

Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation

for

Kankakee Community College

Kankakee, Illinois

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 (Kankakee Quality Highlights - August, 2008)
- 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

Kankakee Community College was first accredited by the Commission in March 1974, (having been admitted to Candidacy for Accreditation in March 1971). The institution was admitted to AQIP on May 2, 2002. It participated in Strategy Forums on October 23- 25, 2002, and May 17 – 19, 2006.

Since admission to AQIP, the institution has officially declared and attempted seven individual Action Projects, and has provided AQIP with Annual Updates of ongoing projects and received Annual Update Feedback Reports on these.

Kankakee Community College provided its Systems Portfolio for review in November 2005, and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on March 23, 2006. 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 on August 22, 2008.

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

Kankakee Community College (KCC) is a public, not-for-profit, two-year public community college which encompasses most of Kankakee and Iroquois counties and part of Livingston, Ford, Grundy, and Will counties with a total district population of 120,000. The college plays a major role in workforce development in the district.

Most of the students attend KCC to gain or improve employment while 40 % plan to get a four year degree. Developmental courses are offered both for GED completion as well as preparation for college-level work. ESL courses are offered for basic communication skills, but not for college preparation. Online delivery is new since 2002 and the Corporate and Continuing Education department offers a variety of courses via online delivery.

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

A Quality Checkup site visit to KCC was conducted on April 25-27, 2007. In compliance with Commission requirements, the institution notified its constituencies and the public of this visit, and 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 KCC on April 25-27, 2007, examined

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evidence provided by the institution of its compliance with the Commission's federal compliance program. The Quality Checkup site visit team concluded that KCC presented satisfactory evidence that it is in complete compliance with all Commission and AQIP expectations in this program.

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

KCC has shown itself to be responsive to Commission concerns about its operations. Three action projects resulted from the Appraisal Report in March 2006: Assessment of General Education Outcomes, Communication, and Continuous Improvement. The Quality Checkup site visit found evidence of a four-year strategic plan led by the President. The team also discovered that KCC had worked hard to develop a culture of continuous quality improvement where members use a common terminology and are actively involved in action projects and systemic process improvement.

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. The existence of a four-year integrated strategic plan led by the President will help ensure the institution fulfills its mission by defining and communicating long-range strategic priorities for the college. Since this planning process is linked to the AQIP Systems Portfolio submission process, all improvement efforts are aligned which reinforces the mission and integrity of the institution. (QCU, p. 3; SU, p. 1)
2. KCC hired a Director of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) who is responsible for institutional advancement, continuous improvement, and strategic planning. The college has also hired a new Dean of Sustainability and Planning. Two additional staff members have been hired to assist the IE, a Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness and an Institutional Effectiveness Specialist. (SU, p. 4; QPS, p. 5)
3. The AQIP Leadership Team is being reorganized to more closely tie to both IE and strategic planning. (SU, p. 4)
4. KCC joined the National Community College Benchmarking Project to provide comparative data to inform strategic priorities. This alignment allows the college to compare its quantitative results with a national cohort. (SU, p. 4)
5. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness produced the College's first formal data report that serves as the foundation for future reports as well as informs the new strategic

planning process. This is a critical document for purposes of alignment with the mission. (SU, p. 1)

6. Members of the faculty, staff, and administrators are intentionally meeting with representatives from business, industry, and health care providers to make sure that career programs are providing students with the skills needed in the community. (QPS, p. 6)
7. The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee (SPOC) oversees strategic planning and is chaired by the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and a tenured faculty member. It consists of representatives from three subcommittees each designed to bring college planning into alignment with strategic goals: goals, assessment of institutional effectiveness, budget development, and resource allocation. Significant to this restructuring is the fact that AQIP is integrated into campus leadership and no longer functions as a separate entity from strategic planning. (SU, p. 2)

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

Since this integrated planning process and data collection is relatively new to KCC, it will be important to monitor progress and make sure that results are being used to ensure integrity and help in the fulfillment of the mission as defined by KCC. (QPS, pp, 5-6; SU, pp, 1, 2, 4)

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.

The focus on communication used to be top-down rather than two way (SA, p. 22) and at the time of the Systems Appraisal, there was no formal succession planning process in place. This appears to have been improved with the restructuring of committees and an intentional focus on alignment. (SU, p. 1)

Succession planning is addressed (QPS, p, 9), but it does not indicate how planning to replace the president would take place. Since this is a critical role in the institution primarily because of planning, this needs to be specifically addressed and described in the 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 and no Commission follow-up 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.

