

**EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION ACTION PROJECT TEAM
2008 ANNUAL UPDATE [w/ REVIEWER COMMENTS - 10/15/08]**

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

Describe concrete achievements: meetings, data gathered and analyzed, plans made or implemented, changes in processes, and measured results. If you haven't made much progress, explain why you think things are moving slower than planned.

Since the last annual update, the Team has completed CQI Steps 2-4: Step 2 (Define current situation); Step 3 (Analyze current situation); Step 4 (Develop improvement theory). Based on its accomplishments, the Team has formulated a recommendation to achieve the project's goal. Working with its sponsor, the Team has finalized a presentation for the President and Executive Cabinet, recommending "the creation of a position and office charged with the development, management, and coordination of existing and future applied learning arrangements in all areas of the curriculum." Specifically, the team will recommend:

- The President and/or his designee should be responsible for administration and oversight of the recommended position and the Experiential Learning Office.
- Create and maintain a clearinghouse for standardized management of information related to faculty, staff, student and employer/community stakeholder needs.
- Create and fund a position to develop, manage, and coordinate existing resources and facilitate new opportunities for cooperative education and experiential learning.
- Allocate the appropriate physical space and equipment to support the effective functioning of the Experiential Learning Office.
- Transition the AP Team into a "resource council" who will be empowered to provide ongoing guidance, advice and support to the Experiential Learning Office.

Review (10-15-08):

The college Team is to be commended on the progress of completing the CQI Steps 2-4. The team has clearly outlined their recommendations to achieving the project goal. The recommendations demonstrate the team's commitment to the AQIP Category of Helping Students Learn. The outcome of this project goal is dependent upon the approval of the recommendations.

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

AQIP wants Information about motivation and communication: how you kept this Project on the institution's priority list, how you maintained general awareness of the importance and progress of the Project, and how you kept those working on it directly active and motivated.

As noted in the Team's 2007 AP Update, this project has engaged the college community in a number of ways, including:

- A survey was conducted of all faculty (both part-time and full-time) to describe current experiential activities in all college courses; the survey results were utilized extensively by the Team in its work this year
- Both the credit and non-credit areas of the college continue to be engaged in the investigation and research for the Team's work
- The Team continues to maintain a rich body of web-based resources on its processes, including meeting minutes, agendas, resources from other institutions, etc
- Two cabinet-level sponsors are assigned to this Team, including the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Vice President of Student Services and Administration

In addition, the Team continues to have a membership representative of the diverse stakeholders in experiential learning efforts, including the Director of Workforce Development, the Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, the Employment Services Coordinator, as well as faculty members, program coordinators, and administrative support personnel.

Review (10-15-08):

The institution has done an effective job in engaging people in the Action Project. By including all full and part time faculty in the experiential learning survey, the institution demonstrated its commitment to be inclusive in their investigation of resources. In addition, using a web-based data source to keep the institution informed is very transparent. The committee structure also appears to include a cross section of the representatives from campus that should have the knowledge and community and business connections to assist in identifying potential experiential learning sites. Building upon current partnerships with business and industry and community organizations will expedite the formalization of experiential learning agreements. The collaborative work conducted by the committee and the development of web-based data source aligns well with the AQIP Category (5) Leading and Communicating.

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

Be specific about the next critical steps you are planning to move the Action Project ahead. If your planning is vague or there is no planning at this point, explain why.

The next critical step for the Team is to present its recommendation to the President and Executive Cabinet. A final draft of the presentation has been prepared; the presentation was reviewed by the Team's primary sponsor, the Vice President for Student Services and Administration, who supports the recommendation and will advocate for its adoption in his role as a member of the President's cabinet. The Team plans to meet one additional time to perform a "run through" of the completed presentation. The Team sponsor is currently working to schedule a presentation date in early October of 2008. As with a previous AP Team presentation, the President has indicated a willingness to schedule a presentation date separate from the regular weekly Cabinet meeting. This will allow the Team to make its presentation without competition from other pressing or ongoing matters before the Cabinet. The Team's work will then depend upon an executive decision/response; no specific action steps beyond the presentation are currently planned.

