

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Southwestern College

Winfield, Kansas
March 25 - 27, 2009

Quality Checkup team members:

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Carroll University

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Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained, experienced AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification);
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewer(s) trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*. The report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluator(s). Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. A copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

For example, the team reviewed recent results from the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index, the National Survey of Student Engagement and the "Are We Making Progress" survey. The team also reviewed job descriptions and the new administrative evaluation process that was developed as the result of an AQIP Action Project.

Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last *Systems Appraisal*

There were no accreditation issues identified in the Systems Appraisal.

Review of the institution's approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last *Systems Appraisal* in the *Strategic Issues Analysis*.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

The College provided evidence of several improvement projects undertaken since receiving the Systems Appraisal. These include:

Category 1 – Helping Students Learn

- Program Review and Assessment in Professional Studies
- Creation of a Student Success Center
- Alignment of Co-Curricula Activities to Academic Program Goals
- Participation in "Transparency by Design"

Category 2 – Other Distinctive Objectives

- Increasing Faculty Involvement in Planning and Assessment
- A Futures Task Force
- Developing Targets Related to Other Distinctive Objectives

Category 3 – Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

- The Director of Academic Advising and Learner Engagement: Persistence of Professional Studies Students

- Process and Decision Points for Documenting Student Complaints
- Use of End of Course Evaluations in Professional Studies Program Review
- Analysis of Lead Generation Sources in Professional Studies

Category 4 - Valuing People

- Administrative Evaluation Process
- Required Credentials and Skills for Teaching in Professional Studies
- The Planning Coordination Team

Category 5 - Leading and Communicating

- Transparency in the Budget Process
- Are We Making Progress Survey and Focus Groups
- Seeking a Nationally Normed Survey

Category 6 – Supporting Institutional Operations

- Enhanced Role of the VP for Information Technology
- Training to Support a Change in Culture

Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness

- Use of the IDEA Survey – Correlation with SSI and NSSE
- Recent Graduate Survey
- Institutional Effectiveness Audit, June 2008
- Strategic Planning Coordination Team
- Merging Student Outcomes Assessment for Main Campus and Professional Studies
- Developing Unit Goals Linked to College Goals
- Benchmarking Project Using IPEDS, IDEA, NSSE, FSSE and SSI

Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement

- Improve Stakeholder Involvement in the Planning Process
- Developing Measures for Tracking Improvement
- Allocation of Resources for Implementing Goals

Category 9 – Collaborative Relationships

- Creation of a List of Mission-Related Partnerships

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations. The team was impressed with a discussion which centered on a "visualized planning process diagram." The discussion made it clear that Southwestern continues to move away from cyclical planning and towards continual planning. The activities depicted in the diagram, and the diagram itself, are designed to help departments and divisions see how their plans fit with overarching institutional plans. Southwestern College has recently published the ninth annual edition of the "Goals and Directions" booklet which captures updated institutional plans. The team encourages continued implementation of this planning process with open communication flow between levels so that what has been effectively visualized can be even more successfully implemented and institutionalized. The team recommends consideration be given to student involvement and participation in this process. The team also recommends the development of stronger ties between the budget process and planning, especially now that there is the potential for allocating discretionary dollars.

The team was also impressed with the design and work of the Futures Task Force at Southwestern College. This group meets one year out of every three, looking five years into the future for the institution. This Task Force provides regular review of the mission, goal statements, SWOT data and distinctive characteristics of the college. In the last iteration of the Futures Task Force, the mission was revised to include the desire to become a green campus and promote sustainable lifestyles. Unsolicited, the team heard more about this goal in both community and student sessions. There is significant evidence that the leadership at Southwestern has institutionalized effective planning processes.

There was discussion with leaders at both the Professional Studies campus and the Main Campus regarding assessment. Southwestern College has recently undertaken the Herculean task of revising its core curriculum after successfully identifying institutional outcomes shared by both campuses. Assessment of the general education program is evolving and will include the use of the baccalaureate level Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test. By administering this test to freshmen and native seniors, this test will provide an assessment of core skills. The Professional Studies program is applauded for their move to conducting specific program reviews and participation in the Transparency by Design initiative. Transparency by Design allows Southwestern to benchmark a variety of assessment data against other online

programs for adult learners.

