

Category Improvement Worksheet—*Creating the Climate for Continuous Learning*

Complete this worksheet and email it as a .doc or .pdf electronic file to AQIP before the Strategy Forum Homework Deadline. The boxes will expand to fit whatever you write. Questions? Call AQIP at 800-621-7440.

Institution: Iowa Lakes Community College	City & State: Estherville, Iowa
<p>Identify one AQIP Category that your institution would like to target for focused improvement (in the form of a campaign consisting of one or more Action Projects).</p> <p>Category Six: Supporting Organizational Operations</p>	
<p>Within this Category, identify a significant challenge — one or two processes or performance results data that you consider targets for change.</p> <p>Systematic mapping of operational processes for continuous improvement and planning purposes, collegewide, over the next four years with emphasis on [a] data needed/used for decision-making, [b] resource allocation planning and prioritizing, and [c] staff development required.</p>	
<p>Which specific <i>opportunities for improvement</i> (identified as <i>O</i> or <i>OO</i> in your Systems Appraisal) are core to this challenge?</p> <p>6P5: “A comprehensive plan that describes support processes for institutional operations, management of these services, and how the college assesses the adequacy of these services would allow the College to monitor and improve services.” (O)</p> <p>6R1b: “The entity by entity list in 6R1 of the Systems Portfolio provides excellent detail on the data collection tools used by the campus support services, but does not describe who analyzes the data, uses the data to make improvements, or how the data inform the planning process.” (O)</p> <p>Also identified as an “issue affecting future institutional strategies.”</p>	
<p>What feedback from other external sources (consultant reports, other accreditation reports, research studies, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution?</p> <p>The March 2009 Iowa Department of Education accreditation team also identified process mapping and clarification of operational processes as a priority for effective continuous improvement practice and as a tool for more efficient and transparent employee succession planning/transition.</p>	
<p>What feedback from internal sources (performance results data, complaints, system breakdowns, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution?</p> <p>At a July 2009 Retreat, the President’s Cabinet identified the need for mapping of processes, in particular data collection/use, resource allocation, committee structures, goals and communication lines; and professional development as priority. Iowa Lakes’ average employee age is 48 years old. Nearly 50% of the faculty and 70% of the President’s Cabinet will have reached eligible age of 55 to qualify for early retirement under the state’s employee retirement system within five years. A significant loss of institutional history, experience and knowledge may potentially exit within the next 5 – 10 years. It is imperative that processes be mapped, evaluated, and published for continuity of operations as well as continuous improvement initiatives.</p> <p>Cabinet recommendations were affirmed by the Collegewide Improvement Council at the September 2009 meeting.</p>	
<p>When did you become aware of the need to develop a strategy to address this challenge? What is stimulating you to confront it now?</p> <p>In addition to the reasons detailed in the discussion above, a recent retirement of long-tenured faculty and staff and subsequent organizational downsize and re-structure has highlighted the need for published</p>	

process maps. With the exit of several experienced employees who played key roles in operational practice also went a wealth of knowledge about how, when and why things are done. Employees who have assumed these key roles – even those with significant length of service to the college, albeit not in the specific area – would benefit from written plans outlining the process steps, goals, timelines and “supporting players” to insure continuity and excellence of services to students and other stakeholders.

Which specific needs of your students, other external stakeholders, faculty, or staff could you meet better if you addressed this challenge? How?

In a climate of limited or dwindling resources and escalating public expectations for higher education, it is imperative that college operational processes be effective, efficient and transparent. Published operational process maps will result in all stakeholders (internal and external) understanding the roles, expectations and resources available to respond to their needs.

How might addressing this challenge change or strengthen your institution’s quality culture and infrastructure?

The tentative plan is to first map processes associated with data collection/usage, resource allocation, and staff development. These are foundational operations for decision-making, planning, and continuous improvement. These will also provide a process model that can be replicated throughout the organization to further strengthen communication, understanding and evaluation/improvement of processes collegewide.

What enthusiasm and support exists among your leadership and employees for addressing this challenge now?

This has been endorsed by the college’s executive leadership and the Collegewide Improvement Council (representing a vertical slice of organization). Several standing committees have also incorporated portions of this activity into FY10 – FY11 action agendas. For instance, a sub-committee of the Assessment Review Committee will study the types of data/surveys currently being gathered collegewide, how data are used and by whom, and suggest the level of value to the College for future planning/practice. A report of the findings is scheduled for February 2010.

Identify two processes or performance results measures included in this Category that you consider significant current strengths (e.g., identified as S or SS in your Systems Appraisal) that might prove useful in addressing this challenge.

6P1 -2 6P2: “Iowa Lakes uses a broad array of quantitative and qualitative measures to determine the support needs of students, other stakeholders, and internal constituencies.” (SS)

6I1: “The continued and expanded use of data has guided Iowa lakes in its improvements of support services. The five-year plan developed by Counseling and Career Resources should improve these services in particular. The College is encouraged to set targets for the measurement of these improvements.” (S)

What ideas have you already come up with for potential Action Projects that might help address this challenge? (Provide 3- 6)

[1] Establish a systematic process for on-going process mapping, evaluation, and refinement beginning with data collection/usage, resource allocation, and staff development.

[2] Identify types of data outside of current committees, Learning Style Assessment, Noel-Levitz, Green initiatives, and student satisfaction surveys that may further support decision-making and process improvement.

[3] Review and publish process for establishing standing committees, membership selection, membership terms, committee purpose, goals, and resource needs as a model for collegewide replication.