Review (10-15-08):

The Experiential Ed/Co-Op Team has completed the CQI steps and has collaborated across campus to arrive at the recommendations to move the Action Project forward. The college team should be commended on their work and commitment to the AQIP Category (5) Leading and Communicating and (1) Helping Students. Arranging to make the presentation separate from the scheduled Cabinet meeting is an excellent idea in order to have the full attention of the cabinet.

[D]. Describe any “effective practice(s)” that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

Share practices (or processes, policies, procedures, or initiatives) that could be adopted or adapted at other institutions. AQIP is most interested in practices that would give value (better educational services, cost-savings, improved morale, more satisfied stakeholders, etc.) to another institution if they copied your innovation. If you believe that your work on this Project has little or no value for other institutions, explain why.

Two effective practices emerged from the Team’s work during the past year. First, the Team spent considerable care and energy reviewing a previous committee’s work on the subject. In 1995, an ad hoc committee of MCC’s academic governance body, the College Professional Study Committee, recommended the expansion of experiential learning. Due to other organizational priorities, the 1995 committee’s recommendation was not adopted. Despite the age of the previous committee’s work, the current Team found some good information and inspiration in the earlier report. For this reason, the Team recommends leveraging previous efforts to study organizational issues as a way to avoid “reinventing the wheel.”

Second, the Team noticed how closely its Step 4 improvement theory aligned with aspects of MCC’s recently-completed strategic objectives. In its recommendation to the President, the Team explains how their proposed solution impacts specific elements of MCC’s 2007-2012 Strategic Plan. In particular, the action proposed by the Team impacts portions of the plan contained under Student Learning & Success, Systems Improvement, Economic Development, and Institutional Image & Community Relations. In all, the Team identified 8 separate strategic goals from the Strategic Plan that would be furthered by the work of their proposed Experiential Learning Office.

Review (10-15-08):

The college was able to identify two best practices from their current year's work. Using previous studies and research to assist in building the case for expanded experiential learning and not “reinventing the wheel” was a good use of human resources. In addition, by determining how the Action Project recommendations fit into the overall strategic plan of the campus adds value, purpose and demonstrates how experiential learning fits into the larger context of student learning.

[E]. 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.

The primary challenge facing the Experiential Education AP Team is its upcoming presentation to the President and Executive Cabinet. In considering possible implementation, the President and EC will need to determine the staffing and organizational structure of the proposed Experiential Learning Office, neither of which is prescribed by the Team's proposal. In the event the Team's recommendation is adopted, the new Office will face a challenge similar to that of the recently-completed Professional Development AP Team: its next challenge would then be to effectively manage Step 6 (Monitor results) and Step 7 (Adjust, standardize, plan further) of the CQI process. These tasks will likely be transferred from the Team to the yet-to-be-determined leadership of the Office.

As a relatively new AQIP institution, MCC will need to pay close attention to the two final steps of the CQI process, as these steps are often overlooked (this fact is also noted in our report on the Professional Development AP Team). The selection and tracking of progress indicators will be crucial for monitoring the success of the proposed solution. MCC will need to be able to answer questions similar to those raised in the "process" and "results" section of the AQIP Systems Portfolio.

Review (10-15-08):

The challenges facing the Experiential Education AP Team are institutional opportunities if the administration adopts the recommendations. Effectively measuring results and making improvements and revisions as necessary will be critical to the success of the Experiential Learning Office. The current Team should continue to serve as a resource to the leadership as the Action Project continues. As the Experiential Learning Officer begins to develop experiential learning sites for students, it will be imperative for the person to become knowledgeable of the work and prior partnerships conducted by current team.

Review (10-15-08):

The institution is making reasonable progress toward completion of the project and development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture in expanding Experiential Education in the curriculum and providing additional learning experiences for students and aligning well with AQIP category (1) Helping Students.