The campus as a whole is encouraged to make more progress in content area assessment beginning with the identification of what students in each particular major should know and be able to do. This type of assessment must be done in addition to the holistic assessment of core outcomes. Southwestern College rightly recognizes that a culture of assessment is built within the faculty over a period of time, supported and appreciated by academic leaders. It is recommended that a timeline be set that includes identifying learning outcomes for each major, identifying where in the curriculum the outcomes are addressed, determining multiple appropriate measures for these outcomes, collecting and analyzing data, sharing data, and using data to inform curricular changes. Progress along these lines is often documented by department using a maturity level model.

The team saw ample evidence that Southwestern College is committed to AQIP principles. The President and senior leadership are obviously knowledgeable and supportive of continuous quality improvement. Southwestern is fortunate to have a Vice President of Information Technology who has significant experience in six sigma improvement projects. The team was impressed with his leadership in training initiatives across campus.

USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions)

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

The team reviewed a report of default rates and noted that they have been mildly trending upward for the past few years most likely due to increased enrollment in the Professional Studies program. The College plans to use exit surveys to mitigate future increases especially for online. The College may also make adjustments in direct student loans.

Compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were

acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

The team reviewed copies of legal affidavit filed in Wichita.

College staff also indicated that they did the following:

- Placed a public ad in the local newspaper
- Sent two e-mails to all Southwestern e-mail addresses
- Issued a press release
- Put an announcement in the College's online publication

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, *Credits, Program Length, and Tuition*

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

- The College requirement of 124 credits to graduate is consistent across all programs and majors.
- There does not appear to be any degrees or programs that charge additional tuition or fees beyond the usual.
- The team does recommend that the College develop a policy relating contact hours to credit hours and promulgate that policy in the appropriate venues.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, *Advertising and Recruitment Materials*

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

For example, the team reviewed information in the catalog and on the College website and was told that other documents comply with this requirement as well.

Compliance with Commission policy III.A.1, *Professional Accreditation*, and III.A.3, *Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation*

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

The College has attained professional accreditation in Education, Music, Nursing, Athletic Training and Fine Arts. There have been no instances in which a program has been denied accreditation. The College does not offer dual degrees internally or with other institutions.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.4, *Organizational Records of Student Complaints*

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

For example, the team:

- reviewed files of student complaints
- learned about a new Complaint Documentation process using a college-wide database-driven software called SharePoint
- based on conversations with College personnel, believes that the College has well-documented student appeals processes for academic as well as student life issues

Other USDE compliance-related issues

There were no other issues identified.

Other AQIP issues

The team wishes to note Southwestern College's progress in terms of holding expenses and reducing the endowment draw. This improvement in the College's financial viability is due in part to the growth of the Professional Studies Program.

The team would like to again praise the Professional Studies Program at Southwestern College for participation in Transparency By Design and would like to encourage continued leadership there. Southwestern College is one of the first of the fourteen participating institutions to post data. Professional Studies is wise to take advantage of comparative practices wherever possible. The Vice President for Professional Studies mentioned the use of two best practice documents provided by the Higher Learning Commission (online, military personnel). The development of an employer survey for graduates of the Professional Studies Program is encouraged. It is clear that the Main Campus benefits from the success of the Professional Studies Program just as the Professional Studies program draws on the expertise and

reputation of the Main Campus.

There is significant effort at Southwestern College aimed at measuring student satisfaction which is absolutely critical for continuous improvement. The team has some suspicion however that Southwestern College is collecting more indirect data than is used or useful. If not already in place, it might be wise to document the inventory of survey instruments employed and then conduct a review of best practice concerning their use.

The team enjoyed the visit to Southwestern College and was very impressed with the leadership team there. The team has these major recommendations for Southwestern College: a) continue to build a culture based on process thinking and metrics; b) develop assessment infrastructure at the program level; c) to the greatest extent possible, continue to synchronize parallel programming and related policies between the two campuses; d) review and confirm that survey selection and frequency is appropriate.

AQIP Quality Check-Up Agenda Record

Visiting Team: Dr. Gary VanKempen, Lansing Community College

Dr. Elizabeth Towell, Carroll University

Tuesday, March 24:

2:30 pm: Team arrives at Wichita Mid-Continent Airport

4:00 pm: Meet with staff of Professional Studies at Wichita
East Professional Studies Center, 2040 S. Rock Road,
Wichita, phone 620-229-5335, key contact is Dr.
Karen Pedersen, Vice President for Professional
Studies

Questions:

How do you assess your Professional Studies programs? How has assessment changed your approach to instruction and learning in Professional Studies?

Could we have access to the “major/program” review reports?

Could we see results of the transparency by design survey along with comparisons with other schools?

