

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

# College of Lake County

Grayslake, Illinois 60030

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**Quality Checkup team members:**

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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*

The team, in partnership with the College of Lake County (CLC) leadership, established a framework for the visit that included engagement in dialogue, reflection, exploration and learning for **all** participants. The framework set the tone for meetings with students, faculty, administrators, board of trustee members, staff and others who are playing a role in the development and implementation CLC's quality initiatives.

Prior to the visit, CLC provided specific tools for team members to review including a revised/updated Systems Portfolio, a quality overview document, and a matrix of opportunities.

The matrix of opportunities:

- Organized opportunities (O's and OO's) into key categories; data/information management, targets, student support, governance, assessment, and planning
- Included feedback comments
- Identified resources and actions taken for O and OO
- Related directly to strategic issues identified in the feedback report, to Action Projects and to other initiatives undertaken by the College to meet its mission.

On the whole, CLC felt the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report was clear and presented an accurate reflection of the institution at the time it was written. CLC cited two opportunities from the report that required clarification; 6R1c and 4R1. These were discussed and resolved during a debrief conversation with the College's new Quality Assessment Manager.

The College intends to explore how it might further use its Systems Portfolio to enhance employee and stakeholder understanding of the institution's strategic direction, the College's approach to quality, and how projects across the institution link systemically; a theme that emerged during the visit.

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

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

No accreditation issues were identified in the last Systems Appraisal Feedback Report. All five

Criteria for Accreditation are being met.

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

Strategic Issues cited in CLC's System Appraisal Feedback report fall roughly under four umbrella categories; 1) Strategic Planning (targets, goals, benchmarks, and data analysis/distribution), 2) Asset Allocation, 3) Student Engagement, and 4) Diversity.

*Strategic Planning* – The College continues to operate in an environment of change in markets, growth, leadership, and staff. Specific to the market place is an increase in traditional transfer students (primarily at the Grayslake campus), an increase in students speaking English as a second language and GED students (primarily at the Lakeshore and Southlake campuses) and an overall increase in Hispanic and Black student populations. The Southlake facility has tripled in size expanding from a 47,000 square foot educational center to a 60,000 square foot campus. Concurrently, CLC has been impacted by the loss of a newly hired President and by a year-long search to find and secure a replacement. During this sea-change, the College has continued to function extremely well under the guidance of its interim executive team. However, the tasks of defining a clear vision of the future, building clear pathways for decision making, and harnessing informal and grass-roots projects as building blocks for systemic change have been ostensibly on hold.

The incoming President attended the majority of meetings held during the Checkup Visit. He also participated in the executive debrief and the organizational debrief. His participation provided an opportunity for CLC's new President to learn about the culture of the organization, which manifested in the many projects and initiatives discussed during the visit. His participation also presented an opportunity to hear employees passionately talk about their work in the context of quality and change. CLC, as an organization, seems ready (and in some instances eager) to engage in a comprehensive strategic planning process. Laying this foundation may be a primary task for the College. Once a vision and strategy are in play, purpose and structure should fall in line with performance targets, metrics, and processes to support those outcomes aligned.

Information and data management will play a key role as well. CLC has improved its data collection, analysis and information distribution processes. Under the current system, 33

organizational performance metrics have been defined with trend data collected and reported on. Review and use of the data appears to still be at an activity, committee, project or departmental level with little synthesis across structural borders.

The newly revised Governance Committee (an AQIP Action Project) is attempting to play a role in coordinating activity. Outcomes of the first phase of the project include a comprehensive list of all governance organizations and their sub-committees (approximately 33 groups), more clearly defined purpose, defined membership roles and responsibilities, and a Web-based matrix to capture actions of each committee and subcommittee. As strategic planning takes shape, the output of this project may help identify natural relationships across “silos” which might lead to a more systemic approach to governance, a possible reduction in duplication of effort and a more direct link of activities to organizational goals.

*Asset Allocation* – Fiscally, CLC is a well-run institution that has invested in:

- Development of new departments (Advising)
- A comprehensive facilities assessment resulting in a database-driven preventive maintenance and replacement schedule
- IT services for students including
  - Student e-mail, completely wireless campuses
  - A “myStudentCenter” a student portal
  - A faculty curriculum development tool (Curricunet).

