

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

**Lorain County
Community College**

Elyria, OH

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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 has reviewed the Lorain County Community College 2005 Systems Portfolio and two subsequent quality applications and found that the Portfolio was an accurate description of key institutional processes and results at the time of its writing. In the team's judgment, Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with the Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- Prior to the visit, the team reviewed the following Lorain County Community College's quality related documents in order to develop a preliminary understanding of the College and its commitment to continuous quality improvement: The 2005 Systems Portfolio and Feedback Report, the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Application and Feedback Report, and the Ohio Award for Excellence Application and Feedback Report.
- During the visit, the team clarified and verified the contents of the institution's Systems Portfolio through meetings with a variety of college stakeholders including the President, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, administrators, students and members of the community.

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

No specific accreditation issues were identified by Lorain County Community College's last Systems Appraisal and none were identified as a result of the Quality Checkup Visit.

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, Lorain County Community College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. In the team's judgment, Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with the Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- Building on the Strategic Issues identified by its last Systems Appraisal, the College has demonstrated extraordinary progress on its quality journey since the completion of its 2005 Systems Portfolio.
- The team was provided with evidence that LCCC has taken action on the opportunities for improvement identified in the AQIP System Portfolio Feedback Report and the subsequent

feedback reports from the Ohio Award for Excellence and Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Program.

- The Vision 2015 process used by LCCC and the resulting Mission, Vision, Values Statements, Six Institutional Priorities and supporting Initiatives, have established a solid foundation for gathering and analyzing the appropriate data required to determine institutional progress toward achieving the institution's six institutional priorities.
- Based on the team's review of the LCCC Baldrige and Ohio Partnership for Excellence applications and the institution's demonstrated response to the feedback from these applications and their Portfolio review, the College is poised to move up to the next level on their quality journey.
- To achieve this next higher level, the College would be well served to focus on measurable ends or goals and interim milestones for their 2015 Visioning Initiatives and other integrated institutional effectiveness measures. The use of such measurable ends or goals will allow faculty, staff and administration to clearly define their desired outcome(s). Interim milestones would then provide indicators of progress which, based on review of and findings related to those milestones, would allow for adjustment, deletion, or amendment of action steps as needed. Consequently, the team encourages the faculty, staff and administration of Lorain County Community College to take this next step and, in so doing, move to an even more effective use of continuous quality improvement in achieving its vision for 2015 and beyond.

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 team commends Lorain County Community College for its commitment to quality improvement and its resulting achievements. Examples of this commitment include:

- The team met with the President and members of the Board of Trustees. In all instances, the team found a clear long- and short-term vision for the College, high levels of energy, and a strong commitment to the institution's quality journey.
- These levels of energy and commitment to continuous quality and the institution's goals were also evident among administrators, faculty and staff as they demonstrated their efforts

to improve discrete processes within the institution.

- The development of the LCCC Vision 2015 with input from multiple stakeholder groups (360 internal participants and 1,435 external participants) as an institutional guide to serving the community and defining long-range priorities for achievement and the short-term initiatives required to achieve those priorities.
- With Vision 2015, the College has established a guide for its future improvement initiatives.
- The full development of the Vision 2015 Matrix (Strategic Initiative ⇒ Action Plan ⇒ Data Source ⇒ Proposed Measure of Success ⇒ Near Target & Timeframe) will provide the college with the continuous quality improvement tools needed to achieve and monitor progress toward achievement of the six Vision 2015 Priorities.
- The use of District Board Indicators to inform the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, administration, and the community the progress being made in achieving its priorities and mission. These indicators include multiple measures with trend data as appropriate for six areas of achievement: linkages with high schools; accessible/affordable learning; collegiate education; life long learning; economic and workforce development; and cultural development.
- The use of Ohio Board of Regents Annual Report data to benchmark LCCC achievements with multiple sectors of Ohio's two year campuses.
- The use of the Integrated and Comprehensive Annual Budget process to align and enable the Vision 2015 Priorities, the four institutional strategic planning processes (Facilities, Enrollment and Staff, Equipment, and Technology), and college and community support initiatives with annual action plan development and assessment, and resource allocation.
- The use of multiple design teams to develop, implement and improve institutional initiatives. The team observed high levels of involvement and ownership by members of the individual design teams. Team members demonstrated genuine enthusiasm and support for the ongoing improvement of those processes in which they were involved.
- LCCC has implemented Six Sigma as an ongoing tool for improving discrete processes within the organization. This implementation includes the training of two Six Sigma Black Belts to assist and support improvement teams and the training of staff in the principles and techniques needed to enable their analysis of system processes. The team observed high

levels of enthusiasm among Six Sigma teams about both the process and the results achieved through their application of Six Sigma principles to reduce waste and improve overall effectiveness of institutional processes.

