



November 2013

Academic Quality Improvement Program



QUALITY PROGRAM SUMMARY



HISTORY / BACKGROUND

Lincoln Land Community College was accepted as an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) institution in 2009. That fall, the President formed an AQIP Steering Team to provide oversight for AQIP processes. Team membership was designed to be representative of the College's divisions: the President's Office, Academic Services, Administrative Services, Student Services, and Workforce Development and Community Education. The Student Trustee would represent the College's student body. And two co-chairs, one drawn from the administrative group and the other from the faculty, would lead the steering team. These co-chairs would be selected from an applicant pool of interested administrators and faculty. This 13-member team began working in December 2009. A sub-group of the newly-formed AQIP Steering Team attended a Strategy Forum in February 2010, and the College's initial Action Projects were launched later that summer.

ACTION PROJECT SUMMARY

Lincoln Land Community College launched seven Action Projects during its first four years as an AQIP institution. These Action Projects emerged from Strategy Forum participation, the College's annual planning and budgeting process, employee suggestions, and the process of drafting the initial Systems Portfolio.

New Student Experience: Stage 1 - Designed/Ready for Implementation

Purpose: Identify the program components and delivery of an orientation process for new students.

The Action Project team spent the Fall 2010 semester researching best practices and gathering information regarding student needs. This work included conducting focus groups with current students, soliciting faculty and staff input at two professional development day sessions, reviewing data and reports from the Foundations of Excellence self-study, and interviewing staff at other community colleges. The team completed their work in January 2011. Several of the team's recommendations were considered in the 2012 planning and budgeting process. A key recommendation was to create a full-time position to oversee the design and implementation of a new student experience at LLCC as well as other related initiatives. A Director of Retention and Student Success was hired in May 2012 and is guiding the College through the design and implementation of an early alert pilot and mandatory student orientation process.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 1 - Helping Students Learn

Status: Closed

Continuous Quality Improvement: Learning to Make Informed, Systematic Decisions

Purpose: Introduce teamwork and improvement processes to make the College's decision-making process more efficient, inclusive, and informed by data. This Action Project team began work in Fall 2010 and featured a two-day workshop facilitated by an external consultant. The team's training focused on how to develop and sustain a culture of quality and continuous quality improvement in higher education. The College's CQI training curriculum, one built on this early experience, went through several revisions and was finalized in Spring 2013. The college community was introduced to a small aspect of the curriculum with an affinity diagram activity at the 2011 Institutional Improvement Day. Quality trainers, drawn from LLCC's faculty and staff, were selected and trained during the 2012-2013 academic year. Two iterations of the CQI curriculum were delivered by the College's quality trainers in the Spring of 2013. The Action Project closed this fall but CQI training for faculty and staff is ongoing. Multiple sessions are scheduled for delivery during the 2014 fiscal year, and the Senior Administration is actively encouraging all to participate.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 8 - Planning and Continuous Improvement

Status: Closed

Establishing and Assessing an Effective Shared Governance Structure

Purpose: Implement the revised internal committee structure at the College and evaluate the extent to which it has improved communication, representation, and effectiveness. In cooperation with the Shared Governance Council, the Action Project leader initially contributed to design of the new shared governance team structure during phase one of this project. Under the new design, seven college-wide teams were created to function under the purview of the Shared Governance Council (SGC). The Action Project team then assisted the SGC with implementation of the new structure. Action Project team members worked with the three main employee constituency groups to run elections and fill positions on the newly created shared governance teams. The shared governance teams then operated for over a year before the final phase – evaluate the impact of the changes – was implemented. In this phase, the Action Project team members revisited the initial goals of the project and interviewed a cross section of the campus community (i.e., faculty, staff, administrators and students, both with and without shared governance roles) on the functioning of the new structure. A report with recommendations was provided to the SGC and President in Spring 2013. The report suggested that the new structure was a significant improvement over the previous one in terms of comprehensiveness and representation. However, the broader College community was generally unaware of work being done by shared governance teams. As a result, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing was placed on the Shared Governance Council and tasked with two goals: (a) assist the SGC with college-wide reporting of actions; (b) develop an action grid to communicate what items have been completed by which shared governance team. “Shared governance news” is now a standing category for LincIN, LLCC’s electronic newsletter.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 5 – Leading and Communicating

