

## NMU AQIP Action Project

Title: Professional Development Strategies to Enhance the Student Learning Environment

Category 1: Helping Students Learn

Start Date: 6-30-2014

Target Completion Date: 9-30-2015

Target completion date: September 30, 2015

### **1. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer.**

Faculty join Northern Michigan University with expertise in their academic disciplines. NMU's current one-day orientation program provides only a cursory introduction to teaching and NMU organizational processes without strategically planned supplemental activities. An effective orientation program will more thoroughly address pedagogy, managing relationships with students, diversity awareness, and other important aspects of a university career.

This project will identify specific career development needs of early-career faculty, develop strategies to address those needs, and plan and begin to deliver programs and resources. The project's goal is to ensure that faculty are well prepared to provide students with a high-quality learning environment.

### **2. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now - why the project and goals are high among your current priorities**

A number of events that have taken place fairly recently on NMU campus have led to the development of this Action Project. First, NMU faculty have requested that changes be made to update professional development opportunities, especially for faculty who have been teaching at NMU for fewer than three years. Currently, faculty participate in a one-day orientation program just prior to the beginning of the fall semester. While the program has been beneficial to new faculty, additional resources throughout the academic year have been requested. Second, the January 2014 opening of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provided NMU with opportunities to address additional professional development opportunities for faculty, including support in best practices in teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The CTL also serves as a communications channel for introducing faculty to the resources available at NMU to assist with scholarly participation. As a part of the planning that took place prior to and during the opening of the CTL, the state of professional development opportunities was addressed and opportunities for improvement were identified. The faculty and staff involved in the development of the CTL are interested in exploring ways in which to improve upon professional development opportunities leading to improved student learning. Third, NMU's new outcomes-based general education program has generated a renewed interest in best practices in higher education relating to student assessment. Considering all of these recent developments on NMU campus, the time is appropriate to review professional development strategies for new faculty.

**3. List the organizational areas most affected or involved in this Action Project.**

Areas most affected by this Action Project are the following:

- Center for Teaching and Learning
- Human Resources
- Academic Affairs
- Graduate Education and Research
- Teaching and Learning Advisory Council
- NMU Diversity Committees

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

Processes involving the professional development orientation of early-career faculty (first and second year) will be changed and improved, resulting in new faculty who are better prepared to address the needs of students. This will include incorporating existing activities and resources into formal processes, as well as creating new initiatives to address gaps the project identifies.

**5. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project.**

The duration of this Action Project is estimated to be fifteen (15) months. This schedule will allow the Action Project Committee to identify a new faculty cohort and gather data from the cohort for a full fall-fall academic cycle.

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

A variety of methods will be used to monitor progress. When the project begins, the project committee will establish a timeline that includes milestones such as: completion of needs assessment; identification of resources, activities, and sponsored programs; and implementation of pilot offerings. Adherence to the timeline will be one way to monitor progress.

In addition, the project will survey early-career faculty at various points of the project to determine the following:

- Satisfaction with current professional development
- Perceived professional development needs
- Optimal delivery methods and schedules
- Immediate impressions of pilot offerings
- Longer term satisfaction with pilot offerings

These inputs will build upon each other, so positive feedback from later inputs will confirm progress from earlier inputs. Ultimately, this work will lead to completion of an annual professional development calendar.

**7. Describe the overall “outcome” measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has met its goal.**

The “outcome” of this Action Project is to develop a full academic year professional development calendar offering activities found to be most useful by new faculty. Specific professional development activities to be included in the calendar will be derived directly from best practices in higher education as well as survey data gathered from faculty throughout the Action Project timeline.