

Kankakee Community College
AQIP Lessons Learned

1. Too many projects at once.

The first AQIP projects should be important to the institution but narrowly focused. We chose projects that had multiple parts some of which were part of the overall AQIP projects and some of which were not. It became overwhelming for some of the college staff. In addition, three projects were being reported to AQIP but all twelve internal projects were linked with AQIP training, much confusion regarding AQIP was created.

2. Set the framework for becoming an AQIP institution with all college staff.

Partially because new projects were created rather than using AQIP to document existing projects during the first three years, many feel AQIP is extra work and do not understand how continuous improvement has been integrated into the college. Many college staff initially believed that the AQIP process would be much like the PEAQ process. They could gear-up, write the report, and be done. We are still sending the message that continuous improvement, documented via the AQIP process, is the way we are doing business at KCC. Our institution did not have many well defined processes or easy access to data when we began the AQIP process. We have come a long way during the last four years but still have a way to go.

3. It was difficult to develop an integrated and simple system for the first portfolio.

It was difficult to develop an institutional structure for writing the initial Systems Portfolio that captured all the needed institutional information and provided little overlap. Many people were involved in the process but it was difficult to give the product an overall voice. The initial process consisted of category champions interviewing administrators and committee chairs. We have reconfigured our AQIP leadership team this year and this team is working to develop a process to update our Systems Portfolio on an ongoing basis to reflect all that is happening on campus. The goal is to develop a system where the data and information from activities is communicated to both the college and the AQIP leadership team for inclusion in the portfolio through the same basic document.

4. Communication, communication, communication.

Four years after beginning the AQIP process, we are still explaining the expectations of continuous improvement. This is a cultural change that is slowly taking hold and changing practice at KCC. We have learned that there can never be too much communication – top-down, bottom-up, and sideways. One of our new action projects will be devoted to communication.

5. AQIP is not a project, it is an ongoing process.

Some staff expected that we would be done for awhile after the initial Systems Portfolio was submitted. In reality, the AQIP leadership team was already synthesizing the data from our October 2005 all-staff planning day. As we move to our next cycle of projects and a system to update the Systems Portfolio, we will need to help all staff see that AQIP is everyone's responsibility and a new way of doing business at KCC.

The initial action projects were deemed projects with final outcomes. People expected to work on a project, implement and stop. Secondary data collection and analysis, communication and development of ongoing processes were not included in the initial round of action projects and systems portfolio creation. Through the action project and portfolio creation, we've learned that the final outcome of a project is the implementation of an ongoing process which includes process documentation, ownership, data collection and analysis. Learning the terminology and thought process involved in engrafting this type change in philosophy is ongoing. This year, an action project is being formed to train college staff regarding the process of continuing improvement.