

Action Project One: Balancing Workloads among Faculty
Annual Report to AQIP

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

1. In the fall of 2006, several members of the team wrote and submitted a proposal to present the Workload project at the AQIP Colloquium of the Higher Learning Commission convention in April. The proposal was accepted, necessitating further work on the actual *PowerPoint* presentation during the spring of 2007.
2. During the fall the team further refined the instrument to be used in the coming pilot project.
3. On January 25, 2007, Glenn Davidson, a consultant from HLC, spent an evening and a day with the team, giving them valuable insights for proceeding.
3. On February 13 the team conducted a pilot involving 25 faculty with every department represented, most by two members. At a dinner, the plan was explained in some detail before members completed forms computing their workload points for both the fall and spring semesters. Statistics from the computations revealed significantly unbalanced workloads. Of the semesters evaluated, points per semester ranged from 483 to 971. The results also showed 18 semesters in the "light" category, 14 in the "average" category, 12 in the "heavy" category, and 1 (from a new teacher with all new preparations) in the "intensive" category. In percentages, those presentation figures indicate that 71.1% of the reported 45 semesters were of "light" or "average" weight; 28.8% were of "heavy" or "intensive" weight. Of the 19 faculty participants who analyzed both semesters, 5 had a "light" year-load, 8 had an "average" year-load, 6 had a "heavy" year-load, and none had an "intensive" year-load. Of those 19, **68% had "light" or "average" year-loads and approximately 32% had "heavy" or "intensive" loads.**
4. In subsequent meetings several weeks later, the results were presented to small groups of participants, who engaged in an open-forum discussion, giving the Team many suggestions for improving the instrument. Those faculty who were unable to attend either meeting met with the Team chair for an in-depth explanation of the outcomes and gathering of more suggestions.
5. Each participant then completed a survey, the results of which revealed a positive attitude in all but one participant toward conducting a pilot with the entire faculty over the next school year. More suggestions were collected to be used in final refinement of the workload measurement instrument.
6. The Team chair conducted meetings in April so that all department chairs could learn details of the plan in small-group settings. Chairs asked questions and made further suggestions for improvement of the plan. These crucial meetings also indicated general support for trying the plan in the following year.

7. At the 2007 fall faculty seminar (August 23-24), the full faculty saw the plan by means of the *PowerPoint* presentation that had been delivered at the HLC meeting in Chicago.

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

1. The chair met with the academic dean on several occasions and was assured more than once that the university's president has no objections to the overall plan.
2. One status report was presented at a faculty meeting in spring of 2007, and the full plan was presented to all faculty in the fall seminar beginning the 2007 year.
3. Faculty representatives from each department learned details of the plan and were involved in a pilot using the workload measuring instrument (as described above).
4. Department heads were presented the plan details and invited to give feedback (as described above).
5. An outside consultant was hired to evaluate the progress and advise on procedure (as described above).

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

1. The Team will meet to decide which members may be interested in continuing to steer the pilot through the coming year and to bring the plan to a final vote on making it permanent policy. Since the charter for the Team has expired, perhaps a new charter is necessary.
2. In the September faculty meeting, the Team will present details of the plan and expectations for all faculty to fill out workload computation forms for both semesters this year. In addition to faculty with standard appointments, all faculty with reassigned time must keep a close account of hours spent for at least one semester, and perhaps for the year for some positions, so that workload points can be assigned to all such jobs as replacement for the current credit-hour compensation.
3. When the fall reports come in, the Team will tabulate the results and meet with department chairs for feedback and for discussion of ways to use the results humanely within each department toward the ultimate end of improving student learning. After results are tabulated, adjustments to the instrument will be made in readiness for the spring trial run.
4. In January 2008, all faculty will calculate their spring-semester workloads using information from their syllabi. After the spring tabulations, in consultation with the academic dean, the Team will ask that an acceptable method be devised for polling the faculty as to whether they want to switch from the credit-hour system to that of the new

workload-point plan. (If the plan is adopted, calculations will always be made at the END of each semester; however, in order to be ready for a possible change in contract language, this year's calculations will be done in January 2008.)

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

As of now, no practices have changed. Any effective practices resulting from the project will come as faculty use the workload point system to evaluate their own classroom methods and, perhaps, begin to work together on common syllabi for general education courses taught by multiple faculty.

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

1. We anticipate that some faculty will not willingly participate in the full pilot project. (We base this opinion on the fact that only 40% participated in the spring 2006 pilot, which necessitated keeping track of hours actually worked for two weeks.) It will be necessary that the administration require 100% participation, but the Team is still awaiting full assurance of that requirement.

2. We thought our project would be finished after two years; however, seeing it to the finished stage will require one more full year of work. Our Team has already spent a great deal of time, and it is possible that some members will want or need to bow out, leaving only a few to complete a rather large and complicated task.

3. Presenting the plan in a logical, clear way so that all faculty understand what is required and answering all questions may take more than the 40 minutes available at one faculty meeting. Thus, the Team may need to schedule individual meetings with departments to clarify and answer questions.

4 Some faculty members “have their own issues” regarding workload, and though some of those can be and have been addressed, probably not all can be. It may be hard to convince some professors that their “pet ideas” cannot or should not be included in the new plan. Furthermore, some teachers who see even one flaw in the overall plan may reject the entire procedure. Finally, faculty who continuously enjoy a “light” load and realize that fact may not favor a plan that will require more effort in order to achieve an “average” load over a two-year period.

5. Some system for monitoring the plan—if it becomes policy—will need to be put in place. Possibly a new Team should be chartered for that task. Without steady oversight and leadership, “entropy” will occur: the plan will gradually become flawed and ineffective.

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 whom to contact.

The Team asks that AQIP keep an “eye” on this plan, especially during the decision-making process next spring (or summer) so that it does not, for some reason, get placed on the proverbial “shelf.” The Team has already spent an inordinate amount of time getting to this stage and will use many more hours before the pilot is finished. It seems reasonable that if a clear majority (perhaps 60%? 70%?) of the faculty vote to accept the plan, those who disagree should not be allowed to divert or stop its implementation, even if they are department heads. This new plan requires strong department chair involvement and support in seeing that each professor is accountable and that records are constantly accessible to the department faculty. This Action Team has no authority to implement accountability measures or reinvigorate the project, should it falter, once our task is finished. The morale of the Team members would be lower than low (thus setting a thoroughly bad example likely to inhibit other faculty from participating willingly in further AQIP projects) if a few professors could derail what many have already enthusiastically endorsed—both verbally and on paper. Our pilot indicates enthusiasm and our dean has given strong support. However, unforeseen forces can always thwart even the best of proposals. AQIP officials can help us by keeping our procedures in focus.