Toured the facility and met with Karen Pederson, VP for Professional Studies and Gail Cullen, Professional Studies Director of Academic Affairs and Candice Dugan, Director of Special Projects (by phone)

Reviewed the following notebooks of documents:

Faculty Credential Templates

Professional Studies Assessment

Professional Studies Program Review

Transparency by Design

Evening: Lodging in Winfield

Wednesday, March 25:

9:00 am: Meet with Dick Merriman, President

Met with President Merriman. Reviewed fiscal viability PowerPoint slides

10:00 am: Opening session, introductions to quality program leaders

Met with:

Mike Kirkland Director of Athletics

Margaret Robinson Director of Institutional Research

Karen Pederson VP for Professional Studies

Dawn Pleas-Bailey	VP for Student Life
Sheila Krug	VP for Finance
Ben Lim	VP for Information Technology
Andy Sheppard	VP Academic Affairs
Sara Weinart	VP Communications
Steve Wilke	VP for Planning

10:30 am: Federal compliance review, third party comment process,
follow-up from PEAQ review

Was there ever a monitoring report submitted after the PEAQ review?

The Commission has received no third party comments related to the visit.

What was the notification process?

Met with Brenda D. Huli, Director of Financial Aid and Tami Pullins, Associate Academic VP of Advising and Student Success. Reviewed a copy of a legal affidavit regarding the accreditation visit, catalog and web language related to accreditation, results from the "Are We Making Progress Survey, Employee Survey results and documents related to employee focus groups.

Noon: Dr. VanKempen and Dr. Towell private lunch in Prokesh Dining
Room in Roy L. Smith Student Center

1:00 pm: System Portfolio verification and clarification

Could we review recent results from the Noel-Levitz, NSSE, and Are We Making Progress surveys?

Could we also have access to your job descriptions?

Met with Andy Sheppard, Karen Pederson, Tami Pullins and Margaret Robinson

2:30 pm: Meeting with Administrative Council (effectively, the college's
planning council), discussion of planning processes and using
data to track improvement, set goals, and evaluate effectiveness

How do you use data to track improvement, set goals and evaluate effectiveness?

How has the planning process improved since the Systems Appraisal? What other improvements would you like to make?

Met with the same group as at 10:00. Steve Wilke presented

3:30 pm: Administrative evaluation process, 4P6
Task Force on the Future of Southwestern 5P2

Met with Lonnie Boyd, Director of HR; Steve Wilke; Sara Weinart and Ben Lim. Reviewed administrative evaluation documents.

4:00 pm: Use of data to improve student support services 6I1
Measuring effectiveness of online delivery 7P1

Met with Dawn Pleas-Bailey and Tami Pullens. Reviewed CSI summary document

6:00 pm: Dinner at The Ridge
Dr. VanKempen, Dr. Towell, college administrators and faculty
leaders

Thursday, March 26:

8:00 am Meeting with Director of Institutional Research, Margaret
Robinson

Meeting with Vice President for Finance, Sheila Krug

How does the budget process assist the College in implementing its strategic and other plans?
What evidence can you provide that the College is doing better financially than it was at the time
of the PEAQ visit?

Reviewed an Endowment Balance document and a financial audit management memo.

9:00 am: Time to write and reflect

10:30 pm: Meet with students, Student Life Conference Room,
Sutton Center

Met with a diverse group of 14 students.

11:45 am: Luncheon and meeting with community leaders, Pounds
Lounge, Roy L. Smith Student Center

Met with eight community members including two Board Members

1:00 pm: Time to Write and Reflect

2:00 pm: Action Project: Administrative information software
Action Project: Persistence in Professional Studies

Met with Ben Lim and Karen Pederson.

3:00 pm: Action Project: Freshman retention
Action Project: Assessment of student learning

Met with Andy Sheppard and Allyson Moon, Associate Professor of Theatre and Chair of the
Assessment Committee

4:00 pm: Exit Presentation to the Administrative Council

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation
for
Southwestern College
Winfield, Kansas**

**of the 2009-10
Academic Quality improvement Program
Review Panel on Reaffirmation**

**The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**

January 5, 2010

AQIP Review Panel on Reaffirmation (lead reviewers starred)

Scott Beard, Campus Manager - North Region, Madison Area Technical College, WI

Chris Crawford, Assistant Provost for Quality Management, Fort Hays State University, KS

Nancy Cure, Dean Enrichment Programs and Services, Moraine Valley Community College, IL

*Jann Freed, Professor of Business Management, Central College, IA

Julie Furst-Bowe, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Stout, WI

*Susan Lupo, Executive Director of Planning and Research, Schoolcraft College, MI

Mary Moore, VP for Research, Planning & Int. Partnerships, University of Indianapolis, IN

John Nichols, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Saint Joseph's College, IN.

