Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation
for
Cowley County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School
Arkansas City, KS
of the 2008-09
Academic Quality Improvement Program
Review Panel on Reaffirmation
The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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I. Context And Nature Of Review

A. Review Purpose, Process, and Materials

AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation reviews are scheduled seven years in advance, when an institution first joins the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) or when an institution already participating in AQIP is reaffirmed via the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation process.

In conducting these reviews, the AQIP Reaffirmation of review panel examines the following materials for each institution:

- Current Commission History file of institutional actions
- Current Commission Statement of Affiliation Status
- Current official Commission Organizational Profile
- Annual Updates of year’s Action Projects
- AQIP Review Panel Report(s) on Institutional Status Change Requests
- Federal Compliance Materials Packet prepared for the Quality Checkup
- Focused visit report(s) and action letter(s)
- Institutional websites
- Key correspondence between the institution and the Commission
- Last Comprehensive PEAQ Evaluation team report, institutional response, and Commission action letter
- Quality Checkup report(s)
- Quality Program Summary prepared for the Quality Checkup
- Summary of Action Projects attempted
- Summary Update of institutional activity and dynamics since the last Quality Checkup, provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Systems Appraisal Feedback Report(s)
- Systems Portfolio Index(es) (to compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation)
- Systems Portfolio(s), including update provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Any other major reports or documents that are part of the institution’s permanent Commission files

Two lead panelists from the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation draft a recommendation that is reviewed and approved by the entire panel before it is forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council.
B. Organizational Context

Cowley County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School was first accredited by the Commission in April, 1975, (having been admitted to Candidacy for Accreditation in July, 1973). The institution was admitted to AQIP on October 3, 2001, and became an AQIP institution in 2002. CCCC participated in its second Strategy Forum from March 6th to 9th, 2007.

Since admission to AQIP, the institution has officially declared and attempted eight individual Action Projects, four are listed as current and four are listed as retired (listing of documented AQIP Action Projects). CCCC has provided AQIP with Annual Updates of ongoing Action Projects and received Annual Feedback Reports on each project.

The institution provided its Systems Portfolio for review in June, 2006, and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on September 29, 2006. The next Systems Portfolio is due in November 2009.

AQIP conducted a Quality Checkup visit to the institution on April 25-27, 2007, and provided a report of the findings of the visiting team following the visit.

C. Organizational Scope and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)

Cowley County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School is a public, non-profit institution that offers associate degrees and pre-associate certificate programs for primarily rural counties in south-central Kansas and the Metropolitan Wichita area (2 campuses and 7 sites located in Wichita, Mulvane, Winfield, and Arkansas City, Kansas). In addition, there are 15 course locations, including Ponca City, Oklahoma. CCCC maintains multiple partnerships with other community colleges, technical colleges and major state universities in its area.

Instruction is offered through a variety of systems including the traditional semester-based classroom, online hybrid courses, telecourses, and web-based courses. Courses designed to address specific local industry and community needs are offered as requested by the appropriate constituency. Tuition and fees are designed to remain competitive with similar programs in the area. Additional fees are charged for those courses that have a higher cost of delivery.


D. Notification of Quality Checkup Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

A Quality Checkup site visit to the institution was conducted on April 25-27, 2007. In compliance with Commission requirements, the institution notified its constituencies and the public of this visit, solicited third party comment to be sent directly to the Commission. The Commission shared all comments received with the institution and the team, and the team discussed both the comments with the institution and reviewed evidence of the institution’s compliance with Commission’s notification and third-party comment requirements.
E. Compliance With Federal Requirements

The Quality Checkup team that conducted a site visit to the institution on April 25-27, 2007, examined evidence provided by the institution of its compliance with the Commission’s federal compliance program. The Quality Checkup site visit team concluded that the institution presented acceptable evidence that it complies with all Commission and AQIP expectations. (Quality Check-up Report, Cowley County Community College Federal Compliance Review)

F. Evidence of the Organization’s Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns Regarding Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation.

In establishing four AQIP Action Projects (Provide Quality Education to Students at All Academic Levels, Plan and Implement an Employee Professional Development/Mentoring Program, Review and Improve the Strategic Planning Process, and Improve the Systematic Tracking and Measuring of Institutional Effectiveness) in its first years in AQIP, Cowley County Community College has indicated its commitment to the AQIP criteria and its responsiveness to Commission concerns regarding its future institutional strategies.

