

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Action Project:

Investment in and Improvement of Teaching and Learning Spaces

September, 2007

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

Based on the work of a Teaching and Learning Spaces Task Force, criteria for evaluating the overall quality of classrooms were determined. These criteria were based on technology, furniture, and aesthetics. Forty-eight classrooms were assessed and 21% met the "best practices" standard established by the Teaching and Learning Spaces Task Force (all new classrooms must now meet this standard). In order to increase the percentage of classrooms achieving this level of quality a one-time investment was made to update 16 existing classrooms. In addition, money was budgeted to maintain this level of quality. This raised the percentage of classrooms meeting the "best practices" standard to 54%. This percentage increases to 63% if we include the new classrooms in two newly constructed buildings on campus.

Another important accomplishment was the creation of a Teaching and Learning Spaces Liaison in the IT department. This person has the authority to insure excellent classroom conditions, scheduling, and support.

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

A group of faculty and staff (representing Student Affairs, Information Technology, Facilities Management, Library, Academic Advising, the Registrar's Office, and Event and Classroom Services) was convened by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to explore current literature, thinking and research in space planning in higher education. The group approached space planning as an aspect of the academic planning of the institution. The 16 Classrooms proposal was first presented to the President's cabinet where it was supported and funding was approved (A one time investment of \$300,000 and \$100,000 annually for replacement cycle funding). In March, 2007 the specifics of the project were presented to the faculty.

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

The next steps for this action project are: Improve other formal teaching spaces including lab, studio and performance spaces as well as other general purpose classroom spaces (not included in the 16 classroom project); Improve informal

learning spaces (spaces around academic areas, student lounges in resident halls. This was designed to be a one year action project and we feel that we have the appropriate structure, budget, and administrative support to retire this action project as planned.

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

A rubric for assessing the quality of classrooms was developed that was helpful in determining which classrooms needed the most attention and which ones should be taken off-line. It resolved for general purpose classrooms both a one-time investment to 'catch up' on deferred maintenance of classrooms and also replacement cycle funding for ongoing maintenance and improvement. This project also addressed difficult organizational issues and proposed changes to how classrooms are supported with the creation of a new position and the reorganization of the IT department to fully support classroom needs.

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

This action project not only has made a significant impact on teaching and learning spaces, it has also raised the dialogue campus-wide on how space affects student learning. The challenge ahead is to keep improving other spaces with the understanding that all campus spaces have the potential to be great learning environments.