QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Cowley County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School

Arkansas City, Kansas
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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*

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 accreditation issues identified by the Systems Appraisal Report dated September 29, 2006.

**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.

It was obvious to the team that the members of the institution reviewed the comments provided by the appraisal team and responded to each concern presented.

Strategic planning has remained a priority with the continuation of an Action Project with it as its focus. Additionally, during the visit it became clear that the administration and the Board are clear as to the need for longer term planning.

The use of data has been incorporated into many of the decision-making processes at the institution and the faculty, staff, and administration continue to refine what data is collected and how it is being used.

The Outcomes Assessment Team has developed an “assessment of learning skills implementation plan” that answers the concerns raised by the appraisal team regarding non-general education courses/programs. There is still some work needed in the out-of-classroom experiences but these are also being addressed.

The concern about succession planning was heard and the board is currently working on a draft for the President’s office which is to be used as a possible template for the other executive offices. Complete position descriptions are on file with Human Resources.
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.

The team believes that quality is becoming part of the institutional culture as the organization is shifting from an “us & them” approach to a “we” orientation. Some version of quality processes has been in place for over a decade and we are confident that quality will soon be imbedded within the institution.

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 default rate trend line is downward sloping decreasing from 14.7% in 1998 to 6.5% in 2005.

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

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

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 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

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 point out a few challenges that Cowley may wish to address in the near future.

The institution has collected data to support many of its decisions. However, it is important to begin to focus on more direct measures of student learning. The team recommends that Cowley consider devoting a portion of an in-service training to understanding direct and indirect measures of student learning.

The integration of the Northern campuses and its burgeoning on-line population into the Cowley Culture continues to be a challenge.
Additionally, it is always important to remember that when it comes to quality processes and AQIP principles it is very difficult to “over communicate” with your faculty and staff. In order for quality to become totally imbedded it must be communicated.

Finally, part of quality processes includes driving decision making down to the lowest levels within the organization. Cowley may wish to devote additional time to assessing its current decision making and communication structures.

General Comments:

Cowley has made great strides in its quality journey and may be viewed as a role model or benchmark in many of its quality processes. It was obvious to us that Cowley is very serious about its quality movement and utilizes the feedback provided by AQIP.

Finally, we would like to compliment Cowley on its warm and welcoming environment, the graciousness of its students, staff, faculty, and board members, and the overall hospitality shown to us during our visit.