Status: Closed

Strategic Plan – Transformation

Purpose: Define and implement a process for regular review of the College’s Strategic Plan. The Action Project was launched in Summer 2011. The team began their work by creating a video which would communicate the project’s responsibilities and outcomes. The video was featured at Convocation, and volunteers were solicited to assist with aspects of the Action Project. During the College’s Institutional Improvement Day in October, the team led a review of the College’s environmental scan and a trivia event about strategic planning. Afterwards, groups of volunteers met several times to review the environmental scan and begin identifying trends. In December, a campus forum was held seeking input on the identified trends. The trends were then organized into themes. The tentative review process was implemented in January 2012 by shifting the College to a review of its mission, vision, values, and goals. The Action Project team presented its recommendations to the President and the Board of Trustees (BOT) in the Fall of 2012. The BOT approved the new strategic plan, and the Action Project team’s process will be utilized once again when the current plan is reviewed.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 8 – Planning and Continuous Improvement

Status: Closed

Electronic Portfolio Pilot Project

Purpose: To enhance the assessment and documentation of student learning outcomes primarily at the program level. In this Action Project, participating faculty are determining the effectiveness of linking their existing program-level outcomes with assigned projects and assignments via electronic portfolio (i.e., *TaskStream*®). Launched in September 2012, four programs – history, psychology, criminal justice, and early childhood education – volunteered to participate during the initial year. In Fall 2012, program faculty completed training and developed Directed Response Folios (DRFs). The history department launched its first electronic portfolio the following spring and is currently redesigning its portfolio based on feedback and the resulting data. The criminal justice and early childhood education programs plan to deploy their portfolios in Fall 2013. This Action Project is ongoing with additional faculty and courses being added.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 1 – Helping Students Learn

Status: Active

Process Mapping: Systematic Documenting of Key Processes

Purpose: Design and recommend a process mapping model that may be applied to processes throughout the College. Launched in June 2013, this Action Project team has three broad goals to accomplish. First, team members will research and identify a process mapping model suitable for replication at LLCC. Next, the team will implement the process mapping model within the Institutional Research department. Once implemented, the Action Project team will recommend a process mapping model which could potentially be employed throughout the College.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 6 - Supporting Institutional Operations

Status: Active

Using Multiple Measures for Placement into Mathematics Courses

Purpose: Examine the College's process for initial academic placement of students into developmental mathematics courses. Launched in June 2013, this Action Project team is researching whether student placement decisions can be improved by incorporating additional, non-cognitive measures in the process. LLCC's current process uses standardized test scores for academic placement decisions, yet research suggests that incorporating non-cognitive measures has the potential to improve placement decisions. If the early work suggests that initial placement can be improved with additional measures, the team will design and recommend a different placement process for use at LLCC.

Systems Portfolio Alignment: Category 1 - Helping Students Learn

Status: Active

THE SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO: SHAPING CURRENT AND FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Members of the AQIP Steering Team began drafting the Systems Portfolio in the Fall of 2010. Nine Category teams, each led by an AQIP Steering Team member, were formed to write a section of the portfolio. Lincoln Land Community College submitted its Systems Portfolio in June of 2013. The process of building the College's first Systems Portfolio highlighted areas where change could strengthen the institution, so the College began addressing some of these opportunities even before the 2013 edition was completed.

National Benchmarking

The Category teams' initial research and drafting revealed that the College collected and examined a lot of data yet national comparisons were limited primarily to standardized instruments such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory. The College joined the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) in fiscal year 2011. NCCBP membership has allowed the College to demonstrate two years of national benchmarking in areas such as student persistence. As they build a dashboard for the College's current strategic plan, the Institutional Research staff continues to work with the President's Cabinet on data that can be nationally benchmarked through NCCBP participation. Additionally, the College is exploring participation in the Workforce Training Benchmark Project (WTBP). Offered through the National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute, the WTBP provides community colleges access to national success and satisfaction metrics for benchmarking the performance of Workforce Development programs.

Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE)

The College had used a locally-written climate survey since 2005. While a locally-written survey provided flexibility in the questions asked and was cost-effective, such surveys make external comparisons of employee satisfaction impossible. Beginning with the Fall 2013 administration, the College will switch to the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) instrument. This will allow for national benchmarking of results in the dashboard as well as Category 4 and Category 5 of the Systems Portfolio.

Understanding Our External Stakeholders

Category 3 and Category 9 revealed that the College could be more systematic in working with our external stakeholders. Subsequently, college administration is reviewing the Higher Education Continuous Improvement Survey System. The two surveys, the Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey (HEPSS) and the Higher Education Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (HESSS), allow higher education institutions to obtain comparative measures of their performance in partnership relations and stakeholder satisfaction. Each features standardized questions that allow for national benchmarking as well as the capability to collect data through institution-designed questions. These measures would then be used to identify areas in need of improvement as well as document effective practices at LLCC.

