

AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement

8C1 CCC's Five to Ten Year Vision

By 2010, Central Community College will become the higher learning institution of first choice for a majority of the people in the service area who are seeking applied technology and occupational education, academic transfer programs, and job training. Observers will recognize Central Community College as an institution that:

- Demonstrates diversity among its students, Board of Governors, faculty, staff, and administration
- Fosters a commitment to life long learning
- Partners with external stakeholders to create educational opportunities
- Provides learner centered environments that support holistic student development
- Provides access to quality instructional programs and support services through:
 - Affordable education and training
 - Multiple instructional delivery methods
- Practices continuous quality improvement processes
- Demonstrates integrity through high ethical and professional standards
- Encourages risk taking, innovation, and creativity that builds on the college's heritage and envisions the future

8C2 CCC's Short- and Long-term Strategies

Central Community College aligns its long-term and short term strategies and three years goals with the College's mission statement. The planning team develops the College's goals and objectives around the AQIP Categories and publishes them in a brochure titled "Central Community College Objectives" for 2005-06, (See Overview O1). From 2003 through 2005, Central Community College upgraded its planning process to a comprehensive master plan. For each major College program and service function, the master plan includes:

- A mission/purpose statement
- A vision statement
- An environmental scan based needs statement
- An action plan for strategy for the coming year
- Projected resources needs and estimated costs: physical facilities, staff and students, and equipment and technology
- Specific team member names who developed the plan
- Three to five year goals and measurements
- Strategies for achieving each goal

8P1 CCC's Planning Process

Early in 2003 the CCC's leadership integrated more data-based decision making and CQI methods into the planning process. For this reason, in late 2003, the College formed a new planning team to create the plan for 2005-2008. Based on data initially collected in the College Issues Questionnaire, the College determined the need for a broader-based planning team with more equitably distributed membership. With this cross-functional team, the College collects more accurate and valid data for its planning process. Charged with a two-point purpose, the team develops the college plan and reviews and updates the College mission, vision, and purpose statement. In the course of developing the college plan, the team validates all proposed objectives with documented data that either defines the issue or resolves it. The College Planning Team uses the steps below in its planning process:

- Reviews the nine AQIP Categories with special focus on Category 8
- Reviews the College vision and mission statements
- Reviews the College environmental scans including data collected on key performance measures of all primary college functions
- Uses nominal group techniques to develop a master list of issues to create a list of proposed objectives to resolve the issue in question
- Rank orders the proposed objectives within each AQIP Category
- Distributes proposed rank ordered objective to the Quality Council and other College employees for review and feedback

- Forwards the resulting objectives to an administrative planning work session for grouping into the following categories: on going, must do, should do, or not do.
- Estimates the resources needed to accomplish the proposed objectives and distributes the resulting list to College employees for review and feedback.
- Forwards the proposed objective/goals to the College Cabinet for approval.
- Presents the final draft of objectives to the College Board of Governors for rank ordering and approval.
- Assigns budget resources to the objectives.

The Executive Vice President formatted the College mission, value statements, vision statement, strategic directions and goals, and strategic process statements for publication (See Overview O1).

8P2 Short and Long Term Strategies

Central Community College monitors stakeholders' needs and trends, and analyzes these against the College role and mission. The College developed the current strategic processes for the 2000 to 2005 College plan and carried them into the 2005 to 2008 plan with minor revision. College employees annually review and update, where necessary, the strategic directions, objectives, and processes. The planning team also identifies strategic issues that the College needs to address. The team proposes resolutions for these issues and drafts objectives and action plans. The Executive Vice President publishes this information for College employees and the Educational Services Committee to respond and review. The College Cabinet reviews and approves the document before the College President submits it to the College Board of Governors for approval. The following list outlines examples of the Criterion referenced issues which the Planning Team identified and then recommended actions for 2003-2004 College year.

