QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Mid Michigan Community College
Harrison, MI
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Quality Checkup team members:

Dr. Gwen Torkelson
Human Resource Director
Madison Area Technical College

Mr. Kenneth Urban
Director of College Advancement
Mid-State Technical College

The Higher Learning Commission
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504
800-621-7740 • www.ncahlc.org
Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained, experienced AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification);
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewer(s) or staff trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and the Commission's internal Organizational Profile, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its Annual Institutional Data Update. The report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluator(s). Up-to-date, complete information about Quality Checkup preparation, procedures, and related information in the Quality Checkup Visit Guide available for download from the AQIP website at www.AQIP.org.

Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. Additionally, a copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AOIP Review Panel during the institution's Reaffirmation of Accreditation.
Clarification and verification of contents of the institution’s *Systems Portfolio*

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

The team felt that the visit to Mid-Michigan Community College verified and clarified the contents of the Systems Portfolio. The appraisal team identified eleven strategic issues, which were the college's focus in the period since receipt of the feedback report. The strategic issues and the college’s response to them are covered in more detail elsewhere in this feedback report.

**Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution’s last Systems Appraisal**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

There were no accreditation issues listed in Mid-Michigan Community College’s Systems Appraisal Feedback Report dated March 2005.

**Review of the institution’s approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the Strategic Issues Analysis.**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

**Assessment Systems (Strategic issue 1)**

The college is in a transitional period, and has begun to deploy tools (such as dynamic criteria mapping) and new processes to support its continuous quality improvement culture. The staff recognize that the college still has to close the loop in the decision making process, and is working toward wide implementation of the tools and processes needed to shift the culture.

**Data Collection, Continuous Improvement Leadership, and Alignment (Strategic Issues 2, 3, 4)**

The college is refining the data it collects, and is adding new resources such as surveys. Some of the data have been placed into a dashboard using Crystal Xcelcius. In addition, the college has been developing new data tools like a program return-on-investment measure. The college has a new action project tasked with aligning the various budgeting and decision making processes in place, to ensure that processes are executed in the appropriate order and that each process cascades data into the subsequent processes. Although the college has not
appointed a leader for the continuous improvement process, it is clear that a de facto leader is in place. The college has standing teams for data and continuous improvement with cross-functional representation.

Relationships with Stakeholders (Strategic Issue 5)
Although the college has yet to define measures of effectiveness for relationships with stakeholders (either from the stakeholders' standpoint or the college's), it is clear the staff have given some thought to the strategic issue raised by the appraisal team. The college should continue to address this issue, paying special attention to measurement.

Initiating Collaborative Relationships (Strategic Issue 6)
The college staff acknowledge that many existing collaborative relationships developed through ad hoc processes. The college used data collected from collaborative relationships to drive selection of new programs for the new Mt. Pleasant facility, and is beginning to roll data collected through relationships with its communities into the strategic planning process. The college also used an action project to develop a new process for evaluating new and existing programs, and is seeking to develop a similar process for new and existing collaborative relationships.

Competition (Strategic Issue 7)
The college made it clear that MMCC works to turn competition into collaboration by sharing programs and developing new programs through institutional partnerships. The college has also demonstrated a strong commitment to online delivery as another tool to remain competitive. The college has an innovative approach to distance delivery, including the use of multimedia components and podcasting. The majority of faculty members are using the learning management system to enhance courses that are delivered in the classroom.

Resource Restrictions and Alternate Funding (Strategic Issue 8)
The college has reformed the Foundation, and since 2001 has increased the fund balance by more than 500%. The college also secured grant funding to deploy wireless networking in the district's community libraries, as a way to increase student and community access to the college's online courses and resources. Grant writing was institutionalized by placing it into the job duties of several administrators, and has resulted in $3.5M in new grant funding in just two years.

Mt. Pleasant Facility (Strategic Issue 9)
The college used input from collaborative relationships to recognize the need for a facilities expansion in Mt. Pleasant. The college secured $16.5M from the state’s Capital Outlay process and is building a new facility on property with room for expansion.
**Formal Processes for Communicating Leadership Best Practices (Strategic Issue 10)**

The college has recognized that it currently does not have a process for communicating best practices in leadership and communication. The college has begun a dialog on the issue.