Communicating our Mission

Three recent actions will further assist LLCC in communicating its mission. First, the College's mission, vision, values, and goals were added to a wall in Menard Hall as part of the new signage project. Second, the Public Relations and Marketing office began printing the LLCC mission statement on the back of business cards. Third, the mission is prominently placed on the first page of the *Forward* magazine/class schedule, a publication which is mailed to all households in the district.

Process Mapping

Development of the College's first Systems Portfolio revealed that many of the College's processes exist only by word of mouth and, as a result, are at times ambiguous. Some process owners struggled to communicate processes that were not clearly defined, documented, or widely understood. Furthermore, a number of employees with long tenure at LLCC are nearing retirement, many of whom possess a vast amount of "institutional knowledge." The College will increasingly rely on quality written documentation to disseminate information regarding our processes. Establishing a systematic mapping process, as described previously in the Action Project Summary section, will (a) ensure that current operations are effective, efficient, and transparent and (b) allow for a smooth continuity of operations.

INITIAL RESPONSE TO STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE SYSTEMS APPRAISAL

The Systems Appraisal Team identified the need for LLCC to develop: 1) more formalized processes and stronger links between planning/budgeting; 2) prioritization of partnership effectiveness; 3) training of staff, in particular leadership succession for sustaining quality systems; 4) specific work processes in division and units that align with the College's Strategic Plan; and 5) collecting and analyzing more direct measures in most of the categories.

More Formal Processes and Stronger Links between Budgeting and Planning

Planning precedes budgeting at LLCC, and this is detailed in the 8P1 response. This approach has worked well for the College because it allows planning strategies that require new funds to be considered as the new budget is built. LLCC chooses to use a baseline rather than a zero-based approach to budgeting. The College's budget baselines are reviewed annually as part of the overall planning and budgeting process. Budget baselines may be increased, decreased, or frozen at the previous year's level during this annual review. Budget maintenance then follows this adjustment phase. Given the perceived clear link between planning and budgeting, the College is puzzled by this identified need. If the perception for change in this area still exists, more specific conversations are needed during the upcoming Quality Checkup.

Prioritization of Partnership Effectiveness

The College commits much effort to working with its external partners. Partnerships with K-12 schools in District 526 are strong (9P1). The College maintains active Program (3P3, 9P2) and ESA Advisory Committees (3P4). Membership on these committees is very intentional and diverse, representing various segments of the District such as government, business, civic and professional, and geographic areas. LLCC's relationships with four-year institutions were summarized in 9P2. While it has entered into many

collaborative relationships, LLCC has not focused time and effort on either prioritizing partnerships or collecting effectiveness measures of building collaborative relationships.

The College previously mentioned its review of the Higher Education Continuous Improvement Survey System. The two surveys, the Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey (HEPSS) and the Higher Education Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (HESSS), will allow LLCC to obtain comparative measures of performance in the areas of partnership relations and stakeholder satisfaction. The College views this as an initial stage in prioritization of partnerships. In addition, a member of the AQIP steering team proposed an Action Project that would (a) catalog LLCC's collaborative relationships and (b) assess the associated level of commitment and benefit to the College for each. This potential Action Project is mentioned briefly in 9I1. The proposal was initially discussed in the spring when new Action Projects were launched, but it was not prioritized as one of the top two at the time. Once the HESSS and HEPSS are examined more fully, the President's Cabinet will evaluate the utility of an Action Project that prioritizes the College's partnerships.

Training of Staff, in particular Leadership Succession for Sustaining Quality Systems

While a formalized leadership succession plan does not exist, LLCC noted in the Systems Portfolio its investment in leadership training (4P9), efforts at cross-training staff (4P5), opportunities for sabbatical leave (4P2, 4P3) and professional development (4P2), and initial work in systemically documenting processes at the department level (6P5, 6I1) to ensure continuity of service. In addition, the College offers employees opportunities to assume and practice their leadership skills in positions that include the Shared Governance Council, teams under the Shared Governance structure, faculty coordinator roles, and professional organizations affiliated with their position at LLCC. So while LLCC lacks formal structure for succession planning, there are many talented faculty and staff who possess the skills and abilities needed to move into key leadership roles when the need arises. The current approach has served the College well, and further discussions to combine these efforts into a formal structure for LLCC are not a high priority for the institution at this time.

Specific Work Process in Division and Units that Align with the Strategic Plan

The College believes its process mapping and continuous quality improvement Action Projects are foundational efforts for aligning division-level work with the strategic plan. In the meantime, other completed or ongoing efforts address this need. First, the Budget, Financial Planning and Analysis office merged with Business and Fiscal Operations to form a new Finance Department. This merger took several months and involved examining and re-writing departmental processes as well as job descriptions to better align each with current practice. The Financial Aid Department is undergoing a similar re-design under the guidance of an external consultant with the goal of timely service to students and becoming more efficient in its work processes.

