

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northern Michigan University: Enhance the infrastructure to support the expansion of distance-delivered education

Project Details	
Title	Enhance the infrastructure to support the expansion of distance-delivered education
Category	1-Helping Students Learn
Timeline	
Planned Project Kickoff	12-15-2012
Target Completion	01-15-2014
Status	ACTIVE
Updated	
Reviewed	
Created	12-07-2012
Last Modified	12-07-2012

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

A: Northern Michigan University (NMU) intends to implement plans for improvement in its distance delivery support infrastructure, quality oversight, assessment and faculty and student preparation. This project also addresses the need to more strategically plan support services for sustainable growth in distance-delivered program.

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: NMU is presently authorized by HLC to offer 5 % of its programs in distance-delivery mode and wishes to expand offerings in undergraduate and graduate programs requiring authorization at the 20% level. In July 2012, NMU initiated a distance delivery self-study using the HLC Change Request Application. That systematic process identified strengths and prioritized short and long term improvements; an Action Project is appropriate to carry on the application and improvement processes.

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

A: Distance-delivered education has a wide impact on an institution; some areas may be represented on the task force and other serve as consultants to the task force. Together, these include:

- Academic Affairs Administration – Office of the Provost, colleges, academic departments
- Faculty teaching in current or potential distance-delivery programs
- Academic Information Services (AIS) – Instructional Design & Technology, Library, HelpDesk
- Information Technology (IT) - central staff for course management system and institutional computing
- Learning Resources Division (LRD) - ITV, video-capture, video conferencing, broadband
- Academic and Career Advisement (ACAC) – includes institutional learning supports and orientation
- Student body / governance
- Marketing and Admissions
- Finance and Administration

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

A: The primary processes and activities are:

- Assessment of learning within distance delivered programs and courses

- Evaluation of course design and the nature of interaction between students and faculty member engaged in distance delivery courses
- Faculty qualifications and training, and assignment of teaching
- Student advising, orientation and learning supports
- Faculty and staff recruitment for distance education programs

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

A: NMU's distance delivery self-study for the drafted HLC Distance Delivery Change Application involved the primary organizational units identified for this Action Project, thus enabling this Action Project to begin implementing items identified as highest priority, develop and refine appropriate processes, run pilots and assess the effectiveness of those implementations.

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

A: Awareness of the HLC Change Application for Distance Delivery and planned improvements already exists within Academic Affairs through presentations and discussion in meetings of the Academic Cabinet, Academic Department Heads, Presidents Council, Executive Management, Educational Policy Committee, Academic Senate Executive Committee, Academic Information Services and Course Technology Alliance.

Further publication will be via the campus employee newsletter, email announcement and NMU AQIP website. Additional discussions will be held in the above venues and via mechanisms designed to directly solicit student and faculty participation and input. Reports and drafts needing feedback will be available on the public NMU AQIP website at <http://www.nmu.edu/aqip>, as well as the secured SHARE intranet.

A representative project task force will meet monthly or bi-weekly and provide interim reports. Progress presentations will be made to the President's Council, Academic Cabinet, Academic Senate, Academic Department Heads and ASNMU (student governance).

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: The outcome measures are:

- Adoption and posting of revised policies and procedures for distance delivered education
 - Inclusion of learning assessment in all courses within distance delivered programs
 - Development of minimum criteria to achieve designation as a distance education qualified faculty member at NMU and implementation of a process to review, on a regular basis, faculty credentials in light of those criteria.
 - Development and adoption of template language specifying minimum qualifications to use when recruiting faculty who will have teaching assignments in distance delivered courses and programs.
 - Implementation of a process to assess the design of courses within distance education programs
 - Implementation of a policy that ensures compliance with new federal regulations on credit hours in alternate delivery formats
- Successful HLC Change Application to the 20% level for distance delivered education by August 2013
- Refinement of existing student services (e.g. advising, orientation, tutoring) to ensure comparable access to students enrolled in distance programs
- Formulation of a planning document identifying resources (e.g., staffing, training, professional development; equipment; software) needed to implement the processes developed for reviewing course design; supporting faculty development and review for distance delivery qualified; and providing student

services to distance enrolled students.