Adelaide Parsons, Emerita Director of International Programs and TESOL, Southeast Missouri State University, MO

Kathleen Plinske, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, McHenry County College, IL

David Sill, Senior Scholar and Professor, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, IL

William Tammone, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Illinois Central College, East Peoria, IL.

Vice President for Academic Services, Montcalm Community College, MI

Kimberly Thompson, Director Institutional Accreditation Strategic Planning & Effectiveness, University of Colorado Denver, CO

Richard Wagner, President, Dunwoody College of Technology, MN

Linda Wellborn, Director of Graduate & Professional Studies, Evangel University, MO

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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
- 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
- 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
- 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

The institution was first accredited by the Commission on January 1, 1918, having been admitted to Candidacy for Accreditation on January 1, 1918.

The institution was admitted to AQIP on August 2002.

It participated in a Strategy Forum in October 2003, and November 2007.

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

The institution provided its Systems Portfolio for review in June 2007 and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on September 21, 2007.

The institution proposed a change in its relationship with the Commission that was reviewed by staff and approved on April 24, 2009. The change permitted the institution to streamline approval to add new sites.

AQIP conducted a Quality Checkup visit to the institution on March 25-27, 2009, and provided a report of the findings of the visiting team on April 8, 2009.

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

Southwestern College is a private institution affiliated with the Kansas West Conference of the United Methodist Church. The college is governed by a 41-member, self-perpetuating Board of Trustees with the President reporting directly to the Board. The Board governs through the utilization of a committee structure aligned with the six administrative units of the college. Southwestern College's instructional offerings are divided into two categories; 1) undergraduate and degree programs for traditional, residential students and 2) Professional Studies Programs designed to meet the needs of working adults. Additionally, the college serves the learning needs of military personnel through partnerships with three local military bases as well as by providing courses and degrees through the U.S. Army's eArmy U initiative (SP, p. 1, 3).

Approximately 1700 students receive instruction from 45 full-time and 91 part-time faculty. Seventy-four full-time and 15 part-time administrators fulfill the leadership functions of the college. Hourly staff comprised of 27 full-time and 10 part-time employees complete the operational staff. Eighty-five percent of undergraduate students are under the age of twenty-five. Professional Studies students and graduate students are primarily working adults (SP, p. 2).

The college sits on 85 acres and houses 600 residential students. Professional Studies instruction is located in leased space. Online delivery is available for most degree programs with some exceptions including teacher education and nursing. The college is affiliated with multiple associations and private sector business enterprises as well as with the public Kansas Board of Regents and public K-12 and community college partners (SP, p. 1-4).

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

A Quality Checkup site visit to the institution was conducted on March 25-27, 2009. In compliance with Commission requirements, the institution notified its constituencies and the public of this visit, 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 visit reviewed the institution's compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's *Federal Compliance Program* in 2008-09, and reported that all issues and practices reviewed at that time were acceptable. However, the Commission's Board of Trustees adopted additional policies on February 24, 2009 to comply specifically with requirements of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 concerning *Transfer of Credit* and the *Verification of Student Identity* policies. It is essential that the institution become familiar with these new accreditation expectations and take action immediately to ensure that its practices comply with these additional requirements. Detailed information about the new policies is available on the Commission's website and from the Commission's staff.

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

There are no accreditation issues currently under review.

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.

- Southwestern College's mission is clearly defined and apparent in multiple print and online publications (<http://www.sckans.edu/about/mission/>). The mission statement works in tandem with the institution's vision statement as the mechanism to achieve its vision, frame its educational offerings, and meet the distinct needs of affiliates and students.
- Structures to review mission include a Futures Task Force meeting once every three years. A recent meeting produced a revised mission statement that was then vetted to student and community stakeholders resulting in an inclusion of a green, sustainable culture. (QCU, p. 5).
- The Board of Trustees annually reviews and approves revised goals and directions drafted by the Futures Task Force which include long-term and annual objectives (SP, p. 70). Campus-wide analysis and tools include a SWOT analysis, data collection and review, market analysis, and business targets (QCU, p. 5, SP., p.70).

