

Summary of Lessons Learned from Successful On-Campus IQP Advisors

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In faculty-conducted IQP program reviews, off-campus IQPs consistently receive higher ratings than on-campus IQPs for achieving educational outcomes. This is not surprising, given that off-campus project students complete a ½ unit preparation before embarking on the project. There are also other factors that contribute to fundamental differences in the process and product of off-campus and on-campus IQPs.

Nonetheless, there are many examples of on-campus IQPs that are highly rated. In an effort to learn from these successes, I interviewed four WPI colleagues who have never advised off-campus, and whose on-campus IQPs have consistently received very favorable reviews. Below is a summary of the findings from a content analysis of these interviews.

1. Stay within your area of expertise, but look for topics that satisfy IQP objectives within that area.
2. Don't worry about external sponsorship if you follow #1.
3. Don't worry about student quality---if they are self-selecting your project then some intrinsic motivation is there.
4. Expect that the project will not be completed in 3 terms of 1/3 unit each. Some learning curve (intellectual maturation) will extend the initial time as may proper analysis near the end.
5. Get a book on good teaching techniques and apply everything in it to the project advising process. Some important points:
 - a. Have a syllabus that conforms to good syllabus writing practice
 - b. Set clear objectives
 - c. Clearly explicate high performance standards and expectations
 - d. Give frequent, specific, consistent, high quality feedback (consider a weekly "If I assigned a grade now, it would be a ___ and here's why.....")
 - e. Consistently enforce deadlines
 - f. Make the learning environment student-centered, not advisor-centered
 - g. Recognize that different learning styles require different teaching styles even if you aren't comfortable with that
 - h. Show excitement and interest---if you are bored and unmotivated, they will be too
 - i. Know and use the basic principles of cooperative learning