Collecting and Analyzing More Direct Measures

The College is aware of the need to collect and regularly analyze more direct measures, particularly for processes associated with Categories 4, 5, 6, and 9.

The Systems Appraisal team identified the following specific strategic issues arising from a categorical perspective.

Aggregated SLO measures at an institutional level. The College agrees that generating an overall performance for program level outcomes has value. Consequently, faculty and staff have invested much time and energy the past couple of years putting a foundation in place that will allow LLCC to generate SLO data at an aggregate level. The College acknowledged on page 3 of the Systems Portfolio that it is difficult for the institution to report SLOs at an aggregate level. Additionally, the College has identified the electronic portfolio Action Project as a possible means to document learning at both the program and

general education level. Upon completion of this Action Project, the faculty will determine the viability of having students document their learning through electronic portfolios. The College also remains open to the possibility that it may need to investigate other avenues for aggregating SLOs at the institutional level.

Stronger connections to businesses that hire their graduates and the program SLOs. Program and ESA Advisory Committees connect faculty and staff to businesses in District 526, and these relationships are used to guide both program development and program review. This role was exemplified when the College described its use of stakeholders from the local health care systems to inform the development of its new Surgical Technology program (see 3P3). Yet LLCC is open to opportunities that could strengthen the relationships with businesses that hire its graduates. Accordingly, as noted in the Category 1 overview, the College has been exploring the value of incorporating commercial employer surveys into this process.

Alignment of co-curricular programming with SLOs. Progress is being made towards strategically aligning co-curricular goals with the College's General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). LLCC students drive club creation and activity programming at the College, so Student Life is moving student programming decisions towards a process that embraces curriculum infusion. As noted in the Systems Portfolio, the Logger (Student) Activities Board now requires any potential speaker or event to submit learning outcomes. The Logger Activities Board reviews these learning outcomes prior to booking college speakers and events. These learning outcomes are then communicated to the faculty who individually determine any linkage to the learning outcomes of their courses or program. This is viewed as an initial step towards this change, and the College is committed to expanding alignment where possible.

Analysis of needs of the various stakeholder groups. The College recognized this need during the drafting of the Systems Portfolio, acknowledging in the Category 9 overview that it lacked a formal process to effectively document, measure, and evaluate new or existing collaborative relationships. The College's recent efforts regarding this opportunity are reflected in the previous description of work underway at LLCC, titled Understanding Our External Stakeholders (on p. 4). The College remains committed to this opportunity.

Stronger communication outlets for recruiting non-traditional students. LLCC recruiters coordinate and conduct presentations, meetings, and information tables for various businesses, governmental offices, and community organizations, averaging two visits per semester (six per year) to each established business/office/agency. Business partners include the Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Illinois Department of Labor, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Revenue, Goodwill, Wal-Mart, Bunn, Memorial Medical Center, Memorial Health Systems, St. John's Hospital, Taylorville Memorial Hospital, Passavant Hospital, Cargil, St. Francis Hospital, Ameren Call Center, Centrum Building, SAMS Club, Central Management Systems, and Dickey-John.

Methods for measuring cultural change from CQI training. LLCC's CQI training program has five objectives. The College is in an early stage of developing measures to gauge a cultural change from its newly-developed professional development program. The initial step is to collect employee perception data during the Fall 2013 PACE administration. Three institution-specific questions have been added to measure (a) the institution's perceived commitment to continuous quality improvement and (b) the extent to which CQI processes and tools are being used by institutional teams, institutional work groups, and the staff member's primary work team. The College remains open to exploring other ways to measure the effectiveness of this Action Project.

ERRORS OF FACT AND MISCONCEPTIONS REPORTED IN THE SYSTEMS APPRAISAL

Some errors of fact as well as misconceptions are evident in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report. LLCC acknowledges that these misconceptions may be attributed to how a process was described or the way in which results were presented. The following errors of fact or misconceptions were discovered in the Feedback Report.

The Feedback Report noted that the College has five transferrable and one non-transferrable degree. The College has five transferrable degrees and two non-transferrable degrees. The College correctly listed its degree information on page 1 in the Organizational Overview.

The Feedback Report recognized the College for launching seven Action Projects and having completed five. The College has completed four Action Projects and is currently working on three Action Projects.

The Feedback Report acknowledged that the College completed its process mapping Action Project. This Action Project was launched in Spring 2013 and is still active.

The Feedback Report suggested that the College used an Enrollment Management Task Force to create a new Shared Governance Council. The opposite is actually true. LLCC's Enrollment Management Task Force emerged from the College's new Shared Governance structure.