

McHenry County College (MCC) is focused on making “McHenry County College the leading community college in Illinois by focusing on excellence and student success.” This goal has been the driving force for the College over the past two years. Much has changed at MCC since the submission of a Systems Portfolio in November 2009 as the College now emphasizes excellence, quality improvement and comprehensive strategic planning more than ever before.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AT MCHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE**

MCC has been an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) institution since 2006. In November 2009, the College submitted its first [Systems Portfolio](#) and in February 2010, received the [Systems Appraisal Feedback Report](#). Six “Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies” were specifically outlined: Comprehensive Strategic Planning; Responding Proactively; Comprehensive Metrics, Performance Targets and Systematic Analyses; Leadership Development; Comparison Data; and Continuous Quality Infrastructure and Culture.

On September 28-30, 2011, Dr. Cecilia Wittmayer and Dr. Cathy Anderson completed MCC’s first Quality Checkup visit. Their report to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) stated that, “In the team’s judgment, McHenry County College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach to and schedule for the Quality Checkup visit provided ample opportunity for the review team to examine evidence provided in the Systems Portfolio. No additional clarification or verification is needed. McHenry (County College) complies with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.”

To date, MCC has implemented [56 Action Teams](#). Of those, nine action teams have been reported directly to the HLC:

- Clarify and Improve the Process of General Education Assessment (Fall 2006)
- Develop a Culture of Continuous Improvement (Fall 2006)
- Key Performance Indicator and Balanced Scorecard Development (Fall 2006)
- Curriculum Mapping (Spring 2009)
- Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (Spring 2009)
- Enterprise Resource Planning (Spring 2009—project put on hold and re-launched Fall 2010)
- Implementing Priority Registration (Spring 2010)
- Student Success (started in Spring 2011)
- Planning for Employee Effectiveness and Success (started in Spring 2011)
- Planning and Measuring Institutional Effectiveness (started in Spring 2011)

MCC’s AQIP Steering Committee consists of members of the Executive Council, administration, faculty, staff, members-at-large as needed, and three ex officio members from Institutional Research, Institutional Effectiveness and the President’s Office.

## **INITIATIVES SINCE SYSTEMS APPRAISAL AND QUALITY CHECKUP**

### **Educational Master Plan**

The [Educational Master Plan](#) was approved by the Board of Trustees in August 2011. This plan was developed to provide direction to the development of programs, support services, and ultimately facilities to meet the higher educational needs of the district. The three areas of emphasis are: 1) increased access for district residents, 2) ensuring excellence in teaching and learning and, 3) cultivating a climate of

student success. This plan serves as the roadmap for the development of the Facility Master Plan, Technology Master Plan, and Fiscal Plan. The Educational Master Plan provides MCC's focus for "Helping Students Learn." Accomplishments in this category include:

**a. Excellence in Teaching**

An AQIP action team is focusing on the quality of instruction at MCC with the development of a clear definition of excellence in teaching and a faculty enrichment process that reflects those values. On April 26, 2012, MCC's Curriculum and Academic Policy Council (CAPC) approved the definition. Professional enrichment opportunities to enhance the four areas of expertise (subject matter, pedagogy, assessment, and professionalism) will be implemented via Faculty Professional Development Days, the New Faculty Orientation/tenure process, the Adjunct Faculty Orientation, and a stronger professional development web presence.

**b. Focus on Student Success and Completion**

An increased focus on student success, support and completion resulted in a restructuring of the Student Affairs Division. This was necessary to create three redefined clusters that align with the Educational Master Plan. The new structure includes more efficient student services, increased academic support and tracking, and expanded educational and student development and engagement. The clusters interface and will track quarterly student success, completion and support rates. This data will influence the future structure and support efforts for students.

**c. High School Dual-Credit Programming**

Through strong partnerships with nine area high schools, MCC has dramatically expanded its three different dual-credit programs to increase from 148 students in 2009 to 1,097 in 2012. The three options provide high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit and increase college readiness skills while attending high school. While it is too early to chart statistics for the current year, of the 118 students enrolled in "Partnerships for College and Career Success" in 2009, 80 (68%) returned to MCC for a college education over the next two years.

**d. New Academic Programs**

Since 2009, MCC has added a stackable culinary degree in Pastry, Culinary Management and an Associate of Applied Science in Culinary Management. Much of this was made possible through a partnership with Woodstock North High School that allowed use of their newly created space and allowed them to enroll high school students in MCC classes. Renovation at MCC is currently underway to reconfigure space to include a culinary lab on campus and expand on the strong success of this new academic program. An Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program is underway, and a weekend nursing program launched in January 2012 to meet demand. Robotics and Graphic Arts degree programs also have been added, plus a certificate in Medical Billing and Coding.

**e. Expanding to Reach Residents in the Far Northwest Corner of Service Area**

In an effort to increase access in the far northwest corner of McHenry County, MCC has developed an outreach site in Harvard, IL which will offer eight different classes beginning in the Fall 2012 semester. Residents will take high-demand classes, working toward their degree or certificate—all closer to home, saving time and transportation costs.

**Facility Master Plan**

In response to the direction of the Education Master Plan to meet the needs of the County, a Facility Master Plan establishes the educational facility space needed for the next 10, 20 and 40 years. The year-long development of the plan obtained public, business, legislative, faculty, board, and student input through focus groups and community-wide presentations. The final plan was presented and adopted by the Board of Trustees in April 2012. Input from three AQIP action teams also contributed to the final

designs and information including Campus Signage, Room Usage and MCC's newly adopted Sustainability Strategic Plan.

