AQIP Quality Check-Up

Quality Progress Report

An Update to the Systems Portfolio

October 2008
Introduction

The objective of the quality progress report is to highlight the activities Rochester Community and Technical College have undertaken to continue its journey towards organizational improvement, innovation, and excellence.

The college’s continuous quality improvement journey is grounded in a commitment to self-assessment, systems and process management, partnerships, results-orientation and continuous learning. While some material will be a historical look backwards, most of the content will focus on progress made since the submission of the AQIP Systems Portfolio in June 2007.

A Commitment to Self-Assessment

Since 1996, RCTC has engaged in ten organizational self-assessments largely utilizing the Performance Excellence Criteria and/or the Baldrige-like AQIP Framework.

- 1996 Minnesota Quality Award Self Assessment
- 1997 Higher Learning Focus Visit on the Assessment of Student Learning
- 1999 Application to the Minnesota Quality Award for Participation in the Minnesota Assessment Program
- 2000 Application to the Minnesota Quality Award
- 2001 Baldrige-based Special Emphasis Self-Study Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission Site Visit
- 2004 Applicant for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- 2005 Applicant for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- 2006 Applicant for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- 2007 Applicant for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- 2007 Academic Quality Improvement Program Systems Portfolio Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission

Strategy Forum Participation

In November 2007, the college assembled a team to participate in its second Strategy Forum in Lisle, IL.

The first Strategy Forum attended was in June 2003, where three “vital few” projects were declared:

Assessment of Student Learning: The goal of this project was to create a learning organization grounded on a comprehensive assessment process fostering a culture that values innovation and continuous improvement. Additionally, this project would result in the establishment of a systematic approach to measure student learning. Measuring the outcomes of teaching and learning-centered processes was a key in the determination of institutional accountability and effectiveness; student learning results being core indicators demonstrating institutional accountability and providing faculty with information to continuously improve teaching and learning. This project is led by the Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) Sub-Committee.

Human Resources Planning: This project focused on creating a comprehensive human resources plan that aligns with the college’s strategic directions, rectifying concerns raised by The Higher Learning Commission and Minnesota Council for Quality (MCQ). The Higher Learning Commission had also cited the aging of the RCTC staff and its diversity as issues to address. Components of the human resources include faculty and staff recruitment, employee orientation, employee retention, faculty and staff diversity, and professional and personal...
development. This project is led by the Human Resources Committee.

Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness: This project focused on the creation of an accountability framework to provide a systematic approach to measure institutional effectiveness. Activities include the identification of college indicators that should cascade throughout the college assisting departments to align their indicators with college indicators and goals. Identifying competitive and comparative data and best practices were another focal point of the project. Another major project was to link data systems and sources via a common portal enhancing access and reliability to data and information; this would support college leadership and staff in planning and decision-making.

At the 2007 Strategy Forum, the college chartered a new “vital few” action project while closing another. The Measuring Institutional Effectiveness project was retired; and the “Better Serving Stakeholders” was chartered.

Better Serving Stakeholders: This project focuses on improving stakeholder satisfaction and their experiences. This includes better managing the experiences that prospects, applicants, and enrolled students have within the stages of the Student Life-Cycle (SLC). The SLC focuses on several phases including awareness, inquiry, applicant, enrolled and advancement stages. The goals of the SLC is to create engaging experiences that better meets the needs, expectations and requirements of students and stakeholders. Increased competition requires the college to compete by differentiating itself through service.

The AQIP Systems Appraisal and Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Feedback Reports have both identified service and satisfaction as a key opportunity for improvement. Student satisfaction data for national benchmarks and item-level data show that the College's ratings are consistently performing below the national average and among that of comparative organizations. Qualitative findings and stories shared with College personnel support the data. This project is led by the Strategic Operations Committee.

Vital Few Project Updates

Since submission of the Systems Portfolio, the College has made much progress. The following section will highlight those successes by each project.

Assessment of Student Learning

In 2007 the College elected to keep it’s “vital few” Assessment of Student Learning project. This was in large measure due to the Systems Appraisal and Malcolm Baldrige Feedback Reports indicating this as a continuing opportunity for improvement and future challenge to accreditation.

