**Mission Statement Action Project Update – September 2009**

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

This project was undertaken to ensure that all units across campus fulfill one of our accreditation goals (Higher Learning Commission Criterion 2, Core Component D): “All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission”. One reason for undertaking this project came from the 2006 NMU Systems Appraisal, which suggested that evidence relating to the above-named accreditation goal needed expansion. The Appraisal indicated that “NMU’s Portfolio did not depict or provide evidence of how all levels of college planning align with or enhance the institution’s current mission statement or the proposed new mission statement.” This Action Project was undertaken both to address this critique, and to ensure that all units were focused on the revised NMU mission statement.

In October of 2008, the Vice Presidents of the two major divisions on campus – Academic Affairs, and Finance and Administration – revised their mission statements to be consistent with the university mission statement. College Deans and Division Directors were then charged with evaluating their mission statements with members of their unit, in consultation with their direct supervisor, to ensure that their unit mission statement was consistent with both the university statement, and their divisional mission statement. After those statements had been revised, the process was repeated at the next level of administration. The work of all units involved multiple consultations and conversations within and between the units, processes that fostered a better appreciation of the overall university mission, and of how each unit could help the university fulfill its mission.

The Final Report for this Action Project is publically posted on the NMU AQIP website (<http://webb.nmu.edu/aqip/SiteSections/ActionProjects/Mission/MissionIntro.shtml>). A review of this report reveals 75 distinct mission statements, from both academic and service units. This posting permits all units within the university to view the university, divisional, and departmental statements, thereby enhancing our understanding of how the work of different divisions across the university relates to that of the other divisions, and to the larger university mission.

This Action Project fulfilled its primary goals, as stated above. We noted when we submitted this Action Project that in the annual Outcomes Assessment Reports that all campus units are required to complete, 73% of academic departments did not achieve departmental and university mission statement congruence. We are optimistic that this congruence will be enhanced upon review of these reports in the current academic year.

A pleasant but unanticipated outcome of this Action Project is that, for the first time, NMU has a single website at which mission statements from all university divisions and departments are located. The document displayed at this website will foster a broad understanding of the similar and interconnected roles of these units within NMU.

***AQIP Review*** *(10-03-09):*

It appears that the university has met its stated objective of “aligning unit mission statements with a revised university mission statement.” It might prove useful in this section to state how many possible “distinct mission statements” are found at the university so one knows that “75 distinct mission statements” represents all possible (if that is the case). However, the Web site does show an absence of a mission statement from one unit (e.g., History/Philosophy Department). Putting everything on the well done, extensive Web site lends to underscoring the university’s commitment to the project. It seems that the project accomplishments in the past year fulfill its project goals.

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

This Action Project involved people from all units across campus. Prior to submission of a revised mission statement to the divisional director, discussions occurred within the units, to first consider the revised university mission statement, and then deliberate the mission of the unit, and how that mission was consistent with the university’s mission. Unit leaders were encouraged to involve as many people as possible in these discussions. The 75 statements that were discussed during this process indicate that people within 75 separate units representing all academic and service divisions across campus were involved in this Action Project.

***AQIP Review*** *(10-03-09):*

The resulting project Web site lists all the committee and committee members working on the project. Apart from the formal committee representatives, it might prove useful to list all the individuals who were a part of the process to show to everyone just how extensive the project was. Redoing 75 mission statements in one year is a significant accomplishment.

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

The Final Report of this Action Project was posted on the NMU AQIP website, as noted above. This posting enables all units to be aware of the mission of the other units across campus. While the defined work of this project has been completed, the continuing work of ensuring that all units continue to focus on their mission, accepting new continuous quality improvement projects that are consistent with that mission while rejecting those that are not, remains ongoing. This project was a necessary step in the continuous improvement of NMU, but the fulfillment of our mission remains an ongoing priority.

***AQIP Review*** *(10-03-09):*

Since the project appears completed, there is no need for “planned next steps” for the AQIP project, per se. However, the university addresses its intention to continue monitoring the project outcomes through the Web site that was developed for the project. And the institution will have the appropriateness of its project outcomes formally assessed again when its accreditation is reviewed at a later date by its accrediting organization.

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

After many discussions between multiple groups across campus, Northern Michigan University recently adopted a strategic plan – the Road Map to 2015 (see: <http://www.nmu.edu/roadmap2015/>). All units across campus are asked to consider how they have addressed the goals stated in the Road Map; indeed, we have a “Road Map Update” at each meeting of our Board of Trustees. The practice that units were asked to undertake to update their mission statement has facilitated our Road Map considerations, by focusing units not only on their activities, but also on how those activities fit within the larger university strategic plan. These synergistic activities have permitted NMU to devise planning processes that will be particularly useful in our immediate future, as we face the reality of Michigan state budgetary constraints and the prospect of declining student enrollment, based on regional and state demographic projections. Our practice of deliberating the role of the unit within the university, developed during the course of this Action Project, should prove useful as we discuss how to realize the goals articulated in our university strategic plan.

***AQIP Review*** *(10-03-09):*

It is gratifying to learn that NMU used its AQIP project to improve its “practice of deliberating the role of the unit within the university.” Seeing how each unit fits within and contributes to the entire organization can lead to a more comprehensive view and understanding from top to bottom. The processes and policies used in the project should serve NMP well as it moves in other directions and initiates new endeavors.

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

This Action Project will help NMU fulfill its mission at all levels across campus. However, while the project per se was very successful, a challenge that remains is to ensure that the unit activities reflect the mission statement that the unit designed. Those activities are monitored in the annual Outcomes Assessment Reports and Plans that units provide to the Office of the Provost for Academic Affairs, and hence this challenge – to make sure that unit activities reflect their mission statement – will be monitored when annual Outcomes Assessment Reports are submitted.

***Review*** *(10-03-09):*

It is good to learn that NMU is not going to merely accept the 75 mission statements and move on. Monitoring each unit and its commitment to its stated mission statement will take time and resources. However, as the adage goes, “That which gets measured, gets done.” NMU seems to understand that adage by annually reviewing each mission statement.

**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.**

This Action Project has achieved its stated goal. At the time of this report, 38 of the 38 service units, and 37 of the 38 academic departments, have completed this process. All units begin their annual Outcomes Assessment Report with a statement of the university mission and their departmental mission, indicating how the two are congruent. Since each Outcomes Assessment Report is reviewed by one of two standing review committees (either service-oriented or academically-oriented), if units change their mission statements in the near future, university/unit congruence will be assessed by these external committees at that time. Hence, we do not need AQIP assistance to stimulate progress on this project.

***AQIP Review*** *(10-03-09):*

Stating “At the time of this report, 38 of the 38 service units, and 37 of the 38 academic departments, have completed this process” is impressive. It should also be included in part A to show specific achievement of the project goal. Developing an internal checks and balances system to monitor each unit’s ongoing commitment to it stated mission statement is a testament to NMU’s commitment to the AQIP project goals.