and addressed issues of legality. The project demonstrated support for our mission, vision, and values and the high performance expectations of Stark State College.

Review (09-10-07):

Just like you not realizing that you had more than 150 documents to address, many colleges discover things like this as they implement their action projects. This process that you are engaged in is interesting because it will confirm policy and procedure issues that you knew existed; but, you did not know to what extent as well as to what would be required to make the appropriate corrections. Your experiences conducting this project would be an excellent model for other colleges and you should seriously consider presenting this project to other colleges during the upcoming annual Higher Learning Commission Conference during April, 2009 in Chicago. If you wanted to present your project during the April, 2008 conference in Chicago, you will need to submit your proposal by October 1, 2007.

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

All policies not in our Policies and Procedures Manual will need to go to a Standing Committee and then to President's Cabinet for formal approval. We need to communicate the process that must be followed regarding policies to ensure that the process is continued once this project is complete. We also need to monitor the policies to ensure they remain consistent.

Review (09-10-07):

It is indeed noteworthy that you recognize the need to ensure that this process continues once this project is completed; and, to monitor the policies to ensure that they remain consistent. A suggestion would be for you to mandate a review of the policies at a specific time each year and that there be a formal process to notify the necessary people to make the corrections as well as a formal process to monitor that the corrections are completed in a timely manner.

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?

Review (09-10-07):

If you ever need any help or have any questions, please feel free to contact the Higher Learning Commission. 9835