

Quality Improvement Initiatives



Background

Early on in the College's adoption of the AQIP Pathway to accreditation, AQIP became something the Institution did, often in addition to business as usual. Quality initiatives were identified and created as additional, separate initiatives that often fell completely outside of the primary roles and responsibilities of those individuals working on them. This is not to say the initiatives themselves were not on target or needed, but because they were separate from the daily work or central to the recognized priorities of the College, they often floundered at best, and failed at worst.

Today, continuous quality improvement is what the Institution does, and AQIP is the mechanism that helps the College evaluate how well it is doing it. At every level of the Institution, the cycle of assessment, planning, and implementation ensures that quality initiatives are consistently selected, deployed, and evaluated to achieve continuous improvement.

As described in 4P2, the College conducts a comprehensive strategic planning process that results in a multi-year Strategic Plan. Within the plan there are goals, and each goal has a series of accompanying strategies. These strategies form the primary quality improvement initiatives for the Institution, many of which become the College's formal AQIP Action Projects. These strategies are grounded in evidence derived from the environmental scanning process, through the identification of critical issues, and the SWOT analyses completed during strategic planning.

The College has also created an institution-wide innovations funds program to help identify and support quality improvement initiatives. The Innovation Funds Program is designed to encourage innovative approaches to helping the College better meet its mission. The program accomplishes this by funding (1) pilot projects that will investigate and implement ideas initiated by creative faculty, staff, and students; and (2) one-time planning projects by a faculty/staff member or student to investigate whether an idea is relevant and feasible. The program fosters an entrepreneurial culture by promoting an environment that is conducive to experimentation and imagination.

To promote creative thinking, no project is off limits; however, the project must have the potential for significantly impacting the ability of the College to meet its mission and motivate student completion by addressing one or more of the following areas:

1. Instructional Effectiveness
2. Success after Completion
3. Student Support
4. LCCC Strategic Plan
5. Program Start-Up
6. Organizational Effectiveness

Innovation funds proposals are reviewed and scored by the broadly represented College Council using an objective criterion rubric containing the six items listed above. The rubric also scores on criteria relating to the proposal's evaluation plan and outcomes. This process further promotes continuous quality improvement by not only aligning funds to areas with the greatest potential for improvement, but by

completed, results in a Certificate of General Studies. This initiative has been functionally completed, and the new general education core will be offered starting fall 2015.

- Finalize planning and secure funding to construct a new student services, university, and instructional building on the Cheyenne campus. This building is fully funded and currently in the final design stages with construction planned to begin in the spring of 2015.
- Implement an intensive first-year experience for new faculty that exposes them to the Institution and, more importantly, builds the foundational knowledge to become excellent instructors. The College's new Center for Teaching & Learning has successfully offered its first NFL program to one cohort and currently has the second cohort enrolled.

These are but a handful of examples of the various quality initiatives underway at LCCC. All of the examples reflect those initiatives scored within the top tier of importance after the objective ranking process.

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LCCC's results and success to date have been inspiring and motivating; however, challenges still remain, and improvements must continue. For example, massive changes in all corners of the campus have led to the fear of too much, too soon. As a result, communication issues remain and perhaps have even

Act”; its very simplicity is one of the reasons it has withstood decades in the arena of continuous quality improvement. LCCC has embraced the foundational elements of this cycle by focusing the Institution on rigorous assessment of institutional effectiveness, planning for improvement based on the evidence provided by the assessment, resource allocation and implementation, followed by formative and summative evaluation, and the cycle repeats. Integrated within this cycle is the College’s belief in shared governance and inclusiveness across all levels of the Institution. This forms the infrastructure to support a culture of quality and continuous improvement at the College.

The LCCC model for continuous improvement was described in more detail in 4P1, but it is important to reiterate how that model has formed the basis for the culture that is emerging at the College. Every day, new processes are developed or existing ones are improved to ensure the elements within a continuous improvement cycle are being implemented across the Institution. More importantly though is the focus on how these processes relate and integrate.

For example, strategic planning is informed by assessment of institutional effectiveness through the College’s KPIs, which are derivative of the mission, vision, and values. The plan is developed, and its goals and strategies are built upon the identified needs for improvement. Strategies are operationalized and implemented, and the resource allocation model of the College objectively assesses the potential impact for these strategies to help guide resource allocation to those areas with the greatest likelihood for positively impacting improved outcomes. Activities are evaluated formatively to assess their success, and the Institution again examines institutional performance summatively through the KPIs, and the cycle repeats.

