AQIP Action Project: Study Abroad

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

The Action Plan:
The Study Abroad Workgroup was given the charge to plan and implement two distinct but related projects as first steps in the direction of establishing study abroad opportunities at Metropolitan State University. First, the workgroup was to design and administer a survey on student interests. Second, the workgroup was to develop a basic information website on study abroad opportunities offered through MnSCU and other institutions outside of Metropolitan State University. Both these projects are now complete.

Study Abroad Website:
A one page study abroad website (http://www.metrostate.edu/ccbl/global.html) with links to programs offered through MnSCU institutions, University of Minnesota, selected private colleges and other volunteer organizations can now be accessed by students. The website will be maintained and updated by the Center for Community-Based learning (CCBL).

The Student Interest Survey:
This unscientific survey was designed to address the basic issues impacting study abroad including but not limited to interest in study abroad, availability, cost, preference and importance of study abroad. Twenty five instructors teaching on campus and online courses during the summer term were selected, and 500 surveys were sent and 288 (58%) completed surveys were returned. The results of the survey were as follows:

| Study Abroad at Metropolitan State University Survey of Student Interests |
|---------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|--------|
| N= 288                                      |     |     |           |        |
| 1. Have you ever studied abroad?            | 36  | 251 | 1         |        |
| 2. Are you interested in studying abroad?   | 161 | 121 | 1         | 5      |
| 3. Do you prefer short-term (1 week to 1 month) Study Abroad Programs? | 118 | 69  | 99        | 1      |
| 4. Do you prefer long-term (1 semester to 1 year) Study Abroad Programs? | 84  | 104 | 99        | 1      |
| 5. Is cost a factor in considering study of  | 170 | 28  | 90        |        |
Do you think study abroad is critical to your education? | 97 | 93 | 7 | 91
---|---|---|---|---
Do you plan to engage in study abroad whether or not Metropolitan State University offers it? | 66 | 113 | 10 | 99

A significant number (251) of our students in the survey do not have a study abroad experience, and a good majority (161) would like to add study abroad to their academic portfolio. This, we believe, provides the needed evidence to conduct a more thorough and scientific survey to make sure the university has an accurate picture of student interests.

The survey also reveals that students respond better to short-term (118) study abroad opportunities as oppose to long term (84), and for many of them (170) cost and other life circumstances including work, family obligations as factors in making decision about study abroad.

Students are equally divided over the importance of study abroad. Even though a slight majority (97) responded positively, it is important to note that 93 students said no and 91 students did not respond. Also, the majority of the respondents (113) are not eager to pursue study abroad without our institutional input.

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

This Action Project was the work of a Study Abroad Workgroup adequately representing both student and academic affairs and chaired by a dean of one of the colleges. It also involved 25 faculty members in administering the student interest survey and 288 students who responded. Further, members of the Center for Community-Based Learning and Instructional Technology provided input on the development of the Study Abroad Website.

The selection of Study Abroad as one of the actions projects this year is an indication that the project is a priority for the university.

The outcome of the project will be communicated back to various constituents including but not limited to the Study Abroad Workgroup, Academic Deans and Directors Council and Advising Council.

3. Be specific about the next critical steps you are planning to move the Action Project ahead. If your planning is vague or there is no planning at this point, explain why.
One outcome of the project which might improve our practice is the active use of our website as a vehicle in providing appropriate information to students. The website will connect students to Study Abroad opportunities within the MnSCU system, university of Minnesota, and other private colleges and universities while we continue to study the feasibility of having study abroad programs at Metropolitan State University. In addition, the website will link students to many of high quality short-term global experiences which will lend themselves to internships, student-designed independent studies and prior learning assessment.

Also, the outcome of the survey suggests additional and more complete study is needed. This coming year, it will serve the process well if we engage in making an effort to involve institutional research to administer a more scientific study on Study Abroad.

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

Designing and administering a more scientific survey is the most immediate challenge.

5. The optional question: If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s), and tell us who to contact and when?