

AQIP Quality Highlights Report

Prepared for the Reaffirmation Review Panel, as part of the
Accreditation Reaffirmation Process



O c t o b e r 2 0 1 4

History/Background

The Academic Year 2014-15 is an exciting time as we celebrate our college's century mark! We are proud of the fact that we have been continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1917. In November 2000, Grand Rapids Community College was officially accepted into North Central Association's AQIP Program as one of the inaugural members. In spring of 1999, members of the GRCC NCA Self-Study Team began to hear reports from other colleges who had shown great success in making system-wide transformational improvement by using a quality approach to re-accreditation. After careful research and study, it was determined that GRCC would be an excellent candidate for this new approach. In the late 1990s, GRCC faculty and staff participated in extensive training in total quality management tools and processes. The Self-Study team was eager to participate in a quality-based accreditation process hoping that it would result in a continuous focus on improvement rather than a major effort in the form of a self-study followed by several years of relative inactivity.

Our history as an AQIP college has been a positive one. We established our first set of action projects in 2001. We have attended Strategy Forums in 2002, 2005, 2009 and 2014. We submitted Systems Appraisals in 2005 and 2009; and prepared a Michigan Quality Leadership Award application as part of the Baldrige option in February 2012. In addition, we submitted an AQIP Baldrige Option Summary report in November of 2012 as well as our Quality Program Summary in February of 2014.

Oversight of Quality Implementation at GRCC

When GRCC first joined the AQIP process, the quality management journey was overseen by a new team entitled the Quality Leadership Team. This team, established to lead quality and AQIP efforts, was comprised predominately of former members of the 1999 NCA Self-Study Team. Within a few years it became apparent that the quality process had to become the "way we do business at GRCC" and thus the College Leadership Council was created. This new team was a merger of the President's Cabinet and the Quality Leadership Team and was responsible for overall college leadership. Currently, the oversight of quality management at GRCC is done jointly by the Strategic Leadership Team and the President's Cabinet. Our current model provides for college-wide representation on the Strategic Leadership Team as well as agility with a smaller President's Cabinet. All members of President's Cabinet are also Strategic Leadership Team members. AQIP action projects are approved and monitored regularly by the Deans Council in addition to the Strategic Leadership Team.

Major Changes and Improvements since April 2014 Quality Checkup Visit

The Quality Checkup Visit for GRCC occurred April 2-4, 2014. The feedback report was received in June, 2014. After receiving the report, President Ender sent an e-mail notice to all faculty and staff attaching the report and thanking everyone for their hard work and dedication to student success. In addition, the report was posted publically to the grcc.edu/accreditation webpage.

The Checkup Team determined that GRCC had presented satisfactory evidence that it met the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the core components therein). The report noted that "*The institution's approach to addressing the Criteria, documenting how they are meeting those Criteria, and the subsequent performance of their processes as they address the Criteria were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.*" However, several of the core components within the Criteria were marked as "Adequate but could be improved." Although only a short time has passed since receiving the report (4 months), we take this opportunity to provide an update on our improvement efforts in these areas.

Areas deemed “Adequate but could be improved” by Quality Checkup Team		
Criteria/Core Component	Quality Checkup Team Suggestions	GRCC Response
Criterion 1, Core Component D: The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good	No specific suggestions provided	We continue to look for ways to incorporate community feedback into our decision-making processes including the use of advisory boards, focus groups, community meetings, and community surveys.
Criterion 2, Core Component D: The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning	Concern about the implementation of the new Academic Freedom policy (coupling freedom of expression with community standards). Concern about the lack of faculty support for the new faculty evaluation process.	The new Academic Freedom policy was formally adopted in April, 2014. It contains a stipulation that <i>“Faculty members must also recognize that students are free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered....”</i> To date, no issues have arisen surrounding the new policy. However, we will continue to monitor this issue closely. Regarding the negative reviews of the new faculty evaluation process, we solicited feedback from participating faculty in both November, 2013 and April, 2014. Several faculty suggestions for improvement have been implemented for this year. We plan to repeat this survey in November 2014 and April 2015 continuing to seek suggestions for positive change.
Criterion 3: Core Component B: The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its education programs	We were encouraged to continue the improvements in both the accelerated developmental education program and the “Street to Completion” project until data is available to document the results.	Data regarding the success of students in the accelerated developmental education program was presented to the Deans Council in the <i>Teaching and Learning Quality Report on Developmental Education in August 2014</i> . Retention, course completion, and course success rates were encouraging and the project is currently being “scaled up” for full implementation. Likewise, data from the Street to Completion project shows an overall increase in fall to fall retention rates for Fall 2014.
Criterion 3: Core Component C: The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services	No specific suggestions provided	Since April 2014, we have hired 49 full time faculty positions and another 7 staff positions. Forty-two of the new faculty had been previously holding temporary or part time positions at GRCC.
Criterion 3: Core Component D:	No specific suggestions	The 2014-17 Strategic Plan is written to

