

## ***Innovative Practice: Ongoing Improvement Model #1***

### **Title & Category**

OnGoing Improvement (OGI) model directs strategic and systematic planning and improvement (AQIP Categories VII & VIII)

#### **1. What does this Innovative Practice do and how does it work?**

The OnGoing Improvement model is used by all university departments, linking strategic initiatives and annual goals to mission, research, collaborations, actions, evaluation, and improvement. The OGI process utilizes a data-based, collaborative decision making approach. Faculty, staff, and administrators deliberate upon research-based information and identify relevant professional standards, e.g. teaching and learning methodologies or financial stability indicators. Applying these standards to the USM environment yields criteria for effectiveness measures and then relevant and meaningful data points are defined. Information Services staff work with faculty and staff to determine appropriate tools for data collection, leading to either centralized or decentralized collection procedures. Data are generated during the OGI Action and Implementation phase and results are analyzed during the Ongoing Evaluation phase. Findings lead to improvement decisions which establish new goals for ongoing improvement.

#### **2. What motivated you to develop or adopt this Innovative Practice?**

The 2001 Comprehensive Curricular Initiative identified the need for the OGI model to ensure currency and excellence of academic programs. As a result of the comprehensive nature of the curricular initiative, the administrative council identified the need to align and evaluate all university systems to support the university's primary mission of helping all students learn. They saw that a common and connected approach to ongoing improvement would enable focused goals and alignment of department and division objectives. Moreover, through communicating expectations for the OGI model, the council established a culture of ongoing improvement that relies upon informed, data-based decisions.

#### **3. How long did it take you to develop and implement this Innovative Practice?**

Systematic implementation of the OGI model began in 2002 after a year of development. During the first year of implementation, guidelines for use of the model were piloted and refined. Annual reviews, program development initiatives, and proposals for new programs use the OGI model to analyze achievements and set goals based on emerging challenges.

#### **4. What did it cost you to develop and implement this Innovative Practice?**

Cost for development and initial implementation was primarily in employee time, including administrators' identification of procedures for implementation and faculty/staff training for integration of OGI within annual reviews. These activities occurred within regularly scheduled meetings and inservice days.

#### **5. What resistance did you face in developing and implementing this Innovative Practice, and how did you reduce or overcome it?**

Resistance was encountered due to two primary factors—redundancy and lack of data management resources. Due to prior unevenness across divisions with annual reviews, some divisions found the OGI model redundant with existing reporting and evaluation procedures. For example, faculty had an existing system for annual review and the OGI was perceived as a redundant add-on. With review and revision of annual reporting procedures, expectations were streamlined so that redundancy was reduced. The lack of data management resources caused resistance since a central feature of OGI is data-based decision making. Without the infrastructure to support all divisions' information needs, resistance was heightened. Information Services staff put in place a phased plan to improve the technological infrastructure, including conversion to Jenzabar EX, training module experts, and setting up databases.

#### **6. What does it cost you to maintain and operate this Innovative Practice, and what does it save you?**

The OGI model is an approach to doing our work and as such it is integrated within existing procedures. To improve effectiveness in data-based decision making, technology infrastructure enhancements were made. The cost of maintaining technology support is a part of the university's operating expenses.

#### **7. How do you measure or check whether this Innovative Practice performs the way you intend it to?**

Metrics used for assessing effectiveness of OGI model are: 1. efficiency in accessing information, running reports, and representing trend data; 2. reliability and validity of data; 3. communication of results to make improvements.

As program, committee, and office staff analyze the results of target objectives, the measurement system is an integrated component of the analysis. When recommendations emerge to make the system more effective and efficient in gathering and reporting relevant information, requests for improvements are developed in conjunction with the Information Services staff and then forwarded to the next level of decision making authority. Issues are discussed at the administrative council level to determine if the problems are shared, which may alter the approach to problem solving. Requests are prioritized by the administrative council.

#### **8. What print or web documents are available to provide more detail and explanation about this Innovative Practice?**

The OGI model is depicted in a graphic and templates for annual review and new program development are available upon request.

The OGI model was highlighted as a strength by AQIP evaluators in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) also acknowledged the quality of this innovative practice in its 2007 Award to the university. The system for improving student learning outcomes is based on the OGI model and won recognition in this award.

#### **9. How does your organization currently use this Innovative Practice?**

The University of Saint Mary (USM) in Leavenworth, KS is a small, private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). Faculty and staff meet at least monthly as a community. These meetings provide a forum for information updates, problem solving, and data-based decision making. USM committees are charged with using the OGI model for decisions relevant to the committee's scope of work. Task force groups are established when a need for improvement or change has been identified within or across administrative units. The OGI model is used to: solicit data based information from relevant stakeholders, analyze findings, explore recommendations in light of objectives, develop and implement a plan of action, and regularly collect information to assess the effectiveness of the change strategies.

**10. Whom at your organization should people should contact for more information or help about this Innovative Practice?**

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