Criterion 1: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Cohort graduation rate – Address the College's cohort default rate:
 - Set a cohort graduation rate baseline comparable to national averages
 - Set a graduation target goal
 - Identify the three programs having lowest cohort graduation rates and establish study teams to determine strategies for improving the graduation rate
2. Developmental courses – Resolve the high percentage of students needing developmental education:
 - Group students with basic skills deficiencies:
 - recent high school graduates 24 years of age and younger
 - non-traditional students 25 years of age and older
 - Report to feeder institutions the generic data showing success rates of students 24 years of age and younger and basic skill areas needing improvement
3. Program assessment development – Integrate the program assessment activities with WIDS curriculum development and budget development processes

Criterion 2: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Distance learning center emphasis – Analyze the effectiveness of distance learning centers compared to alternative distance delivery methods such as Web CT and satellite delivery
2. Individualized instruction – Consider the future delivery methods by studying the advantages and disadvantages of individualized delivery compared to other nontraditional delivery methods

Criterion 3: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Future educational needs of post-high school stakeholders – Survey stakeholders individuals 25 years of age and older within the defined geographic area to determine their short term, intermediate term, and long term educational needs
2. Future curriculum needs of high schools within geographic area – Survey high school administrators and counselors to determine short term and intermediate term needs of early entry classes/courses

Criterion 4: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Stakeholders' involvement – Increase internal participation in decision-making process:
 - Improve authentic opportunities for appropriate decentralized decision-making and streamline bureaucracy and paperwork
 - Empower employees by delegating authority
 - Consider the potential enhancement of student learning when establishing decision-making processes
 - Increase student participation in decision-making processes
2. Faculty participation – Develop formal process for faculty to review administrative policies and procedures
3. Employee morale and peer institutions comparisons – Begin addressing employee morale issues:
 - Study peer institutions for comparisons of faculty and staff wages and benefits in order to address the perceived discrepancies in wage and benefit increases between faculty and staff
 - Determine salary grade level based on required education and skill levels

Criterion 5: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Employee communication skills – Provide communications training for approximately 250 full-time college employees during working hours
2. Communications and use of data - Provide an update of progress on AQIP Action projects to all CCC employees through monthly emails

Criterion 6: Issues and Recommended Action

1. First year, first time students from service area – Implement the 2004-2005 marketing-plan objectives specifically related to High School Marketing Plan Goals to make Central Community College the “college of choice” for 20 percent of the high school students in the twenty-five county service area
2. Career consulting and exploration – Identify areas for improvement through surveys and other instruments as related to career explorations and choice

Criterion 7: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Measure effectiveness of processes – Improve the College's ability to measure institutional effectiveness:
 - Identify shortcomings accessibility and knowledge of available data including comparative data from peer institutions and internal trend analysis
 - Provide training in data-based decision-making
 - Define critical processes not presently measured and develop assessment measures
 - Institutionalize database decision-making
 - Expand the use of stakeholder input in developing new measures for the college
 - Increase access to computerized data for stakeholders who require it:
 - Decentralize the control of non confidential data access that is not confidential
 - Centralize data collection
 - Standardize reports

Criterion 8: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Connection of planning process and budgeting – Provide College leaders training on importance of planning and its impact on budgeting

Criterion 9: Issues and Recommended Action

1. Identification of internal and external relationships – Build collaborative relationships with stakeholders:
 - Identify current and potential internal and external stakeholder relationships
 - Develop plans to improve communication with stakeholders
 - Share information among clusters

- Eliminate sense of internal competition
- Develop marketing efforts to promote new partnerships
- Increase promotion of College

The College Planning Team with the collaborative efforts of the Quality Council, all College employees, Cabinet members, and members of the Board of Governors developed these objectives.

The College Issues Questionnaire, the CLARUS study, key performance indicators, trend data, and college stakeholders' input provided data to develop the College planning goals listed in Figure 8P2-1.