- The team met with three AQIP Action Project Design Teams (Assessment of Student Learning, Human Resources, and Indicators/Benchmarking). In each case, the teams showed ownership and enthusiasm for their project and its potential impact on the overall satisfaction, internally and externally, with the performance of the College. Each team is to be commended for its commitment to continuous improvement and encouraged to continue its improvement initiatives.
- The team met with faculty and other staff involved with the institution's academic transformation/course redesign effort. The members present displayed genuine enthusiasm for and engagement in their improvement efforts and their impact on student learning. These faculty and staff are encouraged to extend their efforts into a more systemic initiative which would have the potential for even greater improvement on the teaching and learning initiatives of the College.
- The team met with both staff and professional/technical employees and found a positive awareness of the quality initiatives of the College and a commitment to their achievement.
- The team met with students who were both positive and knowledgeable about the College, their experience in the College, and the College's role in supporting the community.
- In response to the Vision 2015 priorities and the institution's commitment to economic development, the College has developed an impressive array of entrepreneurial initiatives such as the LCCC Entrepreneurship Innovation Center, the Glide (Great Lakes Innovation & Development Enterprise) Incubator, and the LCCC Foundation's Innovation Fund to support, retain and grow jobs in Northeast Ohio.

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

In the team's judgment, Lorain County Community College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and

AQIP's expectations.

- Through judicious training of staff and the resulting efforts to address student defaults, the College has achieved a declining trend line in default rates from 1987 through 2006, the most recent year for which data is currently available.
- The College has achieved over a 20% reduction in default rates from 1987 through 2006 with a current low of 2.9%.
- The College reports consistently clean audit opinions from its annual A133 audits.

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

In the team's judgment, Lorain County Community College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. This evidence included the following:

- Press releases to daily and weekly newspapers with an estimated circulation of 182,000 beginning on January 7, 2008 and continuing through January 21.
- Solicitation of comments via the LCCC Website.

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. Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- LCCC offers credit in compliance with the Ohio Board of Regent's *Operating Manual for Two-Year College Programs*.
- LCCC's associate degree and technical certificates follow the guidelines established by the Ohio Board of Regent's *Operating Manual for Two-Year College Programs*.
- The College offers 50 associate degree programs, 11 one-year technical certificates, and 11 short-term technical certificates.
- As reported to the Ohio Board of Regents, LCCC's annualized full-time undergraduate tuition is \$2,400 for in-district residents, \$2,890 for out-of-district residents; and \$5,837 for out-of-state residents. This tuition is second lowest of the five Ohio community colleges with

a local district levy.

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

In the team's judgment, Lorain County Community College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- The team reviewed a variety of advertising and recruitment materials including the College Website.
- The materials reviewed were consistent with the mission and values of Lorain County Community College and were in compliance with Commission Policy IV.B.2.

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, Lorain County Community College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Lorain County Community College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- While the College does not have a single agency accrediting a significant portion of its programs, it does have a variety of programs which are accredited by program specific accrediting agencies such the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, the American Dental Association, and Joint Committee on Education in Radiological Technology.
- The College is in compliance with Commission Policy II.A.1.

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.

- Lorain County Community College maintains both informal and formal student complaint processes.
- The formal student complaint process includes both an appeal and final review by the President.
- Complaints over a three year period have ranged between 6 and 15 annually.

Other USDE compliance-related 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.

- LCCC advertised the AQIP Quality Checkup visit over 60 days prior to the site visit on the LCCC Website and in a variety of local papers.
- Two third-party comments were received. One comment was a suggestion for a new area of study at the College.
- The substance of both comments was shared with the institution, but neither comment needed to be addressed in this Checkup Report.

Other AQIP issues

The Quality Checkup Team found no other AQIP issues.