

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northern Michigan University: Analyze Process

Project Details

Title	Analyze and Update the University-wide Academic Program Review Process	Status	DRAFT
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	
Timeline		Reviewed	
Planned Project Kickoff	10-15-2010	Created	10-06-2010
Target Completion	11-15-2012	Last Modified	10-06-2010

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

- A:** Northern Michigan University will study current processes for academic program review conducted by its academic departments and colleges; review past university-wide procedures; identify and analyze best practices used internally and externally; and develop a cyclic academic program review process that can be applied campus-wide. The baseline process must be systematic and standardized. While accommodating program accreditation requirements and reflecting best practices and standards for academic program review, it must strive to efficiently align curricula and program offerings with student' and employers' needs.

2: 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:

- A:** Goals and priorities in the NMU strategic plan, Road Map to 2015, refer to the need for curricula to be balanced, meet needs, leverage its location, enhance quality, and be efficient. While individual departments do conduct periodic program reviews, NMU does not currently use a university-wide, systematic academic program review process. This project recommences a previously used overall approach and remedies a shortcoming listed in the 2006 Systems Appraisal that NMU lacked formal oversight, review, and coordination of curricula issues above the department. The 2010 Systems Appraisal encouraged NMU to develop more formal systematic processes and a proactive culture rather than reactive.

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

- A:** All academic departments and colleges will be impacted; they have primary responsibility for implementing academic program review and oversight of their programs. The Office of Provost is the primary institutional area, overseeing and supporting all disciplines. The resulting procedures of this Action Project will impact other organizational units in their infrastructure roles of academic support and/or review, e.g. Registrar's Office and curriculum review committees.

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

- A:**
- Continuous improvement of curriculum through regular assessment of learning objectives for courses and programs
 - Maintain economic efficiency by keeping curriculum relevant, innovative and aligned with student and industry needs
 - Accommodate transfer and matriculation students without undue burdens while maintaining program quality standards
 - Smoother operation of curriculum approval procedures for new programs that have been well vetted

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

- A:** In this proposed two-year action project, the first year would analyze best practices for academic program review, newly identified needs in the Road Map, Educational Policy Committee (EPC) recommendations, current NMU college and departmental procedures and prior university level procedures. The outcome of year one would be a draft of a baseline process for review and change of academic programs that will ultimately be applied to all academic departments and a pilot test implementation plan for year two. The second year of the project tests the drafted process with a pilot of selected academic units, after which the process would be refined and ready for campus-wide implementation. The use of a November target month is to adjust a timing issue we have incurred, which forces project solicitation and closing to compete with fall start-up.

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

- A:** The Action Project team will maintain an up-to-date, collaborative website overseen by the Action Project Liaison that reflects their collection of opinions and documents, best practices, pilot plan and feedback, and a mid-project report. Bi-monthly progress presentations will be given to forums within Academic Affairs. Draft and final academic review processes and mid-term and final team reports will be posted on the NMU AQIP website. Four milestones that correlate to the main components are identified to keep the project on track: best practices, baseline review process, pilot execution, review process refinement.

7: 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:

- A:**
- Catalogs of existing academic department and college program review procedures, as well as examples of "best practice" in program review, made available on the NMU website. This systematic sharing provides a campus-wide learning experience.
 - Establishment, adoption, and publication of a baseline process by which all academic departments will be expected to regularly review and revise, as needed, their academic programs.
 - Updates of all relevant procedural pages within the NMU website