College Planning Goals for 2005-2006 Approved by College Board of Governors on June 16, 2005		
	Strategic Issue	College Goals
1.	Revenue Sources	Improve the financial status of Central Community College by identifying new dependable revenue sources such as foundations, business and industry partnerships, grants, and service fees. (AQIP Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement - 4b)
2.	Prioritized Planning	Develop a planning process that prioritizes human resource adjustments, equipment needs, service additions or deletions, and other resources needed to improve the effectiveness, quality, and efficiencies of instructional and support service programs. (AQIP Category 1, Helping Students Learn - 1a)
3.	Enrollment Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement a marketing and recruiting strategy that results in Central Community College becoming central Nebraska's college of first choice with a student body representing the diverse ethnicity of central Nebraska. ▪ Develop measures to predict program, course, and service capacities. ▪ Identify crucial student retention issues and develop strategies to improve student goal achievement. (Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs - 2a, 2b, 2c) + \$40,000
4.	Leadership Development	Develop and implement a plan for leadership and professional development for full- and part-time employees. (AQIP Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations - 3b) + \$10,000
5.	Improving Teaching and Learning	Place greater emphasis on analyzing and improving teaching, learning, diverse cultural and learning styles, and other critical instructional support processes. (AQIP Category 1, Helping Students Learn – 1b & c)
6.	Infrastructure	<p>Assess for effectiveness and efficiency, and develop planning systems to develop and maintain infrastructures and processes designed to adapt to the higher learning needs of a changing society and to achieve the college mission through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ effective learning systems ▪ responsive student support systems ▪ employees who contribute fully and effectively ▪ an inviting physical plant <p>(AQIP Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations – 3a & c, and Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement – 4a)</p>

Figure 8P2-1

8P3 Action Plans to Support Institutional Strategies

The College Cabinet assigns a team champion, a team leader, and team members to each key objective. The team builds an action plan with appropriate timelines, assigned responsibilities, and identified resource needs. Annual reports convey objective accomplishments to the College Cabinet, the College Board, and interested stakeholder groups such as the President's Advisory Council. The team champion monitors team progress and provides necessary support for accomplishing the objective.

8P4 Coordination and Alignment of Planning Processes

As stated in 8C2 above, during 2003 through 2005, Central Community College upgraded its planning process to a college comprehensive master plan. The master plan includes for each major college program and service function:

- A vision statement.
- A mission/purpose statement.
- An environmental scan based needs statement.
- Three to five year goals and measurements used to determine effectiveness.
- Strategies for achieving each goal.
- An action plan for strategy for the coming year.
- Projected resources needs and estimated costs: physical facilities, staff and students, and equipment and technology.
- The names of the team members who developed the plan.

The college organized the master plan by major function and sub-functions: instruction, instructional clusters, and instructional cluster programs; student services and student service programs; and business services and business service programs. CCC is currently piloting a process to further integrate employees into the planning process. The College gave this process the title, Systems Planning for Actions, Resources, Knowledge and Skills (SPARKS). The SPARKS design will allow most full-time and some part-time College employees and students opportunity to participate in an annual College Systems Portfolio review and update. The SPARKS process will identify critical processes and issues the College needs to address. The following pages describe the SPARKS process.

- **SPARKS Project Objective:** To develop a process for defining college goals using:
 - Input from college employees.
 - The Institutional Portfolio as a basis for identifying area needing improvement.
 - Continuous quality improvement concepts in college planning.
 - Time during the All College In-service for collaborative planning.
 - The developed goals to guide the College budgeting process.
- **Overview** The SPARKS project utilizes a large scale nominal group technique to define the primary objective/actions for CCC. Figure 8P4-1 illustrates the basic steps, actions and timeline of the SPARKS process.
- The SPARKS leader assigns full-time college employees to a Systems Portfolio Category review team.
- The individual category teams (8 persons per team) reach consensus on recommendations regarding actions the College should take on assigned category.
- Institutional research compiles recommended actions from all SPARKS teams and forwards the recommendations to College Cabinet for prioritization and approval of goals.
- The Cabinet then forwards the recommended actions to the Board of Governors for final rank ordering and approval.
- The College started the first pilot SPARKS session on September 29, 2005, and will complete the first cycle with funding assigned to the goals in May 2006.