- The SWOT analysis is the primary vehicle used to solicit input from students and community however environmental scanning includes input from advisory councils and (SP, p. 51) and other accrediting bodies and affiliated partners including the University Senate of the United Methodist Church (SP, p. 4).
- A three year goal to improve the planning system includes improving stakeholder involvement in planning, employees will identify processes they engage in relating to quality, achievement of goals and ultimately achievement of mission (<http://www.sckans.edu/other/sc-improving-quality/improvement-of-quality/>).

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

None.

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 is 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.

- An Action Project emerged following the 2007 Strategy Forum applying the Process Maturity Model to evaluation and improvement of key support processes (QH, p. 1).
- Reengineering the College's planning process to overcome the "top down" bias of the process better connects planning process outcomes to budgeting (QH, p. 2).
- The College continues to work to strengthen performance planning and evaluation processes and to enhance alignment of individual work plans with divisional and institutional plans (QH, p. 2).
- A Planning Coordination Team (PCT) was formed with the purpose of improving faculty and staff involvement and linkage to planning, assessment, and budgeting. (Category Improvement Updates [CIU], p. 4, <http://www.sckans.edu/other/higher-learning-commission/>) This team will oversee departmental goals and objectives for

a two year plan until processes run smoothly for departments within the College (CIU, p. 12).

- A Futures Task Force appointed by the president was designed to lay the ground work for a more inclusive decision making process for ownership, assessment, and improvement of the College's distinctive objectives (CIU, p. 6; QCU, p. 5).
- A newly appointed person, the Director of Academic Advising and Learner Engagement, is the result of environmental scanning in order to reshape how Professional Studies works with learners. The goal is to become the benchmark in this area (CIU, p. 7).
- The PCT is leading the effort to guide units to write unit plans that map to the overall strategic plan of the College. Each plan incorporates measurements and comparative data where appropriate (CIU, p. 20).
- The vice president for information technology has a strong background in quality management principles and has responsibility for improving quality institution-wide (CIU, p. 16; QCU, p. 6).

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

None.

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 is 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.

- Overall strategies to develop a data and knowledge management system based on six-Sigma principles contribute to the college's assessment efforts and address strategic issues from the System Appraisal (SA, p. 5) including deficiencies in assessing outcomes by major and content area.

- Core curriculum is being revised to reflect identified institutional outcomes from both the Main and Professional Studies Campus (QCU, p. 5) which is also an improvement goal and component of current Action Projects (<http://www.sckans.edu/other/sc-improving-quality/improvement-priorities/>).
- Professional Studies is conducting a program review which further aligns “adult” education with traditional instructional offerings. Benchmarking of online offerings involves participation in Transparency by Design Initiative, allowing the institution to evaluate online learning effectiveness through national comparisons (QCU, p. 5-6).
- Academic proficiency testing has been adopted using the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test (QCU, p.5), as a standardized instrument to assess baccalaureate achievement at the freshman and native seniors levels. The test measures core skills and competencies (QCU, p. 5).
- The college’s three –year goal for AQIP Category One is to establish clearly expressed learning standards across the institution support by integration of co-curricular activities in learning goals as well as other support systems like newly created Student Success Center (QCU, p. 3).

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

None.

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 is 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.

- All employees have been trained on completing employee appraisals and forming SMART goals for their staff which are directly aligned to departmental goals (CIU, p. 11).

- The College provides extensive opportunities for staff development and training (SA, p. 6; SA, p. 23).
- The College continues to annually administer the “Are We Making Progress?” survey. Responses are discussed within a variety of groups with the results fed into an administration council for steps to be taken for improvement (SA, p. 6; SA, p. 14; SA, p. 36).
- The College completed training in 2007 for supervisors designed to strengthen links between performance evaluations, departmental plans, and institutional goals and objectives (SA, p. 35).
- The College is beginning to use the “Process Maturity Model” and “Critical to Tree (CT)” to help all institutional members move from a common language to actual quality improvement (QPS, p. 3).
- The College organized all-employee forums so that they could understand “how the college was doing” (CIU, p. 15).

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

None.

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 is recommended.

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

A. Evidence that Core Components are met.

- AQIP Category Three is a second focal point for the institution resulting in a current Action Projects designed to enhance retention and student success for adult learners. (AP 1332). Additionally, efforts to deploy and improve counseling, placement, and support for this student population are in process.
- An additional three-year goal is articulated through a strategic engagement of people in CQI efforts anchored in developing shared mental models of quality and improvement

through Six-Sigma principles. Top-level management and second level management have been trained.