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. KCC has formalized short- and long-term strategic planning, and has appointed a Strategic Planning Committee. (SU, p. 1)
2. The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee, chaired by the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, provides oversight to implementation of the strategic plan. (SU, p.1)
3. A system is in place to evaluate the success of the orientation course which provides evidence of the institutionalization of a quality process. (SA, p. 12)
4. KCC offers a variety of methods in course delivery, leveraging their many resources to ensure a variety of delivery methods to meet the needs of stakeholders. (SA, p. 12)
5. The process of determining new students and stakeholder groups is well defined and includes a clearly-articulated process. (SA, p.16)
6. AQIP is explicitly integrated into key institutional structures and processes. (SA, pp. 21, 27; SU, p. 1)

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

1. It is recommended that the College develop a process to identify other distinctive objectives. In the absence of a process, the college may miss opportunities to prepare for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends. (SA, p. 14)
2. It is recommended that the College develop a formal succession plan; the age distribution of employees may be an issue to consider in light of planning for retirements. (SA, pp. 18, 22)

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 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. General Education Assessment became one of the Action Projects. The Assessment Committee developed linkages between the courses and the institution's general education outcomes. (QPS, p. 1; SU, p. 3)
2. KCC created an Assessment of Student Learning guidebook for faculty. Almost all faculty report implementing Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). The general education outcomes have been revised and approved by the Curriculum Committee. A master Syllabi Review took place over a three-year period to ensure that every course taught at KCC had a master syllabus with measureable outcomes. (QPS, p. 1)
3. Two of the six Strategic Goals for FY 2009-2013 include: 1) benchmark and promote best practices in all aspects of students services and student success and 2) improve curriculum development. Engaging in these practices enhances student learning and teaching effectiveness. (SU, p. 2)
4. ClassClimate (an online electronic software program) was purchased to improve and standardize students' evaluation of instruction. This is important in evaluating effective teaching (SU, p. 4)
5. "All College faculty are actively involved with assessment of student learning." [QH, p. 4] Identifying Assessment of General Education Outcomes as an Action Project has led to a focus on student learning. A cycle has been developed and used to assess three of the eight general education outcomes. The process includes a team of experts who recommend teaching strategies to improve learning outcomes. (SU, p. 3)

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

While the focus of the institution appears to be on assessing general education outcomes, it is not clear the institution has a formal process to review baccalaureate program competencies. This is important to make sure that all students on are the path to graduate. (SA, p. 12)

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.

Since KCC has many new processes in place with an emphasis on assessment of learning, it will be important to report in the next Systems Portfolio how well these processes are working to improve teaching and learning. (SU, 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, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

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. KCC offers a variety of methods in course delivery, leveraging their many resources to ensure a variety of delivery methods that are used for offering courses. (SA, p. 12)
2. KCC has an effective plan for professional development for existing and new staff. (SA, p. 12)
3. KCC demonstrates an extensive and active effort to provide educational opportunities to stakeholders which differentiate KCC from other institutions. (SA, p. 14)
4. Faculty and staff play an important role in determining objectives; their needs are regularly assessed through surveys and meetings. (SA, p. 14).
5. KCC Foundation Scholarship programs document exceptional results. (SA, p. 14)
6. Numerous teaching and learning workshops are offered; the number of offerings increased 56% between 2004 and 2005. (SA, p. 18)

7. Surveys are used to measure the climate of the College; results are analyzed through the President's Cabinet. (SA, p. 19)
8. Systematic processes exist to recognize, reward, and compensate full- and part-time faculty and staff. (SA, p. 19)
9. Supervisor training to develop leadership and promote professional development is conducted using best practices. (SA, p. 22)
10. KCC has begun aligning individual and institutional goals. (SA, p. 25)

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

It is recommended that the College place a priority on developing occupational program reviews to assure the currency of curricula. (SA, p. 30)

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 recommended.