Systems Planning for Actions, Resources, Knowledge and Skills (SPARKS)		
Steps	Specific Action/s	Time line
STEP 1: Data Collected and Portfolio Updated	Department of Institutional Research collects/compiles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Performance Indicators • Program Core Performance Indicators • Updates for data in the system portfolio • Updates from individual Category teams integrated into the system Portfolio • Selected measures placed on dashboard • Assessment of Student Learning data 	July- June (12 month cycle)
STEP 2: Data Analysis Conducted by Various Teams and Team Champions	All specific function teams and Action Project teams analyze data as it becomes available on regular cycles	July- June (12 month cycle)
STEP 3: Team Selection and Data Distribution:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC employees are randomly selected to represent one of the nine AQIP categories • The employees are then randomly placed on a team of six along with a facilitator and recorder (facilitators and recorders trained) • Employees notified of the team and category they have been assigned, and the processes to be followed • All categories and supporting data will be made available for review on the college intranet or web page • A notification will be given to all employees, requesting them to prepare by reading the materials provided 	September / October
STEP 4: Nominal Group Breakout (All College In-service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC employees at the All College In-Service will go to the designated room for the assigned category • Employees will be directed to a specific nominal group • Under the guidance of the facilitators at each table, each nominal group will develop a prioritized list of issues that have a potential for process improvement and relate directly to the category they are assigned and supports the college mission 	One Hour at the All College In-Service October – (Pilot 2005, Full Implementation 2006)
STEP 5: Data Compiled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is compiled from each category nominal group • The average/common results are compiled for each category • Generation of the SPARKS Issues Report 	October
STEP 6: Report Forwarded to the College Cabinet for Review and Prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Cabinet reviews and prioritizes actions/goals based on the SPARKS Issues Report • Forwards proposed goals to College Board for rank-order and approval • Forward prioritized list to Financial Planning Team 	November
STEP 7: Funds Prioritized and Systems Portfolio Updated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are assigned as needed to the prioritized and approved SPARKS list • Appropriate departments and individuals are assigned to implement required actions plans • Department of Research updates the Systems Portfolio and Action Projects as necessary 	January - May
STEP 8: Implement Action Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The departments and teams assigned the defined action projects are monitored and assisted by the appropriate college leadership group- Educational Services Committee, College Cabinet, Business Service Teams, Campus Cabinets, Board of Governors, etc 	July -June
STEP 9: Complete Action Plans and Restart Process the Following Year		

Figure 8P4-1

8P5 Selecting Measures and Setting Performance Projections for Institutional Strategies

Currently existing data sets determine measures used in setting performance projections for institutional action plans and strategies:

- Course and Program Retention Rates
- Headcount
- Assessment of student learning data
- Placement data
- FTES/FTE data

Since the Strategy Forum, the College has focused on expanding the use of specialized studies to indicate successful performance. Using a structured approach, the requesting individual team defines the primary outcome of the process in question and defines contributing factors that could have a significant correlation to the primary outcome. Additionally, the College has expanded its use of data in decision making to most departments and divisions. This expanded use of data has necessitated more effective distribution to people, divisions, and departments. To meet this need, the recent efforts of the data-based decision making team provided a "Dashboard," a readily accessible library of key performance data useful to all teams. Data factors in the Dashboard will include:

- Program Core Performance Measures
- College Key performance Objectives
- Weighted Program performance data
- Public financial data
- Locally produced reports
- Externally produced reports
- Internal and external survey results

8P6 Ensuring Appropriate Allocation of Resource Needs to Select Strategies and Implement Action Plans

The person or team developing the objectives also estimates the resources needed to implement the action plan. These resources may include staff, space, equipment, and dollars. The planning team then ranks objectives by perceived need and resource requirements. The budget team then allocates available funds to the most critical objectives. The departments can fund what they consider critical objectives through their continuation budget should they elect to do so.

8P7 Ensuring the Development of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Capabilities as Institutional Strategies Change

The Quality Council recently accepted the responsibility to develop the CCC Leadership College initiative. The College asked the council to:

1. Identify work environment competencies (frontline competencies) common to all full-time employees
2. Recommend educational opportunities for those employees who have not developed the common work environment competencies
3. Create a College leadership development program for those employees who aspired to a leadership role.

