Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

Action Project Application Questions

1. Name of person(s) submitting application: Barry McVinney
2. Date: 11/4/2011
3. Division/Department/Committee: Fine Arts and Humanities

4. Provide a short title for your Action Project in 10 or fewer words. (Provide a descriptive name containing nouns and verbs.)

   Digital Textbook Initiative

5. Describe the Action Project’s goals in 100 words or less. (It is not necessary to explain how you are going to accomplish the project’s goals, but provide clear and explicit purposes/goals of the project. Indicate which specific needs of your students, other external stakeholders, faculty, or staff could you meet better if you addressed this challenge.)

   The goal of this project is to foster a greater utilization of newer technology and digital textbooks by students at Pulaski Technical College. The learning potential of students will be enhanced, while the net cost of course materials will be lower. Instructors in the Fine Arts and Humanities Division have already confirmed the feasibility of assembling very low cost (royalty-free) course materials that point to “open source” internet content; an instructor’s e-book will be sold in the bookstore alongside tablets/e-readers effectively creating a textbook alternative, and at the same time giving students greater access to technology.

6. Identify the AQIP Category the proposed Action Project will most affect or impact:

   Category 1: Helping Students Learn
7. How does this project support PTC’s mission?

This project is congruent with the statement “The College’s mission is to provide access to high quality education that promotes student learning, to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential ...” as well as the statement from the college home page "Pulaski Tech demonstrates its commitment to student success by offering...cutting-edge technology...".

8. Describe the motivation for taking on this Action Project now. Describe why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities.

As the topics of publishers, sales reps, and textbook adoptions were being discussed recently in our division, there seemed to be a convergence of thinking regarding the transition of publishing from print to digital. Technology is advancing very quickly and we feel that we need to be adapting along with technology so that we can better guide our students. Every semester we see more students failing to be successful because they cannot adapt to technological changes and necessities -- that is an unfortunate circumstance that needs to be alleviated.

9. What enthusiasm and support exists among your leadership and employees for addressing this challenge now?

There is great enthusiasm among several full-time and adjunct instructors, as well as the dean and some department chairs. At some point every instructor is frustrated when a student has not purchased a textbook because of the cost, or when a student is unsuccessful due to limited access to technology that is needed to do their homework. Our students benefit from a low tuition rate; however the price they pay at the Bookstore remains as high as at any other Arkansas institution. Conventional textbooks have been an academic necessity, but with the explosion of free online content, the affordability of powerful e-readers and tablet computers, and the shift in publishing from paper to electronic books, many instructors realize that a new paradigm is emerging. We want to be on the cutting edge of this change.

10. List the organizational areas most affected by or involved in this Action Project and briefly describe how that area is affected or involved in this project. (Organizational areas are the academic units, departments, divisions, committees, etc. that are directly or indirectly affected or whose needs may influence the way the project is conceived.)

A significant part of the Division of Fine Arts and Humanities will be involved.

The Dean, some Department Chairs, and some instructors have agreed to be involved in the creation of e-books. Some areas will be able to quickly develop curriculum using low-cost e-books and others will not. Our Division includes the Departments of Fine Arts (Music, Art, Theater, Film, Mass Media), English, Speech, Philosophy, Foreign Languages.

We will work closely with the Bookstore management who can assist us with the e-publishing process using CafeScribe.
11. Identify and describe the key organizational processes or activities that you expect this Action Project to change or improve. *(Recognizable processes or activities such as hiring, recruiting, course scheduling, program review, budgeting, planning, etc. can be named while others may need to be described.)*

**Student learning and involvement**

**Student access to technology**

**Student computer literacy**

**Clarity of instruction in the classroom and online**

**Simplified textbook adoption**

**Simplified purchase process at the bookstore**

12. Explain the rationale for the length of time (from kickoff to target completion) planned for this Action Project. *(Establish interim mileposts that mark progress toward the project’s ultimate goals. Beneficial even with short projects, mileposts are essential for projects that will last longer than one year.)*

The project can be started immediately and completed in about 18 months. Typically changes in textbook adoption happen in the Fall semester. If we start creating e-books in the Spring 2012 term it will be possible to have some pilot classes in Summer and Fall 2012 terms, followed by further roll-out in Spring 2013, and completion before the Fall 2013 term.

13. Describe how you plan to publicize and monitor your efforts on this Action Project. *(This Action Projects deserve a central place in the institution’s attention. Explain how everyone will be kept aware of what it’s working to achieve. Interim goals tied to objective measures or indicators gauge progress, serving as “leading indicators” or predictors of a successful project.)*

We can create a page on the college website that is updated as the Digital Textbook Initiative progresses. The Faculty Senate and campus Committees can be notified of progress, and mileposts can be announced in email newsletters.

14. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals. *(Outcome measures tell whether the project accomplished the goals or purposes that led to its undertaking, evaluating whether it was successful when completed.)*

Success will be obvious when the Bookstore sells e-reader devices and students have their e-books loaded on them ready to use.

A useful measurement will be when assessment results show success levels with e-books equal to or greater than results with traditional textbooks.
Other signs of success will be:

When students walk around campus holding a tablet instead of a backpack full of books.

When students stop failing classes because of lacking a textbook or access to technology.

15. What human resources do you anticipate needing and what sort of time commitment will be expected of the participants?

There is no need for new hiring. Participants should be able to create their e-books gradually throughout the Spring 2012 semester as they prepare to teach classes or units of study. We will need to meet to discuss matters of uniform formatting, and to learn from our collective experience. In addition, faculty will need to gather and submit assessment data for the purpose of demonstrating achievement of course goals.

16. Who will be the project leader(s) and other project team members? (Provide name and title)

Leaders:

Barry McVinney, Chair of Fine Arts Department

Joey Cole, Dean of Fine Arts and Humanities Division

Team Members:

Maribeth Anders

Caroline Lewis

Jonathan Purkiss

Werner Trieschmann

Others will be added as the project continues

17. Has the project leader and project team members listed in the question above agreed to work on this project?

Yes

18. How much money do you think it will cost to accomplish this project? (If possible, detail expenses.)

There is no direct cost related to instructors creating course documents, just the time to research content and links. One way to offset the time spent on this project might be through course release.

Regarding technology, it would be useful for instructors to have access to devices that might be sold in the bookstore such as a tablet computer, a Nook Color, or Kindle Fire.