- A second component of the initiative is to “understand what the customer wants, when the customer wants it and what the customer is willing to pay for it” (QPS, p. 3). To that end, several tools have been introduced including “Critical to Tree”, a model linking quality characteristics to customers/stakeholder/constituent requirements (QPS, p. 3).
- Process mapping of freshman admission and retention as a critical business process is being executed.
- Employer surveys for Professional Studies Programs and adoption of two best practices regarding online, military personnel are being utilized. Partnerships in key benchmark projects further enhance an understanding and articulation of value-adding strategies (QCU, p. 8).

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

None.

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 is recommended.

Summary of panel recommendations regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation:

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

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

A. Comments and counsel on specific improvement projects

Southwestern College is listening and responding to key issues identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report either through Action Projects or other improvement activities. The Category Improvement Updates (CIU) are responses to specific issues raised by the

Systems Appraisal Team. This format clearly indicates that Southwestern is serious about continuous improvement and in addressing the gaps identified by the team. The CIU outline what is being done and the person(s) or group accountable.

Based on the CIU, much progress has been done in all categories. In some cases, a visual diagram has been designed to help communicate the process to stakeholders. An example of the unit planning report has been developed to ensure that all faculty and staff know, understand, and execute their work in alignment with their unit plan.

Since these processes are new and the people accountable are newly appointed, it will be important to monitor how well the system is working and to make adjustments as needed. New methods of communicating have also been implemented based on feedback from the appraisal team. It will be critical to make sure that people continue to be involved and engaged to keep the momentum and commitment growing.

B. Comments and counsel on key institutional processes and systems

Evidence from the Quality Program Summary (QPS), Category Improvement Updates (CIU), and Quality Highlights (QH), indicate that Southwestern College is responding to feedback and making improvements to be further along on the quality journey. Key steps have been taken to overcome the “top down” bias of the planning process and to better connect planning process outcomes to budgeting. An intentional focus has been placed on aligning individual work plans with divisional and institutional plans.

The Quality Checkup Team stated “there is significant evidence that the leadership at Southwestern has institutionalized effective planning processes.” This was a major statement of affirmation as a result of the feedback from the Systems Appraisal Team.

Given the process improvements, constant consideration should be given to student involvement and participation in the processes. Communication systems should be monitored to make sure that open communication flows among levels which reinforces engagement, understanding, and commitment.

Inclusion of faculty and staff in the planning process is a challenge and an opportunity for the college. As the work in process-mapping continues, beyond critical business processes (QPS, p. 3), attention to communication and decision-making loops will help clarify how robustly mission alignment and achievement have been integrated into the college’s organizational fabric. Continued emphasis on capturing and documenting process, alignment of process with data and eventually analysis of data and information to inform action will demonstrate progress in this area.

The Vice President of Information Technology has significant knowledge and experience. It will be important to continue to educate other leaders in order to embed quality improvement into the culture. According to the QPS, College leaders are familiar with the language of quality improvement. “We expect Ben Lim, with the help of his administrative colleagues and wide participation by the College’s employees will be able to drive the College’s quality program from conception to reality” (p. 3). Monitoring to make sure this is what is taking place will be essential for making quality improvement a part of the culture.

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

Since 2003 when the College applied to participate in AQIP, much progress has been made in processes and systems to develop a culture of quality. Leadership for the infrastructure is now held by the vice president for information technology. "The College is working more actively to encourage employees to embed 'quality' and 'improvement' into their daily routine" (QPS, p. 2).

The future focus of Southwestern's quality program is based on developing a common language, using process models to make improvements, and to develop measurements to determine how processes are working. There appears to be a clear understanding of how Action Projects are used to move improvement projects forward. The website outlines roles and responsibilities for the person(s) accountable for improvement priorities.

Their efforts to develop an infrastructure that supports the program and culture should be commended. Making sure there is a leadership development and succession plan is key to sustaining the progress to date.

Summary of panel comments and counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP:

Since 2003 when the College applied to participate in AQIP, much progress has been made in processes and systems to develop a culture of quality. Leadership for the infrastructure is now held by the vice president for information technology. "The College is working more actively to encourage employees to embed 'quality' and 'improvement' into their daily routine" (QPS, p. 2).

The future focus of Southwestern's quality program is based on developing a common language, using process models to make improvements, and to develop measurements to determine how processes are working. There appears to be a clear understanding of how Action Projects are used to move improvement projects forward. The website outlines roles and responsibilities for the person(s) accountable for improvement priorities.

Their efforts to develop an infrastructure that supports the program and culture should be commended. Making sure there is a leadership development and succession plan is key to sustaining the progress to date.