Figure 8P7-1 illustrates examples of common work environment competencies.

Common Work Environment Competencies	
Competency 1	Delivering Exceptional Customer Service
Competency 2	Using Technology to Improve Job Performance
Competency 3	Communicating Effectively
Competency 4	College Policies, Programs, & Processes
Competency 5	New Employee Orientation (required) or Making The Central Connection
Competency 6	Staying Safe at Work, in the Classroom

Figure 8P7-1

As referenced numerous times elsewhere, the College Issues Survey identified the need for communications training which the Quality Council identified as a high priority.

8P8 Continuous Improvement Measures of Effectiveness

Central Community College uses Key Performance measures and trend analysis to assess institutional effectiveness as illustrated in Tables 1C2-1, 1C4-1, 1C4-2, 1P11-1, 1P12-1, 1R1-1, 1R1-2, 1R1-4, 1R1-5, and 1R4-1. The College evaluates these measures according to its nature and frequency of use. The College has begun to develop a Key Performance measures Dashboard to monitor critical College data (See Section 8P5).

8R1 Results of Accomplishing Institutional Strategies and Action Plans

The following table provides an overview of the accomplishment of the College's annual objectives.

Central Community College's Accomplishment Annual Objectives						
Year	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Total College Objectives	35	30	28	11	35	37
Number Accomplished	27	29	12	10	31	32
Number Not Accomplished	8	1	16	1	4	5
Percent Accomplished	77%	97%	43%	91%	89%	87%

Table 8R1-1

The major results of accomplishing institutional strategies and action plans include:

- Redefine the role of College and campus administrators:
 - Designated administration of College-wide programs, services, and day-to-day activities to presidents and deans
 - Delineated students services responsibilities College-wide and day-to-day campus activities
 - Defined Area Office personnel responsibilities
- Improved assessment student learning by progressing from collection to analyzing data and recommending program adjustments
- Established a President's Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from each of the 25 counties; meets at multiple locations to advise the College President on higher learning issues
- Established College teams to address critical College issues:
 - Continuous quality improvement
 - Enrollment management
 - Technology planning
 - Communications training
 - Data-based decision making
 - AQIP Portfolio development (10 teams)
 - College short-range and long-range planning
- Hired a consultant to analyze enrollment and marketing issues and to lead in the development of a marketing plan
- Upgraded the College Web page
- Implemented an enrollment management plan
- Increased collaborations with high schools resulting in collaborative agreements with 63 of the College area's 80 high schools
- Collaborated with 34 schools to participate in land line connections to deliver live two-way interactive audio/video classes among the schools and the college
- Developed and implemented a career pathways model for allied health that has expanded into 11 area high schools and accepted as a model for the state

- Created a leadership development program for College employees who desire an opportunity to serve in a leadership role
- Educated area school counselors about Central Community College by inviting the counselors and paid them a stipend for attending a one-day workshop about changes at Central Community College
- Established key performance indicators (KPIs) for instructional and student services programs
- Created an employee professional development program for common core competencies
- Provided decision-makers access to enrollment data files for compilation, formatting in usable designs, and analysis
- Optimized budget allocation through combining data-based planning and budgeting processes
- Enhanced financial resources in 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 by \$3,500,000 each through grant awards and an additional \$1,128,192 raised through the College Foundation

8R2 & 8R3 Projections of Performance and Comparisons to Other Institutions

Central Community College uses Key Performance measures, standards, and trends to project future performance. The College historically achieves between 80 and 90 percent of its action plans (Tables 1R1-5 and 8R1-1). The Student Services leadership has developed trend lines for a minimum of five years in most data fields. However, the team still needs to develop performance standards. The College believes that participating in AQIP has assisted in focusing outcome improvement and anticipates greater achievement as the College matures in the continuous improvement processes.

