



NMU Action Project Declaration

Title: Evaluating the Success of our Graduates from our Students' Perspectives

Systems Portfolio Category: 1: Helping Students Learn

Planned Project Launch Date: May 1, 2017

Target Completion Date: July 1, 2018

Sponsor: Dr. Judy Puncochar, Professor, School of Education, Leadership and Public Service

1. Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

NMU measures graduates' success by monitoring indicators such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in other programs after graduation. A review of these practices indicated a need to investigate more efficient and consistent processes to measure graduate success. In addition, NMU is interested in expanding upon current indicators to include students' perspectives on specific competencies gained within their academic program(s). Data from alumni are expected to provide information for improvements to program learning outcomes and department / program mission statements. In addition, data are expected to facilitate programing for increased alumni engagement and giving.

2. Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this Action Project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted portfolio.

One of the recommendations from Career Services' recent review of alumni surveys indicated a need to develop more consistent and efficient processes for gathering data. In addition, the Assessment of Learning Committee has identified a gap in information necessary to improve academic programs;

specifically, students' perceptions of knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from their academic programs that have contributed to their outcomes in seeking employment in their field or related fields and placement in graduate and/or other programs. Student opinions, captured in a university-wide survey and focus groups, will provide additional evidence of the degree to which academic program objectives are meeting the needs of our students upon graduation. This process also will provide students with the opportunity to reflect upon their learning experiences and indicate an overall level of satisfaction with their individual program(s) of study.

Results from NMU's Systems Appraisal (2014) and recommendations from our recent Comprehensive Quality Review (2017) support making improvements to data analysis procedures and use of data to set targets throughout campus. This action project is expected to address these concerns.

This project is scheduled to take 14 months to complete. Upon final completion, results will be disseminated to contribute to the community of professional practice.

3. List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed.

May-July 2017: Develop an outline of current university-wide student survey practices for upcoming graduates and alumni.

- Committee members (primarily staff and Assessment of Learning Committee members) will meet to discuss current graduate and alumni survey practices.
- Survey practices will be documented; opportunities for combining resources and documentation of strengths and weaknesses in current practices will be reviewed.
- Survey practices at peer institutions will be considered.
- A report outlining the committee's initial findings will be completed and presented to NMU's Provost, Deans, and Academic Department Heads.

August-October 2017: Conduct focus group sessions with students, faculty, staff, and alumni; complete Institutional Review Board requirements.

- At this stage of the action project, faculty and students will return to campus and will participate in committee activities.
- Focus groups will be held to gather data from students who are expected to graduate in December 2017 and May 2018; focus groups will also be held to gather information from staff, faculty, and alumni.
- The Action Project Committee will develop a report of their findings and present it to NMU Provost, Deans, and Academic Department Heads.
- The project sponsor will complete the IRB application.

November 2017-February 2018: **Complete a draft version of the survey based upon focus group data.**

- At this stage of the action project, the Assessment of Learning Committee members are reviewing the academic programs' proposed learning outcomes, means to measure students' perspectives on specific competencies learned within their program(s) of study, and assessment connections to department and program mission statements.
- The Action Project Committee will have a final version of the student survey ready to administer to NMU graduates in June 2018.

March-May 2018 **Complete final version of the survey and administer to Winter 2018 graduates.**

June-July 2018 **Analyze data and provide results to NMU stakeholders (Assessment of Learning Committee, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, Marketing and Communications, Admissions, Institutional Research, faculty and staff assessment committees, leadership team, Associated Students Northern Michigan University, and NMU Board of Trustees).**

- Data will serve as a baseline to establish opportunities to support successful processes and make improvements where necessary. Details outlining how data were used in the improvement process will be presented in a report to follow survey distribution.
- A regular survey schedule will be established with reporting and dissemination procedures in place.

4. Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

Student opinion data are of interest to several stakeholders on campus; therefore, participation will be broad. Individuals who will be key to this project include the following individuals:

Coordinator, Assessment of Learning Committee: Sponsor and project lead. Responsibilities will include collaborating with Assessment of Learning submitters and providing student response data to make improvements to academic programs.

Assessment of Learning Committee members: Assist in survey design and serve as liaisons between Assessment of Learning Committee and academic program assessment submitters.

Executive Director, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving: Serve as a resource to adapt the survey to meet the strategic goals of Alumni Relations.

Student representative: Participate in survey design and survey administration.

Assistant Vice President of University Marketing and Communications: Provide recommendations regarding survey administration opportunities.

Academic Deans and Department Heads: Provide insight into survey design; specifically, what type of information would be most valuable in program improvement efforts.

Assistant Vice President of Information Services: Provide support for survey administration.

Director of Institutional Accreditation and Assessment: Provide support for survey design; coordinate with Assessment of Learning Committee and other department representatives serving on the Action Project Committee.

Director of Institutional Research and Analysis: Provide support in survey design and administration.

5. Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

Progress during the project will be monitored by completing the following benchmark activities on time:

- Complete a document that outlines NMU's survey practices regarding soon-to-be graduates and alumni; include areas of strength and opportunities (July 2017)
- Complete focus group sessions (October 2017).
- Complete a draft version of the survey (February 2018).
- Administer survey to Winter 2018 graduates (May –June 2018).
- Collect and analyze data; create benchmarks for future surveys (July 2018).
- Complete a final report outlining results and establishing a regular schedule for administering and disseminating future surveys (July 2018).

In addition, the project will be considered successful if data gathered result in information considered of value to stakeholders. This will be determined by providing a report outlining the opportunities for improvement which take place as a result of the survey.

6. Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

Completing the project on time will involve a commitment from several key individuals on campus at a time when resources are limited.