Areas deemed “Adequate but could be improved” by Quality Checkup Team		
Criteria/Core Component	Quality Checkup Team Suggestions	GRCC Response
The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching	provided	accomplish the three ends of Student Success, Workforce Pathways, and Transfer pathways. Twenty-one college action projects are currently being implemented to improve support systems for student learning and effective teaching.
Criterion 3: Core Component E: The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment	Lack of comparative data for student activity indicators.	We participate in national benchmark projects including CSRDE, NCCBP, CCSSE, SENSE. In addition, we will continue to seek out new benchmark opportunities.
Criterion 4: Core Component B The institution demonstrates a commitment to education achievement and improvement through on-going assessment of student learning	No specific suggestions provided	Assessment of student learning projects continue to be a core component of the Academic Program Review process. In 2013-14, 24 projects were in progress across the 11 academic departments reviewed. These projects included developing assessment tools (7), collecting data (3), analyzing data and planning improvements (7), implementation of improvements (2), and assessing impact of improvements (5).
Criterion 4: Core Component C The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.	No specific suggestions provided	In July 2014, we began to implement 21 college action projects as part of our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. The indicators for success in this plan include retention, completion, and course success rates. In addition, GRCC is participating in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.
Criterion 5: Core Component B The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.	No specific suggestions provided	The Checkup Team identified that GRCC has a strong team structure. We believe our system of teams (standing teams, ad hoc teams, implementation teams, college action project teams) as well as our organizational structure serves to enable us to achieve our mission. However, we continue to monitor this system to ensure we are as effective as possible.
Criterion 5: Core Component D The institution works to systematically to improve its performance.	No specific suggestions provided	We have established the Teaching and Learning Quality model and improvement process. Within this system, process and outcome measures for 40 distinct academic processes are tracked and reported to Deans Council on an annual basis. These

Areas deemed “Adequate but could be improved” by Quality Checkup Team		
Criteria/Core Component	Quality Checkup Team Suggestions	GRCC Response
		reports include strategies for improvement which are subsequently monitored for implementation. 2014-2015 marks the 3 rd year of implementation for this improvement model.

The Checkup Team concluded their report with five observations noting that these issues were not to be considered “concerns” but rather ideas for future consideration. These issues, along with our response, are found below.

1. The College’s mission/vision/values are not clearly posted on campus.

A placard with the mission, vision, values, and college ends is mounted at eye level at the entry doors of every campus building. These placards were updated in September, 2014 to include the revised Ends from the new 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. In addition, in August, each faculty and staff member were provided with both a color copy of the strategic plan including the vision, mission, values, ends, and institutional learning outcomes (5.5 in by 8.5 in) as well as an 8.5 in by 17in poster size academic calendar for 2014-15 which included the mission/vision/values as well as the ends/strategies/college action projects.

2. Concern about employee burnout with too much focus on the work itself rather than the outcomes of the work.

The checkup team suggested that we put more emphasis on celebrating our successes. To that end, we held two “Celebration” lunches in August, 2014 to recognize faculty and staff for the outstanding work accomplished in preparation of the checkup visit. In addition, our work at the September AQIP Strategy Forum was focused on “putting a face” on our part time students to better understand their needs in order to provide effective support services.

3. Student lack of awareness of how AQIP affects the quality of the educational experience they are receiving at GRCC.

Beginning in September, three student leaders have joined the Strategic Leadership Team as voting members. All three students participated in a special orientation session for new SLT members in August. It is our expectation that these three students will be able to take information about quality principles and how they impact the decision-making process at GRCC back to the student groups they represent.

4. Students feel safe on GRCC’s campus.

We were pleased that the checkup team reported that students reported feel very safe at Grand Rapids Community College. Over the past several months we have been offering sessions to all faculty and staff on how to deal with an active shooter situation. As of July, 2014, 95% of full-time faculty, 84% of staff, and 67% of adjunct faculty have participated in these sessions. Additional sessions are scheduled for this fall in order to reach our goal of 100% faculty and staff trained. This training will be on-going as new people are hired and additional course content is added.