### **Professional Development Strategic Plan**

In support of the Educational Master Plan's focus on Excellence in Teaching and the College's focus on quality employees, a new Professional Development Strategic Plan was developed. This plan supports the mission of the College through a continuum of strategic professional enrichment opportunities for all faculty, staff and administrators. A strong component of leadership and organizational development is built in. The Professional Development team will use the strategic directions of the plan to design topic specific, year-long curriculums, workshops and courses. In addition, a satisfaction tool and data tracking venue will be used to improve and respond to needs and desires to meet individual employee development plans.

### **Revising Board Policy Manual**

In June 2010, teams of MCC administrators began taking a careful look at the current *Board Policy Manual*. Although many of the policies and procedures within it have been updated, the last major revision was in 2007. Using AQIP principles, each section is benchmarked against other institutions and then rewritten to undergo attorney review before being presented to the Board for their input and final approval.

### **Community Engagement Efforts**

Since 2009, MCC has proactively engaged the community by soliciting input on specific topics/programs to help with planning and development efforts. In 2009, MCC's community engagement effort (*MAP*) brought community members together various times for presentation and discussion. The feedback that resulted from this year-long effort informed the College's new strategic plan and direction. These community engagement efforts continue, during the facility master planning process, the visioning of a manufacturing training center, and the rebranding process. The College has also initiated a Community Outreach Core Team of individuals who will more proactively engage different groups of the community in discussion and feedback.

### **Brand Identity Initiative**

Since early 2011, MCC has been focused on defining the MCC experience, or brand, in order to better describe what the College is committed to in a way that is relevant to the many groups served. Through the delivery of a new brand, the College will consistently use the same language and imagery to describe its strengths and uniqueness so that the community is more aware of how MCC is significant to their needs. After research conducted with employees, students, community members and business partners, three distinctive qualities were established to best define MCC. With the launch of its new brand in August 2012, MCC will demonstrate that anticipating change, building a community of learners, and delivering quality programs are at the heart of what makes this a leading community college in the nation.

### **Managing College Data**

MCC currently is in the midst of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation which will allow for the collection, tracking and measurement of data that has not been accessible in the past. Information on student, employee and financial records and reports will be readily available to drive data-informed decision making and systematically stimulate continuous improvement.

### **Using Assessment Results to Drive Transformations**

Faculty assess student learning relative to MCC's general education goals and record their results and the resulting transformations on a shared network drive. The Assessment Team, composed of faculty, administrators and staff, reviews these assessment reports and categorizes the transformations made in response to assessment results. The typology of transformations includes pedagogical change, curricular

change, modification of assessment tool, etc. In 2011, we began reviewing these results annually to ensure that transformations are meaningful and substantive.

### **Planning and Measuring Institutional Effectiveness**

In Spring 2011, in direct response to feedback we received on the Systems Portfolio, MCC launched an AQIP action team to develop operational performance metrics for the non-academic departments of the College. The work of the team is still ongoing and will be developing a tool or template for department leaders to enter their metrics into a central repository, which will allow them to access their metrics as needed and also allow institution-level reports to be run.

As the College moves forward, an emphasis is being placed on utilizing best practices from other institutions. On a more informal basis, employees are encouraged to interact with others through their own professional networking opportunities and conferences, and bring that learning back into the institution. The College also collects data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Personal Assessment of the Collegiate Environment (PACE), the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, and the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP). We are at the early stages of using this data to set performance targets and develop meaningful action plans.

### **Benchmarking Academic Performance Indicators**

An AQIP action team was formed to develop academic performance indicators to measure student learning and success. After investigation and discussion, the team developed indicators in four distinct areas: College Readiness; Assessment Outcomes; Retention, Persistence, and Success; and Goal Completion and Graduation. The *Academic Performance Indicators* book has been developed by Institutional Research, and the College is working to use this information to create a dashboard that will drive data-based decision making regarding the academic enterprise and student learning at MCC.

### **Planning for Employee Effectiveness and Success**

After careful consideration of System Appraisal results in preparation for the Strategy Forum in October 2010, the College focused on “Valuing People.” The topic of communication came up as an area for improvement, and new initiatives were implemented. A monthly Town Hall meeting held the day after Board meetings now encourages employees to meet with the president for information sharing and Q&A. The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs regularly hosts an open Q&A session. The executive council team meets with the academic divisions and provides communication and answers questions. To promote the communication of expectations and drive accountability, a new annual employee performance evaluation tool and process has been developed by an AQIP action team with the primary goal of facilitating communication between supervisors and employees. Another action team is implementing an employee classification and compensation analysis to improve job descriptions, appropriate compensation levels and sufficient staffing levels.

## **THE FUTURE OF AQIP AT MCHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE**

AQIP is now embraced at McHenry County College. A culture and infrastructure of continuous quality improvement is firmly in place. A series of well thought out initiatives and action projects are using metrics, performance targets, systematic analyses and comparison data to strategically plan for the future. The action project process has been streamlined to make AQIP “a way of life” as opposed to a list of action teams. Based on feedback from the Quality Checkup, a student and adjunct faculty member are joining the AQIP Steering Committee. A more comprehensive action project selection and scheduling process will place a strategic focus on priorities and address the opportunities for improvement in the College’s Systems Appraisal.