Cowley County Community College has continued this commitment by developing and implementing four additional AQIP Action Projects (Cultural Diversity, Integrating Institutional Data into the Strategic Planning Process, Student Transfer/Career Development, and Assuring Consistency and Quality in Online Delivery) that are related to concerns raised by the Systems Appraisal Team. (AQIP Action Project Review for Reaffirmation, Cowley College Quality Highlights, Systems Appraisal).

II. Fulfillment of The Criteria for Accreditation

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. CCCC has a clear mission statement which it achieves through its “use of collegewide work teams as well as other initiatives … which develop action plans that detail goals, objectives and timelines that are shared internally.” The mission statement is shared with the public and its internal and external stakeholders through its publications, its advisory boards, conversations with others, etc. and is tied to learning goals. (SP, pp. 1-2; SA 16)

2. In identifying its other distinctive objectives, CCCC has used a collaborative, inclusive process that seeks input from internal and external constituents such as advisory boards, community corporate structures, administrators, staff, faculty and students as well as local, state, regional and federal agencies. (SA, p. 22)

3. CCCC’s course offerings, its programs for its students and stakeholders, the rapidly changing
community populations it serves (e.g. English as a Second Language) flow from its mission statement. (SA, p. 26)

4. CCCC’s organizational structure (SP, p. 8) permits the flow of information. The College’s decision-making process includes faculty, staff, students and administration as well as other external stakeholders (e.g. SP, p. 13, new course proposals), insuring the integrity of its course and program offerings, as well as the appropriate delegation of responsibilities in the decision making processes. (SP, Fig. 5.3, pp. 55-57)

5. Critical points of college information are shared through a variety of means to assure clarity of information and communication among and between all levels of the academic community. (SP, p. 60; SA, p. 33)

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution’s Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None.

Recommendation of the Panel.

The Criterion is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.
Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. Strategic planning remains a priority of CCCC. In 1991, the campus and community participated in a study of future needs of CCCC resulting in a 20 year plan. (SU, p. 3; SA 22)

2. CCCC has developed a continuous improvement system to support its institutional operations, including on-going data collection, analysis, and process improvement (e.g. financial and student financial support). (SA, p. 5 and p. 37; SP 66-72)

3. CCCC has implemented a professional development plan that includes improved training and orientation of its personnel. This plan has been developed and implemented through an AQIP Action Project. (AP; SA, p. 5)

4. CCCC routinely collects data on student services and administrative services. These data have been incorporated into the College’s ongoing quality improvement cycles. (SA, p. 57; SP, pp. 71f)

5. CCCC has developed and maintains a variety of key partnerships with area educational institutions, the communities that it serves, and government regulatory agencies through meetings, internships, agreements, advisory boards, etc. (SP, Fig 9.1, p. 85; SA, p. 44)

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

1. Effective short-term and long-term planning involves processes that are connected to results which have been analyzed and include comparative data. These data and results are then are used to shape the ways in which the school strengthens its continuous improvement cycle. Although CCCC recognizes and supports the need to develop this type of continuous planning cycle; it appears as though work remains in this area. (SA, p. 42-43)

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution’s Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None

Recommendation of the Panel

The Criterion is met and no Commission follow-up is recommended.
CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING.
The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. CCCC has established eight student success areas that meet students’ goals. These offerings include: acquisition of an associate degree, completion of career-technical training, completion of coursework for transfer, continuing education studies, community service programs, non-credit programs, business and industry training and improvement in basic skills. (SA, p. 12)

2. Student success in each of these key areas is measured through the assessment of common student learning outcomes, stakeholder feedback, student self-assessment and other methods of assessment established as CCCC’s institutional focus. (SA, p. 12)

3. CCCC has implemented course delivery systems that are flexible, timely, appropriate and integrated to meet the needs of learners. Course schedules include evening, late afternoon, early morning and weekend classes to meet the needs of working adult students. The college also offers accelerated degree programs, integrated curriculum, and various distance learning courses offered via video (telecourses) and internet. (SA, p. 12 and p. 14)

4. Outcomes for general education courses have been standardized across campuses to ensure that all students learn the language and methodology of key academic disciplines. The critical thinking component of the Common Learning Outcomes encourages the development of mutual respect among students, faculty, staff and administrators. (SA, p. 17)

5. CCCC has dedicated a number of AQIP Action Projects to improving the teaching, learning and student development processes, including a project on “quality education,” a project on “consistency and quality in online courses,” and a project on “student transfer and career development.” (AP)

6. CCCC has implemented a process for program review in which the faculty for the program, under the guidance of the department chair, develop a three-year plan that is reviewed annually. (SA, p. 17)

7. CCCC provides numerous programs and services to assist students including orientation, advisement, career services, student support services and tutoring. Online tutoring and advisement programs are in the early stages of delivery. (SA; QPS, p.2; SU, pp.1-3)