5. Faculty concern about new evaluation system.

The checkup visit occurred during the exact time that faculty were working to comply with the provisions of the evaluation process that had been negotiated jointly between the faculty union and the administration. The new system includes additional paperwork and documentation when compared with the former process and many faculty were frustrated by the new requirements. Surveys asking faculty for suggestions on how to improve the new system were administered in November, 2013 and April, 2014. Several improvement ideas were subsequently implemented. We are planning to re-administer these surveys in November, 2014 and April, 2015. In addition, we have secured the services of an external evaluator to review the process and provide feedback.

AQIP Action Project Summary

GRCC currently has four AQIP Action Projects (with a 5th project “in process”). In addition to the current projects, GRCC has successfully completed a number of AQIP Action Projects. Since our acceptance into the AQIP Process, we have selected and managed AQIP Action Projects in a variety of ways including oversight by the Quality Leadership Team, the Strategy Team, the team attending the Strategy Forum, etc. Currently, AQIP Action Projects are College Action Projects within the GRCC Strategic Plan that have been selected to be AQIP projects due to their potential for positive change for the greatest number of students. The monitoring of the implementation of the AQIP Action Projects is done through Deans Council.

Current AQIP Action Projects *(Descriptions from HLC Action Project Directory Website)*

1. Pathways to Employment

AQIP Category: Helping Students Learn

Project Start: 2010

Most recent AQIP review: October, 2014

The goal of this project is to assess, develop and implement a new path to employment support service system for GRCC students. The project would be a collaborative effort to integrate both on campus and community resources into the system. This effort will lead to a comprehensive inventory and effectiveness assessment of services, methods and communications in our present services. We will use this information to then determine the gaps and plan for the future system. Finding and securing a career related job is a very competitive process under the present economic times and job market. The new coordinated system would build and streamline pathways for students to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to meet this future challenge. We plan to “retire” this project in December, 2014.

2. Strengthening the Infrastructure of Distance-Delivered Education to Promote Student Success

AQIP Category: Helping Students Learn

Start date: 2012

Most recent AQIP review: Pending

Complete a thorough inventory of the purpose, goals, organizational structure, internal and external technology needs, professional development processes, impact on student learning and student success of distance-delivered education at GRCC. Some activities could include: designing strategies for bringing greater consistency among online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses and student support services, especially as these modalities support or impede student success; consider and respond as necessary to

the needs of faculty and staff who use instructional technologies to support student success; create necessary processes and engage resources where necessary that strengthen the overall infrastructure of distance-delivered education.

3. SARS – Early Alert and Scheduling System

AQIP Category: Helping Students Learn

Project Start: 2014

Most recent AQIP review: September, 2014

The goal of this project is to implement a cross campus scheduling system that is fully integrated with the Early Alert System. The Early Alert System allows faculty to identify students exhibiting behaviors or patterns that may interfere with classroom success. Once an Early Alert flag is raised, the Office of Student Success and Retention investigates, identifies, and recommends appropriate intervention strategies.

4. College Generated Graduation

AQIP Category: Helping Students Learn

Project Start: 2014

Most recent AQIP review: September, 2014

Students will automatically be awarded the degrees and certificates that they earn at GRCC. Students will have the opportunity to decline these credentials.

5. Understanding the Needs of Part-time Learners (Pending)

Project Start: October, 2014 (*This project is an outcome of the September Strategy Forum; this project will go to Dean's Council for approval in October, 2014*)

Project Completion: June, 2015

Over the past 10 years, the student profile at Grand Rapids Community College has gone from 55% part time students to 66% part time students (Fall 2013 Enrollment Report). We believe that the majority of our student support services were designed and implemented to best meet the needs of the full time learner. The purpose of this project is to better understand the needs of our part time students. The data from this research project will be shared with several college action project teams who are working to improve services for students.