In the summer of 2008 the College made application and has been accepted to this fall's cohort for the Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy. In its application the college listed the following goals:

1. To establish a clear and more focused plan for the assessment of student learning.
2. To define and set realistic goals to address the college’s assessment challenges.
3. To show concrete movement to address accountability challenges at Federal and State levels.
4. To drive assessment of student learning into the “regular” work of the college—that is, to have such assessment not viewed as some “add on” or “extra” assignment.

During RCTC’s second Strategy Forum in November 2007, the college focused on identifying categorical improvement strategies for the assessment of
student learning. These were formalized in the annual Integrated Planning Process for fiscal year 2009 and noted in our Academy application. These strategies include:

1. Review potential new software for assessment aligning, tracking, and documenting.
2. Accelerate and advance efforts to assess student learning by building institution-wide commitment to the improvement of student learning.
3. Continue and expand analysis of high contact courses across the curriculum.
4. Facilitate the development of direct measures of student learning and align them with program/departmental and institutional outcomes.
5. Gather college-wide input and acceptance of core outcomes and embed them in the curriculum and ensure they are reflected in the delivery of services.
6. Develop a plan for growing the culture of evidence for measuring student learning.
7. Build broad-based support for making ASL part of the academic culture, and a more important part of the other divisions of the college.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the college worked to identify and define core outcomes. Five core outcomes were identified with draft definitions for each including:

1. **Communication** - Students will read, write, speak and listen effectively, using the appropriate technologies, to make meaning and connections between themselves and their audience.
2. **Critical Thinking** - Students will think systematically by integrating new and past skills using a variety of appropriate tools, methods, and approaches. Students will gather factual information, make logical connections, and synthesize information to articulate, support, and defend possible solutions that demonstrate practical and rational soundness and innovative thought.
3. **Global Awareness, Diversity** - Students will recognize differences and commonalities among people, act upon issues of human identity, diversity, bias and inequity.
4. **Civic Responsibility** - Students will understand larger social issues, demonstrate social responsibility, and contribute to positive community change through civic engagement.
5. **Personal and Professional Accountability** - Students will take ultimate responsibility for achieving their educational and personal goals and seek assistance when needed. Students will exhibit honesty and professional conduct, and demonstrate academic competence while recognizing the need for balance in their personal and professional endeavors.

A process to collect college-wide input on these core outcomes is being planned.

**Human Resources Planning**

The Human Resources Committee took two major steps forward in the past year. The first was the creation of a mentoring plan. The second was the establishment of a library of behaviorally-based questions for each college value in the college’s Competency Model that support selection and search processes.

The College identified several priorities for the next academic year. This includes: a continued focus on strategies to improve workforce engagement, a refined search process, a focus on workplace flexibility, a expanded commitment to leadership...
development and succession efforts and implementation of the mentoring plan.

**Better Serving Stakeholders**

The college has established a framework by which to guide efforts to improve service and better serve stakeholders. The framework includes eight categories that include:

1. **Training and Development**: Assess needs and create training and development programs that support RCTC’s goal of exceeding stakeholder expectations.
2. **Communicating**: Create planned access and develop relevant professional communication standards considering the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.
3. **Information and Measurement**: Utilize relevant information to support decisions and facilitate learning that advances efforts to continuously improve.
4. **Audience Definition and Targeted Populations**: Listen to, learn from, and communicate with key stakeholders to understand their unique needs and expectations.
5. **Transparent Culture**: Achieve a seamless, transparent culture by designing system wide organizational processes that will effectively respond to the institution’s mission, vision, and values.
6. **Campus Design**: Integrate institutional value standards into all elements of campus design for optimum learning, service, functionality and aesthetic value.
7. **Policy Compliance**: Develop and/or implement policy that is reflective of the organizational values, inclusive of stakeholders, and offer clarity, utility and empowerment.
8. **Leadership and Workforce Engagement**: Build an environment in which employees contribute to the ongoing development and implementation of excellent performance standards.

A strategy map has been formulated to determine priorities and the flow of activities.