Web pages are available for project management and communication. Data warehouses are in development as well. Of particular note, CLC is using Web pages as a tool to consolidate and communicate information which appears to be producing a transparent organizational culture.

*Student Engagement* – CLC has made a deep commitment to developing support systems and processes that will help students succeed. These initiatives were instigated as a response to low ratings on several benchmark surveys (Noel-Levitz, CCSSE, ACT), feedback from focus groups, and feedback contained in the Systems Appraisal Report. A new advising department (facility and staff) has been launched. CLC also participated in the Foundations of Excellence process which has resulted in three AQIP Action Projects. A New Student Orientation (NSO) program has been launched. Review of NSO is another AQIP project. Lastly, the THRIVE program consolidates efforts of the First Year Experience, the Woman’s Center, the Multi-

Cultural Center and utilizes the expertise of CLC's Retention Specialist to address the needs of at risk students. Clarifying the purpose of each of these initiatives as they relate to strategy and linking these initiatives systemically may be a valuable next step in establishing performance targets and assessing value-added for students.

*Diversity* – As noted, CLC has experienced growth in its diverse student population. In response, the College has been successful in increasing the number of minority employees. Full-time minority employees now equal 28% of that group. CLC has also responded to an increase in its Hispanic student population (primarily at the Lakeshore Campus) by developing strategic community partners, increasing ESL offerings, producing innovative events like Latino Day on the Mall and Salute to Gospel. Possible next steps will be to measure the impact this work has on recruitment, retention and student success. Defining performance targets for these emerging populations may mean identifying patterns of behavior and basing performance targets on those patterns. For example, time to first college credit or mobility patterns might be taken into consideration. Discussions about persona based analysis occurred during several presentations; First Year, THRIVE, marketing and advertising, advising and even governance. Examining new models derived from Clifford Adleman's work as well as those emerging from the National Community College Benchmark Projects were also discussed.

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

#### Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

The College of Lake County is highly committed to the *concept* of improvement. The institution has acquired a Quality Manager, developed a Quality Council, has produced *processes* to assess student learning for general education and career programs, and is conducting process-driven department reviews. CLC has expanded its collection of data to include national benchmarks for student engagement (CCSSE and NCCBP) and student satisfaction with support services (Noel-Levitz). As part of the Illinois system, CLC submits and receives data comparing the organization with other in-state institutions. CLC has, in place, many quality building blocks and tools.

As CLC moves toward systemic change, the College may want to more consciously organize these (and other) building blocks around a quality blueprint. Currently, CLC's approach to quality appears to focus on changing processes, which in turn generate activity, which is then assessed. Why changes are being made, the purpose of the change and the desired outcome at a systems level is often not apparent and at times cannot be articulated. Culturally, "improvement" and "change" appear to be synonymous.

Certainly CLC is engaged in change. The strategic question might be, "To what end?" The quality question might be, "What value does this change add?"

The institution has reached a level of sophistication that may enable it to rethink how to organize, institute and measure the impact of change at a systems level. It also has an opportunity to rethink the integration of quality principles as a way of working. The Governance Council might be the perfect vehicle for such integration as opposed to the addition of a Quality Council which implies ownership of quality by an entity (relates to Categories 5,7, and 8).

Employees' skills and competencies as they relate to quality systems are critical as well. CLC has produced a model Professional Development Center with the capacity to design quality curriculum for employees. This curriculum might be based on a set of skills and competencies all employees should possess as contributors to a high performance organization. There may be a way to integrate faculty in the design of such a curriculum particularly since faculty have produced out-comes based processes to assess general education attainment. These processes are measurable, can be compared, and are time bound (relates to Categories 1,3,4, and 7).

CLC has made marked progress on its quality journey and is poised to capitalize on that progress to reach a higher level of institutional performance.