Completed AQIP Action Projects

- Improving Student Learning Through Course Development, Assessment, and Revision
- Improving Student Support Systems from Street-to-seat
- The Raider Learning System
- Design and Implement a First Year Experience Program for New Students
- From the Street to the "Right" Seat
- Student Success by Deliberate Design
- Expanding the Distance Learning Program
- Improving the Adjunct Experience
- Integrating GRCC's Performance Management Systems with Employee Development Systems
- The College Success Program

AQIP – Baldrige Option

As of 2010, NCA/HLC instituted a pilot AQIP program with a Baldrige Option. In July 2011, GRCC applied for acceptance into this pilot. As part of the Baldrige Option requirements, GRCC submitted an application for the Michigan Quality Leadership Award in February, 2012. In May of 2012, we were notified that we would receive a site visit. The site visit, including eight examiners plus one representative from the Michigan Quality Council, occurred Sept. 10 – 12, 2012. A Feedback Report listing areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement was received in October, 2012. The list of recommendations was prioritized by interested faculty and staff during a series of Dot Voting Fairs held in April of 2013. The President’s Cabinet reviewed the prioritized opportunities and decided on further actions. In some cases, it was determined that existing College Action projects were already being implemented to address the issues. In other cases, we believed that the site visit team had not been provided appropriate documentation regarding a particular process and that no specific action was needed. And lastly, for some items individuals or teams were assigned to put improvement plans in place. Cabinet has been monitoring the progress of these items regularly. A full update of our progress on these items was prepared for the Checkup Reviews in April of this year.

GRCC Response to AQIP Systems Appraisal- Baldrige Option Feedback Report

GRCC received the AQIP Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option Feedback Report in February of 2013. A complete discussion of our response to these issues can be found in the GRCC Quality Summary Report (February, 2014).

HLC Persistence and Completion Academy - March, 2014

In late summer of 2013, GRCC applied to join the inaugural HLC Persistence and Completion Academy in order to reinforce our efforts to increase the student outcomes of retention and degree completion. A full team attended the first Academy in March, 2014. The outcome of that workshop was the development of a specific project entitled “Street to Completion: Increasing Student Persistence at Grand Rapids Community College.” The goal is to increase student success as measured by retention, transfer and completion. This project has seven components: Access, Cohort Groups, Off-Campus Students, Latina/Latino Students, Retention, Transfer and Graduation.

Access: Students in Business, Culinary Arts, and Transfer-Not Specified are being targeted to increase the student success rate (earned a degree, earned a degree and transferred, transferred or still attending GRCC) and decrease the lost rate.

Cohort Groups: Student employees, Foundation Scholarship Students and African American male students are being targeted to increase the student success rate (earned a degree, earned a degree and transferred, transferred or still attending GRCC) and decrease the lost rate.

Off-Campus Students: This team was charged with determining whether retention rates were significantly different for students attending off campus locations compared to main campus students, and, if so, identify barriers that can be removed to increase retention.

Latina/Latino Students: The team analyzed data from Fall 2012 First Time in Any College Students (FTIAC). We found that 30% of Latino students are “Lost” for unknown reasons. “Lost” students mean that they did not graduate, transfer, or were suspended for academic or financial aid reasons or placed

on probation. Only 44% enrolled for the Fall 2013 semester, compared to 49% of all Fall 2012 FTIAC students and 54% of white students. It is important to mention that Latino students have the highest percentage of “Lost” students.

Retention: As part of the Street to Completion project, the Dean of Student Success and Retention was charged with increasing the retention rates of one or more groups of students in a specific curriculum code (major). The Dean assembled a cross-college team, including representatives from Institutional Research and Planning, Information Technology, Student Affairs, the Deans of Arts and Sciences and Workforce Development and the area of Student Success and Retention. Faculty from Counseling, Criminal Justice and Reading were also added to the team. After review of the retention of different groups of students from Fall 2012, the team selected Undecided Students due to the large number of students indicating they were undecided and a high “lost rate”, 39%.

Transfer: As part of the Street to Completion project, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences was charged with improving the transfer rates for one or more groups of students. The Dean began this task by interviewing a number of college personnel about various issues related to transfer in order to better understand all aspects of this process. The Dean then invited a small team, working on an ad hoc basis, to undertake several efforts in year one. This team includes the Associate Dean of Operations from Arts and Sciences, the Transfer and Articulation Coordinator, the Program Director of Counseling, and a representative from Institutional Research and Planning.

Graduation: The Dean of the School of Workforce Development was given the responsibility to lead one of the project elements for the Street to Completion project that began in Fall 2013. The area of focus was student graduation. The primary goal was to determine strategies to improve graduation rates for students at GRCC based on the data provided by 2011-2012 data provided by IRP. The graduation rate for students for this one year period was 7% for those students who earned a degree and did not transfer and for those students who transferred and earned a degree.