8. There are systematic process in place to assess students in reading, writing and math to determine their readiness for college-level work and a mandatory course placement policy. Customized reporting systems for attendance and academic issues assist faculty and staff in identifying students who are experiencing difficulties. (SA, p. 18)
B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

The use of comparative data on student learning appears to be in early stages. CCCC should explore additional sources of comparative and benchmark data in this area to assess performance relative to peer institutions. (SA, p. 20)

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution’s Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

Although the Quality Checkup Team noted that an “assessment of learning skills implementation plan” had been developed, results of these assessments and other student learning assessments have not yet been reported and should be included in the next AQIP Systems Portfolio. The next Systems Portfolio should also include a description on how results of student learning assessments have been used to improve processes for teaching and learning. (SA p.4; SP, pp. 19-22; QCU, p.3)

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None.

Recommendation of the Panel

The Criterion is met; commission follow up may be monitored through the next Systems Portfolio.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. CCCC is committed to learning excellence and personal enrichment in an open access environment. Core values include People, Leadership, Integrity and Accountability. (Mission statement)

2. The College administration is committed to providing a positive atmosphere that fosters personal and professional growth, empowers students and employees to be innovative and visionary and promotes high ethical standards. (SA, p. 32)
3. Through friend-raising, advocacy, and fundraising efforts, the CCCC Foundation sustains the college with financial contributions for educational and cultural programs and capital projects development by the community college and approved by the Board of Trustees. (SA, p. 22)

4. CCCC completed an AQIP Action Project entitled “Plan and Implement Employee Professional Development.” The goal of this project was to develop programs and systems that would contribute to the improvement of workplace skills and employee success. (AP)

5. CCCC has established an AQIP Action Project entitled “Enhance Awareness of Cultural Diversity on Campus and in the Community.” The goal of this project is to educate individuals and embrace individual differences in celebrating diversity of cultures among faculty, staff and students. (AP)

6. To encourage lifelong learning, CCCC provides campus-based workshops and professional development funds are available for conferences and seminars. A tuition reimbursement program is available for employees to continue their formal education. (SA, p. 29)

7. CCCC provides a leadership academy to develop leadership and managerial skills within administrators, deans and directors to enhance their ability to perform their roles with greater effectiveness and accountability. (SA, p. 30)

8. The College engages faculty and staff in grant writing to provide funding to meet student needs and achieve institutional objectives. (SA, p. 22)

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

C. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution’s Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

It was not clear how professional development activities are structured and delivered to assist CCCC in meeting institutional goals and objectives. This issue was addressed by CCCC’s Director of Organizational Learning and Professional Development Team. The process for addressing this issue and accompanying results should be included in the next Systems Appraisal. (SA, p. 30)

D. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.

None
Recommendation of the Panel

The Criterion is met; commission follow up may be monitored through the next Systems Portfolio.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. CCCC identifies five stakeholder groups: students, educational feeder institutions, educational receiving institutions, business and industry and institutional employees. The college regularly assesses the needs of students and stakeholder groups. (SA, p. 43)

2. CCCC maintains partnerships that fall within four general categories: educational institutions, community, business and industry and government and regulatory agencies. (SA, p. 44)

3. The College has successfully created, prioritized and built relationships with its partners and stakeholder groups. Interactions with partners and stakeholders occur through one-on-one meetings, campus activities, collaborative agreements, internships, customized courses and participation on advisory boards. (SA, p. 44)

4. CCCC provides services to assist area job seekers including resume writing, WORKEYS assessments, remedial training through CCCC courses or customized training through seminars or workshops. (SA, p. 22)

5. Internal and external stakeholders, partners and community members are involved in CCCC’s strategic planning processes and these groups also provide input and ideas for new training programs. (SA, p. 22)

6. CCCC reaches out to the community by offering several non-credit courses for personal enrichment and growth, including providing a health and fitness center that is open to community members and offerings through the Institute of Lifetime Learning. (SA, p. 26)

7. Community involvement is emphasized among all CCCC employees and their collective representation has a significant presence in area civic and professional organizations. The College is also plays an important role in area economic development. (SA, p. 26)

B. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.
None

C. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution’s Systems Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.**

Results from collaborative relationships could not be measured at the time of the last System Portfolio. According to follow-up reports, measures have now been developed. Results and accompanying improvement plans should be reported in the next Systems Portfolio.

D. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

**Recommendation of the Panel**

The Criterion is met; commission follow up may be monitored through the next Systems Portfolio.

