

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Minnesota State College Southeast Technical

Winona/Red Wing, MN
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Quality Checkup team members:

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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) 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). Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. A copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

The Team reviewed the Systems Portfolio before arriving for the Quality Checkup visit to gain an understanding of the College. During the visit, the Team verified and clarified the contents of the System Portfolio through discussions held with the Chancellor, Board of Trustee member of the MNSCU system, President, and various cross-functional groups that included students, administrators, faculty, and staff. In addition, the information and results described in the AQIP Systems Portfolio were verified.

Discussions with campus groups focused on assuring action project success, assessment of student learning, financial management, issues facing open access institutions, leadership issues and strategic planning issues. Open sessions included faculty, students, staff and individuals from the community.

Information that was presented in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report was generally understood and the Minnesota State College South East Technical Team agreed that the Appraisal feedback was accurate.

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.

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

There were no critical accreditation issues identified in the 2007 Systems Appraisal report.

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

The strategic issues identified in the 2007 feedback report were addressed as follows:

- Measureable targets. It was evidenced through conversation that measurable targets either exist or are in the process of being identified. MNSCST recognizes that goals without measurable targets are incomplete.

- Use of comparative data from other institutions. The college is now using data from comparable institutions to analyze their results in identifying the success of their research and to determine what directions to take in utilizing the data to make data based decisions.
- The President, Cabinet and Executive cabinet have participated in a extended CQI training, with objectives specifically addressing enhanced data utilization, to identify waste/find efficiencies, unify planning processes, 360 degree evaluations and implementation of a document system. To this end, a CQI team of 30 persons, including faculty, administration and staff has been formed and is meeting on a regular basis. Formal training will be provided to all in March 2009.
- Communication Processes. The College has improved their communication process and there is evidence that this process is an ongoing activity. The Human Resources reorganization has contributed to the improvement of communications at the College. Attendees at the faculty and staff forums indicated improvements in communications have been made and are anticipating continued improvement.
- Process for information, communication and planning. A session was conducted with the President, Executive Council and Cabinet to discuss team building. This session was instituted because most of the leadership team have been in their respective positions less than two years. Although they work well together, it was recognized that team building activities have taken a back seat to pressing every day issues. During the discussion, it was suggested that several options could be pursued including Myers-Briggs, Disc, Insight, and facilitated discussion. Following this session, an open session was conducted including faculty and staff. That discussion resulted in the recognition of the newness of the leadership team and need for and openness to transparent communication and planning.

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.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

Through Institutional Effectiveness Program efforts, Southeast Technical demonstrated how their processes are organized to facilitate continuous quality improvement. An example would be the development and expansion of the Learning Resource Center action project. The LRC was at the bottom of the student satisfaction list. Following the changes, the LRC has risen to the top of the student satisfaction list.

Further, the management team has been through off-campus CQI training entitled LEAN. Said training is to be expanded to include the effectiveness committee and staff. It is recognized that processes and procedures are at least 1/3 of the solution to any problem. Decisions are made through the improvement of processes rather than exclusively based on the bottom line of revenue and expenses.

Another example is the collaboration with nearby Winona State University. Although recognized as a competitor, coursework easily transfers between the two institutions. A partnership has been developed.

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.

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

Compliance evidence was presented addressing USDE 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.

Compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

The team reviewed positive public comments and materials announcing the visit.

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.

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

The team reviewed the college catalog and the state system web site. Tuition is controlled through the state legislature.

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.

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

The team reviewed various 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.

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

In conversation and review of documentation, the college is well within the standards required by state and national agencies.

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.

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

The team reviewed the process for 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.

Other USDE compliance-related issues

None noted.

Other AQIP issues

The team would like to stress the high level of support that this institution receives from those outside of the institution. During our visit, the amount of time that the Chancellor and a Board member from the State Board of Trustees spent on campus was wonderful. We also had a member of the Chancellors' staff there the entire visit, something that is not uncommon at other institutions within the state system. It was very clear that the State is very supportive of AQIP and the value it has as a guide in continuous quality improvement. The individuals from the State were very supportive of this institutions dedication to AQIP and the entire process.