The college sent a team to the Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN) Summer Institute to study legendary service at the Ritz-Carlton in August of 2008. This led to the identification of some key actions by the CQIN team, that are included in the service framework; a major focus being to establish service attributes that are based on college values that are behaviorally anchored. A draft version of the attributes is now being shared in the college community for input. The six attributes include the following:

- **Excellence**
  Anticipate and create positive and engaging experiences.
- **Fun**
  Foster a pleasant and enjoyable environment.
- **Innovation**
  Support and empower creative solutions to better serve.
- **Learner-Centered**
  Be approachable and attentive to others’ needs.
- **Respect**
  Demonstrate dignity and sensitivity in serving others.
- **Teamwork**
  Collaborate and engage each other to better serve.

Once service attributes are agreed upon, a second focus on training and development will be undertaken. The first training and development action is the creation of a “line-up” concept that is being used by the Ritz-Carlton and that has been successfully adopted by Richland Community College in Dallas. This organizational best practice will be implemented to deepen awareness, knowledge and ownership of college mission, vision, values, goals and core learner outcomes. The intent is to embed these signature statements and strategic ends into the culture of the college so that
we all “live” these guiding principles and make decisions reflecting them.

The line-up will be a blended strategy principally focused on a weekly approach using electronic technology including the college website and College Crossings (the ongoing weekly newsletter) as key delivery mechanisms. Faculty and staff work stations will receive pop-ups, screen savers and other time sensitive electronic means. A second strategy will be the assembly of “tool kits” that include items like college goals, signature (pocket) cards, core learner outcomes, fun items and other materials that can be used to reinforce and guide all-college committees, programs, departments and other teams about what is important so as to foster values and goals-based decisions and behaviors. A third strategy will include the delivery and use of line-up concepts in planned events like staff development days, orientation sessions, D2L training, and other activities.

A second training and development action will be the creation of a Service Collaborative model that has been benchmarked with the Mayo Clinic. This approach will blend a plan/do/check/act (PDCA) problem solving approach. Teams will identify opportunities for improving service and then participate in a 12 to 18 month process that included training and development events, shared learning opportunities and project-based activities aimed at continuous improvement, innovation and improved performance.

A Legendary Service Collaborative is another initiative in the planning stages focusing on creating seamless service for prospective, current, and co-enrolled students with our Learning Alliance partner Winona State University (WSU). The two institutions are working on the design and construction of a Welcome Center, which may also include a focus on the redesign of space to improve the flow and seamlessness of services in functional work areas. A third component under consideration is the establishment of a call center concept. The call center will provide for handling and managing incoming calls to the campus and to place outbound calls to manage relationships in the SLC.

The all-college Strategic Operations Committee will be the primary lead for the project. An ad hoc group, the CQIN team will also own and guide the development of some key action items. The CQIN team is composed of members of the Strategic Operations Committee, community partners, WSU and other college faculty and staff. Integrating with this team is the Legendary Service Collaborative composed of equal representation of RCTC and WSU faculty and staff.

The college is also a pilot school in a new survey called the “Survey of Entering Student Engagement” that was administered this fall. The survey examines student engagement, learning, and retention issues in the earliest weeks of the fall academic term.

### Integrated Planning Process

In Fiscal Year 2006, the college launched its web-based Integrated Planning Process (IPP). The three-part process aligns strategic goals with divisional strategies and with program and department continuous improvement plans. The process also aligns strategy with the budgeting process. The three principle phases of the IPP include academic program review and non-academic self-assessment; continuous improvement planning (strategic initiative resource requests); and non-personnel operating or cost center budgeting. Since the submission of the Systems Portfolio in June 2007, the following three improvements to this process have been implemented.
**Academic Program Review**

The college has moved from a three-year cycle of Academic Program Review (APR) to an annual and streamlined process. APR is the first step for academic programs and departments providing for self assessment. The four parts of APR include overview, efficiency, satisfaction, and effectiveness. For the efficiency, satisfaction and effectiveness portions of APR, program leaders and division coordinator perform three activities. The first is to self-rate their program on a efficiency rubric. Second, the program leader and division coordinator responds to efficiency data and information providing context for performance measures composing efficiency as determined by the college. As an example, efficiency measures include fill rates, completion rates, instructional cost study performance, budgetary efficiency, revenue generated and use of course inventory. Unique measures for a program are also considered. Each of these measures then links to a “dashboard” display for that program. This process is then repeated for the satisfaction and effectiveness parts of APR.