**Adjunct Instructor Pool (Strategic Issue 11)**

The college has taken several steps to improve the retention and hiring of adjuncts. The college has developed "lectureships," which have a higher pay rate and some benefits to maintain exceptional adjunct staff members. The college centralized the recruitment and hiring of adjuncts for instructional areas with the highest need, and the college added eight full-time faculty positions which reduced the need for adjunct instructors.

**Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

It was clear to the team that Mid-Michigan Community College had a strong organizational commitment to systematic quality improvement, from the board down and throughout the college. Sessions held during the checkup visit were attended by a wide range of staff, students, and stakeholders, and interactions were candid and almost universally positive. The college is in transition, with the impending retirement of the president. The board communicated clearly to the team that candidates for the position would be expected to be supportive of AQIP in particular and a continuous improvement philosophy in general.

**USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program, audits, or other USDE actions)**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

The team reviewed the documents related to the USDE default rate. The documents show that the default rate in 2003 was 3.9%, and in 2004 was 8.1%. The 2004 default rate is in line with the national average default rate.
Other Title IV compliance issues

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

In December of 2004, a problem was identified by the MMCC Financial Aid office with the Federal Title IV return of funds (ROF) calculations. All students requiring an ROF had the accounts recalculated, and all funds were returned to the appropriate Federal aid program. The financial aid function was evaluated by an external consultant and 42 recommendations were implemented. A change to the college’s student records software system was made, which mitigated the issue.

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

Credits and program lengths comply with Michigan state standards. The college was audited by the state in 2003, and no flaws were found. Tuition is set by the Mid-Michigan Community College district board.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, Advertising and Recruitment Materials

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

The college published advertisements seeking third-party comments in more than eight different media, as well as other venues. No comments were received by the Commission.

Compliance with Commission policy III.A.1, Professional Accreditation, and III.A.3, Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation

In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.
Mid-Michigan Community College has only one institution-wide accreditation relationship, with the Higher Learning Commission. The college has two programs with specialized accreditations.

**Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.4, Organizational Records of Student Complaints**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

The college has a well-documented student complaint procedure. The procedure is published in several places, including the student catalog and the college web site. The complaints are maintained in a central location, and are periodically evaluated for trends.

**Other USDE compliance-related issues (specify)**

*In the team’s judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.*

No other USDE compliance-related issues were noted.

**Other AQIP issues**

The team commends the college on the welcoming environment. There was broad participation in all of the sessions from individuals from across the college.

The college has well-maintained facilities in Harrison. The rolling, wooded setting is especially attractive and an asset to the community. The college has placed a great deal of effort on making student spaces welcoming. The library renovation is an excellent example, along with the "one-stop" shop at the main entrance for student services. Although the team did not visit the Mt. Pleasant site, the team interacted with students, faculty, staff, and community members from that site. Students indicated that more student activity space at the Mt. Pleasant site would be an improvement.

The team notes that the college has been an efficient and strong steward, maintaining services and responding to community needs despite a challenging financial environment.

The team appreciated the opportunity to meet with faculty members on the first day, to get their perspective on the college’s continuous improvement efforts. The faculty members expressed a desire to be more involved in internal processes, including assessment and hiring of instructional staff. The team would have liked to have had larger representation from the faculty, but many were on the Mt. Pleasant campus during the time period set aside for the meeting.
The college and its staff are held in high esteem. Mid-Michigan Community College is integrated in its communities. Community members were enthusiastic about college events such as the annual Pig Roast and Foundation events at Jay's Sporting Goods. The community members were unanimous in asserting that the college and staff were responsive to expressed needs. Students were passionate about the college and its support. The students were especially excited about the impact of the new student activities staff member and the impact she had on student out-of-class options she championed. Although the students are very happy with MMCC, they do not perceive it as one college; the students noted significant differences in services, support, and environment between the two campuses. One Harrison student noted, "When I had to take a class at Mt. Pleasant, I felt disconnected. I didn't know anyone,"

The college has made a conscious decision to move faculty and staff between the Harrison and Mt. Pleasant facilities, with the intent of building a "single-college" feel. The input from students suggests that the college might in fact be doing exactly the opposite of its intent. Given the financial and opportunity costs associated with the co-location policy, the team recommends that the college critically review the policy wherever possible.