**Summary of panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation**

The Criteria are all met, and no commission follow-up recommended other than including the specified information in the next Systems Portfolio.

**III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)**

A. **Comments and counsel on specific improvement projects**

CCCC’s record of eight AQIP Action Projects attempted during a six-year time demonstrates the institution’s desire to improve critical systems and processes. All projects were aligned closely with the AQIP criteria. Initial projects include review and improvement of the strategic planning process, measuring institutional effectiveness, implementing employee professional development programs and providing quality instruction to learners at all levels. Current projects are directed at enhancing awareness of diversity, integrating data into the strategic planning process, improving student transfer and career development and assuring quality in online courses and programs. All current projects were established in February 2007 and have been underway for nearly two years. The institution is encouraged to bring these projects to completion and develop additional projects to address other key areas.
B. Comments and counsel on the AQIP categories

Evidence from the Systems Portfolio Feedback Report and comments of the Quality Checkup team demonstrate a positive trend in several of the AQIP categories.

In relation to AQIP Category 1, Helping Students Learn, the College has identified common student learning outcomes and has been developing methods to assess these outcomes. Although it appears that much work has been done in this area since the initial systems appraisal, the next Systems Portfolio should demonstrate evidence that the College is indeed assessing student learning in all curriculum and program areas and using these assessment data to improve processes and results.

In Category 2, CCCC should be commended for its planning and communication of other distinct objectives. The next Systems Portfolio should demonstrate the specific goals, measures and results associated with these objectives as the college moves forward with its business and industry initiatives.

In Category 3, CCCC has several processes in place to establish and maintain relationships with students and key stakeholder groups. In Category 4, CCCC has clearly recognized the importance of valuing people and providing employee training and development opportunities.

In Category 5, the College has made extensive efforts to foster communication among internal and external stakeholder groups. However, it is not clear that the recommendations included in the Systems Appraisal relative to using data more effectively, identifying measures, setting targets or utilizing benchmark data have been implemented.

In Category 6, CCCC has developed a continuous improvement system that has resulted in ongoing data collection, analysis and process improvement in the areas of financial and student administrative support. However, it is unclear that the recommendations included in the Systems Appraisal in this category have been implemented relative to data acquisition and benchmarking, linking student and administrative support processes, setting targets and analyzing information and using it for process improvement.

CCCC has had a data management system in place since 1991 that allows the College to measure effectiveness as required in Category 7. The College continues to refine its processes for setting targets, collecting data, analyzing results and using this information for improvement. The use of comparative data for measuring effectiveness appears to be in early stages across all AQIP categories and the college is encouraged to continue identifying appropriate sources of comparative and benchmark data.

Strategic planning, a core element of Category 8, has remained a focus for CCCC and the College is engaged in an AQIP Action project to improve strategic planning process. In Category 9, CCCC has developed a number of partnerships and collaborative relationships. It is important to the college to continue developing systems to track these partnerships and to identify the goals of each partnership to be able to assess effectiveness.
C. Comments and counsel on the institution’s culture of quality and its quality program or infrastructure.

CCCC's commitment to quality began with organization-wide training in systems and management in the 1990s and resulted in CCCC being recognized with the Kansas Excellence Award in 1999. The College joined AQIP in 2001-2002 and has been involved in two Strategy Forums and eight AQIP Action Projects. CCCC developed its original Systems Portfolio in 1995-1996.

The College's commitment to quality improvement is evident in comments from the both the Systems Appraisal in 1996 and the Quality Checkup Report issued in 2007. The Quality Checkup team also noted that CCCC had started to address the strategic issues identified in the Systems Appraisal. Further progress on these issues is described in the 2008 Quality Highlights document.

The college should be proud that its past and current action projects demonstrate a commitment to the AQIP criteria and to several principles of high performance organizations. CCCC is encouraged to continue in its journey toward continuous improvement. By committing to documenting key processes, measuring results, and identifying improvements with measurable outcomes, the college will be well-positioned to continue to improve service to its students, employees and external stakeholders.

Summary of panel comments and counsel about the organization’s commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP.

As evidenced by the Systems Appraisal and Quality Checkup Report, the college is committed to using AQIP as its primary vehicle for continuous quality improvement. According to the Quality Checkup Report, CCCC is addressing the strategic issues identified in the September 2006 Systems Appraisal Feedback. In addition, the college is using feedback from the Quality Checkup Visit to further refine their quality improvement initiatives and has shaped its AQIP Action Projects to address concerns and opportunities outlined in AQIP feedback. This evidence indicates the college is committed to the principles of high performance organizations and should be encouraged to continue accreditation through the Academic Quality Improvement Program.