**Systems and Processes Alignment**

A second major improvement has been the identification of key work processes and core process measures for all organizational units. The processes and measures are embedded into the IPP. This provides for a linkage of continuous improvement plans and non-personnel budgets to processes and measures. These measures then compose the dashboard for a program or department. By approving budgets and strategic initiative requests linked to processes and measures, we create a focus on results and evidence that an investment produced improved performance.

A third improvement is the inclusion of Student Life in the IPP. Other than a base allocation, Student Life is funded on a fee per credit basis. These funds are managed separate from the college’s general fund. In the FY10 cycle to launch in February over 15 improvements are planned and being developed by Strategic Operations and Information Technology.

**Measuring Institutional Effectiveness**

In June of 2003, RCTC declared “Measuring Institutional Effectiveness” as one of its AQIP vital few projects. Since that time, the college has identified 41 core measures linked to the goals that comprise the strategic plan. These measures constitute a strategic dashboard that will be transparent to all college stakeholders. The dashboard aligns groups of core measures with goals. Data for each core measure are presented for each core measure; and each core measure is color-coded to depict a level of performance. All core measures for a goal are aggregated to produce an overall color demonstrating progress towards each goal. The intent is to present trend data, comparative data and to set targets for each core measure. A core measures performance will be determined by the performance trend, comparative performance against a selected benchmark and performance to a set target. This will trigger colors on radial dials visually depicting performance based on predetermined tolerances. Each measure potentially will have a color for trend, comparative and targets that create an overall color for that measure. Each core measure will have a color that will create an overall color reflecting performance for the strategic goal. The 41 core measures are aligned to the college’s 13 strategic goals and constitute the strategic dashboard.

Each college division has its own dashboard and each program or department within the division has
a dashboard. Each division, program, or department dashboard includes measures from the “parent”, but also includes unique measures linked to the work processes of that organizational unit. The particular “family” of dashboards is linked to the IPP. Therefore, continuous improvement plans and strategic requests submitted in the IPP are linked to a process with identified core measures. While trend data, comparative data and targets are not fully populated, once completed there will be full alignment of this approach and complete integration of goals, strategies, processes and measures to assess institutional progress and performance at all levels of the college.

The college’s balanced scorecard aligns with the Accountability System launched by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System in June 2008. The ten performance measures of the system are included in the 41 core measures within the colleges’ strategic dashboard. The college’s dashboard can be found at www.rctc.edu/scorecard.

The progress made resulted in the college retiring the “Measuring Institutional Effectiveness” project from its active AQIP vital few projects.

Results Update

Since submission of the 2007 Systems Portfolio, the college has updated several core measures. The following is an executive summary of some key measures.

Better Serving Stakeholders

- Overall student satisfaction declined from 5.16 in 2006 to 5.04 in 2008. This is the lowest level since the late nineties. On a national level student satisfaction was stable or showing a slight increase.
- Items on the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) with gaps between importance and satisfaction greater than -1.2 increased from 10 to 18.
- The percentage of community residents indicating that they were extremely or very satisfied with how well RCTC is meeting community needs increased from 50 to 59%.

Human Resources Planning

- Fifty-six percent of employees were satisfied or very satisfied in 2008 as compared to 66% in 2007. The highest satisfaction rate was 77% in 2003. This year was the lowest rating since 2000.
- Fifty-eight percent of faculty and staff would recommend RCTC as a place to work. This compares to 65% in 2007 and 76% in 2006.

Assessment of Student Learning

Licensure Exam Pass Rate is one of ten priority measures included in the MnSCU Accountability System. The licensure exam pass rate reports the percentage of a cohort of students or graduates that passed a state or national licensure examination.

- As reported by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Accountability System, the college’s performance for Licensure Exam Pass Rate reports a 93.9% pass rate for 2006. This places college performance near the “exceeds expectations” threshold of 94.3%
- The college’s performance as measured by Students of Color Persistence and Completion Rate to the second fall indicates that for the cohort entering in the fall of
2006 who were enrolled the fall of 2007 is 63.7%. This exceeds the target of 62.8% set by the system for RCTC.

Enrollment

- Official 30th day fall enrollment released by the Office of the Chancellor for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System report that RCTC realized a one percent increase in enrollment.

These are selected updates for data and information for some measures, some that are reported in the Systems Portfolio. Additional updates will be available at the Check-Up visit if requested.