Innovative Practice OnGoing Improvement #2

Title & Category

The OnGoing Improvement (OGI) model is effective for action projects and student assessment. (AQIP Categories VII & VIII)

1. What does this Innovative Practice do and how does it work?

The OGI model, which involves internal and external stakeholders, is embedded in decision making systems and guides initiatives. It is effective in generating new action projects and managing the university learning outcomes assessment system. It provides a process for disseminating strategic initiatives and action plans that includes a feedback loop through analysis. The process enables faculty, staff, and administrators to select relevant data and manage the information for student learning; overall institutional objective strategies; and improvement efforts for student assessment, teaching effectiveness, faculty evaluations, annual reports, and program reviews. Results are analyzed and used in the OGI phase of Ongoing Evaluation.

2. What motivated you to develop or adopt this Innovative Practice?

We wanted a systems approach to decision making that would enable stakeholders to have ownership and involvement in determining, monitoring, and assessing strategic initiatives, including our primary mission of helping students learn. We also learned through community meetings and surveys that there was not a clear and articulated process for determining priorities and analyzing improvements.

3. How long did it take you to develop and implement this Innovative Practice?

After a year of development, implementation of the OGI model began in 2002 with annual reviews and goal setting. In 2004 we established it as the driving model for the university learning outcomes assessment system. In 2005, we applied the model to the development of AQIP action plan initiatives and strategic planning.

4. What did it cost you to develop and implement this Innovative Practice?

Cost for development and initial implementation was primarily in employee time, including administrators' identification of procedures for implementation and faculty/staff training for integration of OGI within annual reviews. These activities occurred within regularly scheduled meetings and inservice days.

5. What resistance did you face in developing and implementing this Innovative Practice, and how did you reduce or overcome it?

Resistance was expressed in terms of perceived increase in time and workload as well as in concern about using stakeholder input. Resistance continues to be reduced as the faculty and staff recognize that the OGI model promotes and streamlines their efforts to assess student learning and report progress on initiatives. Resistance is also reduced as stakeholders see the results of their input in action plan priorities.

6. What does it cost you to maintain and operate this Innovative Practice, and

what does it save you?

The cost to implement the OGI model in decision making is for data management. Web-based survey software s $350 per year. Building a database for university learning outcome ratings required 4 weeks of staff time and annual maintenance and report generation is approximately 24 hours per year. Report writing for other initiatives is a part of the responsibilities for an existing staff person.

7. How do you measure or check whether this Innovative Practice performs the way you intend it to?

The metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of the OGI model for decision making focus primarily on 1. the use of accurate and representative information to set and assess initiatives; and 2. stakeholder communication about priorities and results. The Jenzabar EX system has opened communications, defined the decision-making processes, and has enabled USM to systematize data reporting, identify indicators for institutional effectiveness, and revise report tools. Currently procedures have been established in three primary areas: learning outcomes assessment, fiscal stability, and distance learning. The development of procedures for decision making derived from these efforts are evidenced in the selection and implementation of AQIP action projects based on the discussions of the institution as a whole, concerning the recommendations of its own subcommittees.

8. What print or web documents are available to provide more detail and explanation about this Innovative Practice?

The OGI model and how it is embedded in decision making are described in the AQIP Systems Portfolio, Category VII Measuring Effectiveness and Category VIII Continuous Improvement at http://www.stmary.edu/aqip/ The AQIP Systems Appraisal Feedback highlighted this model as an innovative practice. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) also acknowledged the quality of this innovative practice in its 2007 Award to the university. The system for improving student learning outcomes is based on the OGI model and won recognition in this award.

9. How does your organization currently use this Innovative Practice?

The University of Saint Mary (USM) in Leavenworth, KS is a small, private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The monthly meetings of faculty and staff allow for regular communication about initiatives and ongoing improvement. The features of the OGI model guide the work of committees in determining goals, implementation strategies, assessment of outcomes, and recommendations for improvement. The assessment, strategic planning, and AQIP committees have embedded the model in its work and decision making. Database information is collected and analyzed; the findings frame the goals and objectives of initiatives. The cyclical process of the OGI model requires that information is regularly and systematically collected so that results can be assessed. These results then lead to ongoing improvement efforts, starting the cycle anew.

10. Whom at your organization should people should contact for more information or help about this Innovative Practice?

Sr. Diane Steele, President, University of Saint Mary, Leavenworth, KS, 913-682-5151, steeled@stmary.edu