

7 Assessment of Spiritual Development of Students

Annual Update Review: 2009-08-28

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

The Team has been acquiring data during this first stage of the project. A website has been set up for team members to post information and to express opinions on the data that has been gathered. There have been three face to face meetings of the group and opportunities for discussion on the website. The team has identified a number of verifiable practices by the University for providing opportunities for spiritual growth for our students, such as; mandatory chapel, spiritual emphasis weeks, service learning opportunities and theology classes. While moving somewhat more slowly than expected, the main accomplishment has been in refining the process and developing a method for assessing student spiritual growth. Currently the main progress is in choosing an essay option for the assessment tool which will be given to students in their Freshman year and their Senior year theology classes.

Review (10-07-09):

The institution is making good progress toward the goal of assessing the currency and results of fostering spiritual development among students. Although the goal is complex in that measures of an abstract concept are difficult to quantify, the institution has appropriately identified verifiable practices that provide an opportunity to foster spiritual development (AQIP Focus Principle). The project team has identified a measurement mechanism for assessment that will be administered appropriately during different stages of a student's tenure (AQIP Category (2) Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives and Category (7) Measuring Effectiveness).

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

The institution created an action team that is composed of the current spiritual life committee and members who represent academic and staff areas of the University so that there are multiple voices to provide input for the project. Information has been provided by a number of sources including members from the Board of Administration of the University. The aforementioned web site has provided an avenue for communication as well as the University's e-mail system.

Review (10-07-09):

The institution has integrated collaboration and relationship building (AQIP Category (9) Building Collaborative Relationships) as well as some involvement (AQIP Involvement Principle) in the project plan by including the spiritual life committee and members from academic and staff areas of the University. It is not clear if the spiritual life committee includes representation from areas identified as those groups having expectations of spiritual life at Evangel, i.e., students, parents, alumni, and pastors. Including these individuals in the project team planning process may ensure broad base involvement as well as a diverse array of interests (AQIP Involvement, Collaboration, and People Principles, and AQIP Categories (3) Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs and (4) Valuing People).

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

During this coming year we are reviewing some of the information gathered from other institutions to assist in developing the proper tool for assessing the spiritual development of our students. It would appear from the research gathered to this point that none of the tools currently in use are completely satisfactory for assessment purposes. While continuing to develop the

essay question for use in the assessment model, the team is also striving to answer a more complex question regarding whether it is possible to objectively assess the spiritual growth of students.

Review (10-07-09):

The institution has identified appropriate next steps for the project. The project team has engaged in benchmarking strategies and methods with other institutions and has determined that an effective tool does not currently exist for measuring the affective spiritual development of students (AQIP Information and Learning Principles) The plan to continue to develop an appropriate assessment and evaluation tool demonstrates a commitment to the AQIP Principle of Focus and AQIP Category (6) Supporting Organizational Operations.

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

The goal is to develop a plan and/or instrument to objectively assess spiritual development of students during their time at Evangel University. With the number of religious institutions of higher learning that have a stated mission of providing students with an opportunity for spiritual growth, the creation of an instrument to measure spiritual growth will be helpful to that broader community.

Review (10-07-09):

The institution has identified a potential effective practice integrated into this evolving project. The project team has noted that developing an instrument to objectively assess the spiritual development of students may provide other religious institutions with similar missions the means with which to effectively measure and evaluate programs and services designed to develop student spirituality (AQIP Category (7) Measuring Effectiveness and AQIP Foresight Principle). Overall, this project has implemented many AQIP category process applications and AQIP principles.

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

The unique nature of this project provides some challenges to implementation. The first challenge is in regard to the development of an objective assessment for a subjective process. The team is working to develop the proper assessment methodology to provide an accurate measure of spiritual development within a subjective framework.

Review (10-07-09):

The institution has identified the development of an objective assessment for a subjective process as the challenge in the project plan. There are possible approaches for such a challenge, and it might be helpful for the project team to seek out resources that specifically address how to create objective assessments for measuring affective development. The AQIP website has a number of resources that might provide some helpful strategies such as the Innovations Exchange at <http://www.aqip.org/InnovationExchange/> and the AQIP Quality Systems Thinking Bibliography found at http://www.aqip.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=96&Itemid=128.

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?

Review (10-07-09):

The institution did not request assistance from AQIP at this time. Should the institution find the need for further assistance, they are encouraged to contact AQIP.