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

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

1. KCC has developed a table that lists both the processes for identifying needs of stakeholders and the processes for reviewing and implementing changes. (QPS, p. 7)
2. A four-hour orientation course has been created for all first-time full-time students as a way to address needs identified through the College Success Skills course. (QPS, p. 8)

3. A new method of advising was developed which assigns all students within a degree program to specific advisor groups. Advisors contact students several times during their first semester to discuss progress and to answer questions. (QPS, p. 8)
4. Methods and procedures for developing relationships with a wide variety of organizations are clear. (SA, p. 29)
5. KCC describes in detail the various ways it uses to determine if stakeholder needs are being met (QPS, p. 14)
6. All full-time employee groups are surveyed using a climate survey. (QPS, p. 10)
7. Several actions have been taken to improve employee satisfaction: brown bag luncheons with vice-presidents and posting job openings in the employee newsletter. (QPS, p. 10)

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

1. While there are improved processes for gathering stakeholder needs, there are still categories where no implementation process has been defined. (QPS, p. 8)
2. There is no formal process in place to determine distinctive objectives. (SA, p. 14; QPS, p. 7) It is unclear how distinctive objectives are identified by the college in the Comprehensive Campaign for the Foundation. (QPS, p. 7) Without a clear process, the college may miss opportunities to serve stakeholders.
3. Since workforce development is described in the Institutional Overview as a key function of the college, a more thorough explanation how input from employers via meetings, surveys, and evaluations is systematically used to improve relationships with constituencies should be included in the Systems Portfolio. (SA, p. 14; QPS, p. 7)
4. KCC identifies issues affecting future institutional strategies (QPS, pp. 5-6) which includes the progress being made to collect and use data to inform decision making to make improvement in processes and results. Since several significant steps have been taken, it will be important to report in the Systems Portfolio on the success of these steps in ensuring the needs of constituencies are being served and valued.

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 recommended.

Summary of panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

The Criteria are all met and no Commission follow-up recommended.

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

A. Comments and counsel on specific improvement projects

- The number and scope of Action Projects attempted during this period testifies strongly to the institution's focus on improving critical systems and processes. As an early AQIP institution, KCC began with Action Projects which focused on specific systems for improvement, such as advising, registration, and recruitment. As the Institution has moved toward a culture of quality, recent Action Projects have encompassed large systems for improvement, including assessment of general education outcomes, continuous improvement, and communication.
- The Institution is commended for its efforts and is encouraged to move these important Actions Projects to self-sustaining processes.

B. Comments and counsel on key institutional processes and systems

- KCC is commended for major changes and improvements since the Quality Checkup Visit, including the Institutional Effectiveness Report, Continuous Quality Improvement Handbook, identification of Key Performance Indicators, and the Strategic Planning Summary.
- The Review Panel encourages Kankakee Community College to diligently use the data as it works to accomplish the six strategic goals that span 2009 – 2013, and to persevere in the attention it is giving the strategic initiatives and improvement campaigns it has

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already identified, planned, or begun. Continued attention to these critical strategic issues will strengthen KCC's ability to weather the changes every institution must face.

- While trends are generally positive, the Panel believes that KCC would be well advised to pay specific attention to critical opportunities noted under all five Criteria for Accreditation. Those critical opportunities generally relate to developing systems and processes for collecting and coordinating data to ensure consistency in all areas.
- The Institution is encouraged to continue to apply AQIP principles to collect, analyze, benchmark, and communicate results with all stakeholders so that actions may be taken at the appropriate level to implement efficiencies and improvement. Without systematic processes and consistency, it will not be possible to identify and prioritize clear targets for improvement or to assess progress; efforts toward building a culture of quality will lack focus.

C. Comments and counsel on the institution's culture of quality and its quality program or infrastructure.

- Particularly noteworthy is the institution's formalization and integration of the strategic planning process with AQIP functions. Also commendable are the efforts put forth to gather benchmark data through surveys, focus groups, and public meetings, encompassing representatives from business, education, and industry. These efforts, coupled with the newly created Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and addition of the Dean of Sustainability and Planning, Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Effectiveness Specialist, and Strategic Planning Committee, evidence the commitment to develop a quality culture at KCC.
- While commendable efforts have been made since the Systems Appraisal, both the Systems Appraisal Team and the Reaffirmation Panel see opportunities for improvement in the critical areas of succession planning (QPS, p. 9), communication (SA, p. 22), identification of distinctive objectives (SA, p. 14), and accountability for resource planning and allocation. (SA, p. 27). If KCC has addressed these opportunities, these initiatives should be addressed in the next Systems Portfolio.

KCC has made real progress from its initial Action Projects in 2002, and Systems Portfolio in 2005, to the most recent Quality Checkup Visit. The institution is taking a much more systematic and purposeful approach to all of its key systems, and through these efforts is leveraging its human resource capital and community involvement to continually strengthen the institution.