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

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

The College of Lake County recently received information from the Department of Education on

the FY 2007 Cohort Default rate. The default rate for FY2007 is 13.1%, an increase of 2.5% from the FY 2006 year of 10.6%. For the prior two years, the College's default rate was reported as below the average as compared to other Illinois community colleges.

|                         | <u>Aid Year 2004</u> | <u>Aid Year 2005</u> | <u>Aid Year 2006</u> | <u>Aid Year 2007</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>CLC Default Rate</u> | 12.3%                | 9.0%                 | 10.6%                | 13.1%                |

As a strategic goal, the Financial Aid department has been improving its Default Management and Prevention Program. Students are now being provided with a more comprehensive packet of information that includes loan payment options, the students' rights and responsibilities, important contact information, and options for hardship. The Financial Aid department will be communicating with the students who have defaulted in the FY 2007 Cohort in order to provide them with information on options they can utilize with their lenders to resolve their default status.

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

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

The institution took action regarding Third Party Comment by issuing a Public Notification of Accreditation Visit, as well as an article published in the local newspaper on December 11, 2008 announcing an accreditation team visit to CLC and inviting comments. One comment was received which was positive.

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

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

The CLC is in conformity with The Commission's Federal Compliance Program regarding

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition. The College utilizes the traditional Carnegie Unit as a measure of academic credit. This unit is the primary academic measure by which progress toward a degree is measured. All credit hours earned at CLC are considered to be official and all completed coursework is posted to an official CLC academic transcript which includes the semester credit hours earned.

The College offers programs of varying lengths, from a 7-credit Nurse Assisting program to the 80-credit Associate of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene. The minimum credit hours for an Associate Degree are 60 hours and the majority of the degree programs are at or near 60 hours. The program requirements at the College are equivalent to the program length requirements of other institutions with similar programs of study.

Tuition information is clearly communicated and is disseminated via the College Catalog, the Schedule of Classes, and the College web site. There are three levels of tuition based on residency of the student: in-district tuition, out-of-district tuition, and out-of-state tuition. Tuition is based on a per credit hour structure. Tuition does not vary by program; however, there are fees attached to those courses that have exceptional costs in terms of supplies, technology support, and other resource needs.

College of Lake County Tuition Rates for Fall 2008:

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| In-district.....    | \$ 81.00 per credit hour |
| Out-of-district.... | \$206.00 per credit hour |
| Out-of-state.....   | \$277.00 per credit hour |

In the team's judgment, the College of Lake County met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

The College has met all policy requirements for advertising and recruitment materials. The team reviewed CLC's annual marketing plan, its portfolio of marketing and recruitment products, enrollment targets, and the data collection process used to report the effectiveness of marketing and recruiting activities in relationship to student groups or specific markets. The system is dynamic, targets diverse populations, including specific advertising and recruiting materials for

Hispanic, ESL, and Black communities.

In the team’s judgment, the College of Lake County presented ample evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution’s approach, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

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

The College of Lake County is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and scheduled for Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2009. Several programs receive accreditation by state and national agencies such as:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Dental Hygiene                     | American Dental Association  |
| Health and Information             | Commission on Accreditation for Health   |
| Technology                         | Informatics and Information Management Education                                   |
| Medical Imaging                    | Joint Review Committee on Educational Radiologic Technology                        |
| Nursing                            | National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission                                 |
| Surgical Technology                | Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs                    |
| Automotive Collision Repair        | Inter-Industrial Conference on Auto Collision Repair                               |
| Automotive Technology              | National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation                               |
| Computerized Numerical Control     | National Institute of Metalworking Skills  |
| Refrigeration and Air Conditioning | Partnership for Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Accreditation         |
| Human Services Program             | Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association, Inc. |

The College’s programs are in good standing with all of these program accreditation agencies. In the team’s judgment, the College of Lake County presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The College’s approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP’s expectations.

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

The College has in place well documented policies and procedures for handling and tracking student complaints which are stored in an access database. "Students Rights and Responsibilities" procedures are published in the College's Policy Manual. Student complaints primarily managed in the Student Development Division. Academic concerns are handled through the Educational Affairs Division which received 40 complaints between September, 2006 and September, 2008.

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

Other USDE compliance-related issues

None noted.

Other AQIP issues

None noted.