The work of this project has been included in several College Action Projects in our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan adopted in July, 2014. An update of this project will be sent to HLC in November, 2014.

Strategy Forum Participation – September, 2014

GRCC sent a leadership team to the September 22-24, 2014 Strategy Forum. As an outcome of our work, we have proposed a new AQIP Action Project. Work on this project is currently underway.

Project Purpose: Over the past 10 years, the student profile at Grand Rapids Community College has gone from 55% part time students to 66% part time students (Fall 2013 Enrollment Report). We believe that the majority of our student support services were designed and implemented to best meet the needs of the full time learner. The purpose of this project is to better understand the needs of our part time students. The data from this research project will be shared with several college action project teams who are working to improve services for students.

Project Workplan:

Activity	Lead person	Proposed Date	Deliverable
Prepare a 5-year demographic analysis of	IRP	Nov 1, 2014	Written report to be shared with AQIP

part-time students focusing on how they differ from full time students (age, gender, Pell grant status, residence status, developmental education status, program majors, ethnicity)			team and key CAP champions
Disaggregate outcome data (course success rate, fall to fall retention rate, 6 year graduation/transfer rate (State of Michigan indicator), CCSSE data) for part time students compared with full time students	IRP	Dec 1, 2014	Written report to be shared with AQIP team and key CAP champions
Hold a series of focus groups with part time students (minimum of six).	AQIP Team members	Focus groups to be held in November, 2014	Focus group results
Analyze data from focus groups for Key themes	AQIP Team members	January, 2015	Written report
Prepare presentation for Strategic Leadership Team	AQIP Team members	March 2015	Presentation prepared
Facilitate exercise with CAP Champions regarding how or if the new information about part time students will inform their specific projects at Strategic Leadership Team meeting	AQIP Team members	April 2015	SLT meeting
Collect data regarding how information was incorporated into specific activities	IRP	May-June, 2015	Written report

This project has two major components; (1) Data analysis and (2) Focus groups. The data analysis piece will be done primarily by Institutional Research and Planning staff with a written report prepared for the AQIP Team. The Focus group research will be led by the AQIP Team involving others from the President's Cabinet and Student Services staff. All project findings will be shared with the 72 member Strategic Leadership Team who is responsible for implementing 21 projects as part of the GRCC Strategic Plan. The CAP Champions will be asked to provide information on the degree to which the information about part time students was incorporated into their unique projects.

The biggest challenge we may face as we implement this project is our ability to hold focus groups with part time students. However, we have some strategies that we believe will encourage their participation. In addition, we may face some opposition in terms of changing long-standing practices to better meet the needs of part time learners. For example, support offices that are open 9-5 may be resistant to change.

GRCC Strategic Plan 2014-2017

Grand Rapids Community College faculty and staff have been committed to student success for 100 years. One of the tools we use to continuously improve our programs and services to students is through the strategic planning process. In July 2014, we published our 2014-17 Strategic Plan. This plan, authored by the 72-member Strategic Leadership Team, outlines the strategies, action projects, project

champions and indicators of success that will drive our work during the next three years. Regular monitoring reports to the Strategic Leadership Team and board of trustees will allow us to track the plan and move the needle in a positive direction through a series of 16 success indicators.

The 2014-17 Strategic Plan organizes our work under three college ends:

- Student success pathways
- Workforce pathways
- Transfer pathways

Under each college end, strategies have been developed to guide college action projects. There are a total of seven strategies and 21 college action projects. The strategies are:

- Access
- Persistence
- Student support
- Student learning
- Completion
- Knowledge and infrastructure
- Student pathways

Current Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Grand Rapids Community College has been committed to AQIP and its continuous improvement process since joining as an inaugural member in 2000. We have attended four Strategy Forums, authored three Systems Portfolios, and hosted two Check-up visits since that time. We have four current AQIP action projects, a 5th project “pending,” and have completed a total of ten projects over the last 14 years. Continuous quality improvement tools and practices are embedded into our culture and operations as evidence by our receipt of the Michigan Quality Leadership Award in 2007, our acceptance into the AQIP Baldrige Option in 2011, and our Honor Roll recognition by the Michigan Quality Council in 2012.

In addition, GRCC has two academic administrators serving appointments as members of the Peer Review Corps for the Higher Learning Commission.