Central Community College currently participates in IPEDS, Nebraska Education Data Service (NEEDS), National Community College Benchmark Project, the University of Nebraska Transfer Student Study, and the CLARUS Enrollment Management Study to collect comparative data with peer institutions. In most cases, CCC data meets or exceeds the mean of other participating institutions. This data assists the College in comparing outcomes to similar institutions and in establishing realistic strategy and goal benchmarks.

8R4 Evidence that CCC's Continuous Improvement Is Effective

From the onset of the AQIP process, CCC has involved the internal stakeholders in the continuous improvement planning process as the data below illustrates:

- Planning team – 21 persons
 - Cabinet & deans – 13 persons
 - College Issues Survey – 408 full-time employees
 - Objectives review – 408 full-time employees
 - President's Advisory Council – 100 external stakeholders
 - Continuous Quality Improvement Council– 17 staff members proportionally representing college employees
 - Educational Services Committee members and attendees – 20 instructional and student service employees.
- Historical trends and patterns – See Section 8P8 and Tables 8R1-1 and 1R4-1 as examples of achievement.

As employees find their input makes a difference, they will become more active participants in the improvement process.

811 Improving Processes and Systems for Planning Continuous Improvement

Central Community College uses the Continuous Improvement Planning Model that incorporates ongoing review and improvement of the College planning system (See Fig 5C2-1). The College currently uses the specific processes included in 811-1 to improve the College's planning:

CQI Improvement process	Developed / Implemented	AQIP Principle
Systems Planning for Actions, Resources, Knowledge and Skills (SPARKS) (See Section 8P4)	Fall 2005	Involvement and People
College Planning Teams – (Long-range 3 years & mid-term 1 year)	1984	Agility and Foresight
Ongoing review by standing leadership teams (Educational Services, College Cabinet, and the Board of Governors)	1984	Leadership and Focus
Educational Services Committee and teams, Business Services teams, College Cabinet, Quality Council and Action Project teams review of existing processes	Began in 1984 with greater emphasis in Fall 2003	Collaboration
Ongoing review of Key Performance Indicators and environmental scans (all stakeholders) through publicly posted performance data (Web and College Dashboard)	Fall 2000 – Ongoing	Learning, Integrity, and Information

Figure 811-1

812 Setting Targets for Improving Continuous Quality Improvement Processes and Specific Targeted Improvement Priorities

Central Community College sets targets using multiple processes. Instruction has developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with performance standards, targeting for improvement those programs and services not meeting KPI standards. The student service programs have developed KPIs with trend data, but the programs still need to develop and implement performance standards for the KPIs. The College also surveys staff, students, and community stakeholders to identify issues or processes to target for improvement. Figure 812-1 lists specific improvement priorities:

Communications	The College established a communications team which has led the college in providing communications workshops for all full-time and some part-time employees beginning in 2003/2004 and continuing through 2004/2005. The team also established an electronic suggestion box for students and staff; responses occur within 24 hours.
Math course completion	The College established a team to study low math completion rates (60%=2002, 63%=2005) and to establish procedures or actions to improve the completion rates.
Staff development	Employees responding to the gap analysis survey indicated a need for improvement in professional development. The CQIC agreed to provide leadership in developing a structured college professional development process.
College fleet costs	A Six Sigma study determined savings by downsizing the College fleet. The study also established a reimbursement model for college vehicles and rental vehicles resulting in a savings of \$17,000 in one year.

Figure 812-1

Central Community College has set the following priorities as targets for improvement:

- Improve low functioning instructional programs

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- Improve enrollment management processes
- Upgrade critical systems and infrastructure processes
- Improve efficiencies in selected programs and services
- Improve revenue sources and develop new revenue sources

Central Community College does not have a good process in place for communicating current results and improvement priorities to students. Existing resources appropriate this purpose include an in-house student information system, a college owned radio station on the Hastings campus, “Central Connection,” an in-house newsletter, and programmable monitors positioned in heavy traffic areas.

The process for communicating to faculty, staff, administrators is somewhat better—“Central Connection,” an in-house newsletter; e-mail, in-house Web site, and campus and college in-service days.

Appropriate stakeholders have access to annual meetings with President’s Advisory Council and with college program advisory committees.