This process plays out in other aspects of the Institution. Academic program review goes through a similar process based on the cycle of continuous improvement. The student ambassador and leadership program has established formal learning outcomes for student leaders who are assessed regularly; this begins the cycle of continuous improvement within the student services unit. What has been emerging at LCCC over the past few years is a culture of quality founded in the Institution’s commitment to the continuous improvement cycle.

LCCC believes that institutional budgets are value statements. The Institution places its resources where it finds the greatest value. To that end, the College has made sure there are resources available to invest in quality improvement initiatives, whereby making the cultural statement that embracing continuous improvement will be rewarded at the Institution. This is evident in the Innovation Funds Program (with over \$400,000 invested in the past two fiscal years) and the fact that the FY15 Operating Budget has identified linkages between all resource requests and the Strategic Plan (see 4P1). In addition, the Institution has internally reallocated millions of dollars over the past three years to put existing dollars,

President presents and produces the College's report card on these measures (5.D.1). They are objective, authentic, and pertinent to the Institution's performance, and most importantly they demonstrate a commitment to identifying areas where improvement is required.

In addition to measuring institutional effectiveness and driving an overall process for ensuring continuous improvement is evident at LCCC, other processes have been developed and implemented that share this approach. For example, in 2013 the College conducted a comprehensive program analysis to determine the current health of the Institution's academic programs. The Program analysis and ranking system was designed to measure the relative performance of LCCC's programs of study. Twenty-five measures in four key performance areas have been identified for programs of study. Most of these measures can be linked to the College's system of KPIs. The results of the analysis place academic programs into quintiles based on a composite score of program health. This system has informed prioritization for academic program review.

Across the Institution, a culture of continuous quality improvement is emerging. Processes for the assessment of student learning, non-academic program and service review, campus safety, and others are taking shape, and honest conversations are had about where they are succeeding and where they can improve. The College has created a new division of institutional effectiveness led by an associate vice president to help ensure alignment with AQIP and continuous improvement processes and the

6R2-1
 Quality
 Indicators

IP Pathway

It is the goal of LCCC that the concept of AQIP and focus on it as something the Institution does is eventually replaced with the over-arching concept of continuous quality improvement. Accreditation is important, but, in and of itself, accreditation is an evaluation process that validates how well the Institution is designed and performs in accordance with educational standards and effectiveness in meeting the organization's mission.

To those ends, the College has taken great strides to build a model of continuous quality improvement that exists at the core of the Institution's culture and operations. Through strong processes for assessing effectiveness, planning, and resource allocation, coupled with a vibrant shared governance structure, educational criteria associated with the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation standards, assumed practices, and the continuous improvement elements within the AQIP Pathway are present in the core components of the organization's operations. Where applicable and necessary, a direct focus on AQIP and accreditation is present (such as the work of the Institution in developing this Systems Portfolio), but more important is the establishment of a culture that supports the AQIP Pathway without focusing on AQIP itself. For example, the College's program review is modeled in alignment with the AQIP framework of Process, Results, and Improvements. The College's Innovation Funds Program has aligned its reporting requirements in similar fashion to that of AQIP Action Projects. These are examples, but it is the belief of the College that the evidence presented in this Systems Portfolio clearly demonstrates it has embodied the role of the AQIP Pathway into the Institution.

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For two years now, the College has openly shared an authentic assessment of the Institution's performance, even when the information presented demonstrates areas in which the Institution does not perform well. At the fall convocations, the President delivers the state of the College address and shares the Institution's report card. Figure 6R2-1 includes the results of the 2013-2014 LCCC Institutional Effectiveness report card. More information about the annual results and presentation of the information can be found on the [President's web page](#).

Figure 6R2-1: LCCC Key Performance Indicators Report Card		
	2012-13	2013-14
Overall Grade:	C	C
Key Effectiveness Indicators		
A. Student Participation and Achievement	C	C
B. Academic Preparation	C	C
C. Transfer Preparation	B	B
D. Workforce Development	B	B
E. Community Development	B	B
Key Efficiency Indicators		
F. Instructional Productivity	B	B
G. Fiscal Stewardship	D	C
H. College Affordability	B	C
I. Campus Climate	B	C

Figure 6R2-1

More information on the results of the College's KPIs and institutional report card can be found on the College's [Institutional Research webpage](#).

Mentioned previously, the College has implemented a Program Analysis and Ranking process to help inform continuous improvement and programmatic health of the Institution's academic programs. The results of the 2012-2013 analysis that were shared with the Institution are displayed in Figure 1R3-2.

These represent two of the most high profile examples of evidence shared and communicated effectively to drive a culture of quality at LCCC.



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