



Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC)

2016 CQR Quality Highlights Report

Prepared in preparation for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

Comprehensive Quality Review

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Introduction

Des Moines Area Community College began to explore the adoption of AQIP as an alternative accreditation model in 2001, coinciding with the arrival of a new president. The College embraced a new culture of planning; the new strategic planning process included revised mission, vision, and values statements, in addition to new strategic goals and objectives to guide the College into the future. In November of 2003, newly appointed President Rob Denson expanded the planning model, and over a two-year period, guided the development of a long range 10-year comprehensive strategic plan that focused on DMACC's goals to be first in quality, first in service, and first in affordability in Iowa, and in comparison to like institutions across the country. The FIRSTS Goals were adopted by the Board of Directors for a period that covered 2006-2016, and have guided the college planning processes since that time. Each of the three FIRSTS goals include specific indicators of effectiveness that include measurable outcomes reported annually to the college community and Board of Directors in a dashboard format. Action Projects are selected as a result of an analysis of potential projects that can most positively affect the FIRSTS goals.

Since adopting the AQIP model, DMACC has submitted 3 systems portfolios, attended 3 strategy forums, submitted 22 action projects, and had its accreditation reaffirmed by the HLC in 2009. Additionally, DMACC's participation in AQIP played an integral role in the development of the new State of Iowa accreditation process, which was last reaffirmed in 2007. DMACC's adoption of AQIP, and the continuous quality improvement model it represents, coincided with a period of strong growth at the college (2003-2012), followed by a period of declining enrollment (2013-2016) with relatively stagnant state financial support for operations. Through a focus on processes surrounding the nine AQIP criteria, DMACC's FIRSTS goals, and benchmark results with Iowa community colleges and a national peer group, DMACC has been able to devote its resources to those services and initiatives that improve the quality of services for students.

The FIRSTS strategic plan was developed during a period of significant enrollment growth at DMACC, and the metrics were very aggressive. As the economy improved, contributing to a decline in enrollment, the Board of Directors asked that the college create a supplementary strategic plan for 2014-2016, designed to address the new reality of fewer students on all campuses. That plan included revised enrollment goals for the college, program and curricular goals that addressed student retention, persistence, and completion, leadership goals, and financial and facilities goals. This plan and a brief update on the enrollment and student success outcomes of that plan can be found at <https://www.dmacc.edu/aqip>.

Since the submission of the last systems portfolio in 2014, many changes and new initiatives have been implemented as a result of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, received in February of 2015. The pending sunset of the 2006- 2016 FIRSTS strategic plan has provided an opportunity to create a new strategic plan for the college as well as to rethink and refocus how the college will integrate and coordinate all improvement projects, and systematically evaluate the outcomes to determine overall effectiveness and systematic implementation.

Summary of feedback from the 2015 Systems Appraisal Report

Providing evidence that the institution meets all of the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation is the most crucial component of the Systems Portfolio. Evidence for each criterion is reviewed in the feedback report, including indication of whether or not adequate evidence has been provided. The quality of evidence is rated on whether it is; A) strong, clear and well presented, B) adequate but could be improved, or C) unclear or incomplete.

Of the total 21 Criteria for Accreditation & Core Components for which evidence is presented in the Systems Portfolio, all but one received a rating of either A or B by the Systems Appraisal team. The College has thoroughly reviewed the evidence presented in each core component for the 5 criteria, and had dedicated time and resources toward improvement in each criterion as we implement our new continuous improvement and planning processes.

Evidence for only one criterion was described as unclear or incomplete, and was also self-identified as an area that needs attention. Criterion 5, core component 5 D: *The institution works systematically to improve its performance*, was described as unclear or incomplete. This identified concern is closely aligned with the five strategic challenges identified by the Systems Appraisal team. The focus of this CQR Quality Highlights Report is a detailed explanation of the steps DMACC is taking to address its strategic challenges through implementation of a coordinated planning; implementation of a new strategic plan, including revised continuous improvement processes; and evaluation process that is more systematically integrated into the culture of DMACC.

Key Strategic challenges identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback

The feedback report received in 2015 in response to the 2014 systems portfolio identified five strategic issues for the college to address that may be inhibiting improvement efforts. The strategic issues identified were;

- 1) Lack of benchmarks and internal goal setting related to strategic planning,
- 2) Little evidence that processes are evaluated in a systematic, consistent manner,
- 3) Absence of planned or documented improvements in some areas in support of college-wide culture of CQI,
- 4) Little interpretation of results given indicating increased insight and understanding,
- 5) Unclear understanding of how AQIP is infused throughout the college.

Institutional action in response to key strategic challenges

When the feedback report was received in February of 2015, a small workgroup consisting of the President, CAO, Institutional Effectiveness staff, and other senior management immediately began to analyze the feedback within the context of the FIRSTS strategic plan and supplemental plan. The goal of this analysis was to determine if the five strategic challenges were independent of one other or if the identified strategic issues were related and symptomatic of greater needs within the college. The workgroup examined the college processes for making decisions that

informed the strategic plan, interviewed staff and faculty across the college to determine their level of knowledge and involvement in the planning process, and conducted forums to listen to new ideas about how to more effectively include the entire college in the planning process for improvement.

It became clear that though many effective projects have been implemented and continually measured to insure significant improvement in services to support the FIRSTS goals, and that services and programs for students continue to improve, the College lacked a mechanism to demonstrate a clear connection between the strategic planning process, the numerous and on-going system-wide continuous quality improvement projects, and the distribution and use of the metrics and outcomes for improvement.

Because the five strategic challenges all revolved around DMACC’s planning, evaluation, interpretation, and use of data to make changes; rather than trying to address each of the strategic challenges in isolation, the President’s workgroup recognized that the identified challenges had in common four clearly identified institution-wide issues: 1) an unclear strategic focus, 2) uneven coordination and implementation of CQI, 3) too few staff assigned to do the work required for full implementation of AQIP, and 4) uneven access to the data and tools from which decisions can be made and consistently shared across the college. The workgroup was confident that the resolution of these institutional issues, addressed together, will clarify and strengthen planning, sharing of data, and decision making at DMACC.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) was tasked with coordination the development of the plans to address each strategic challenges within the context of the four over-arching institutional issues. Their task was clear: make recommendations to the College leadership team to resolve the institution-wide issues so that the strategic challenges could be successfully addressed. These issues and their relationship of each strategic challenge are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1- Strategic challenges and institution-wide initiatives

Strategic Challenge	Institution wide Issues
1) Lack of benchmarks and internal goal setting related to strategic planning	1: Unclear strategic focus 3: Not enough personnel support for the planning, reporting, and improvement functions of the college 4: Uneven access to data and analysis tools and lack of widespread training on use of tools
2) Little evidence that processes are evaluated in a systematic, consistent manner	2: Little coordination of CQI processes and lack of participation by some departments 3: Not enough personnel support for the planning, reporting, and improvement functions of the college 4: Uneven access to data and analysis tools and lack of widespread training on use of tools
3) Absence of planned or documented improvements in some areas in support of college-wide culture of CQI	1: Unclear strategic focus 2: Little coordination of CQI processes and lack of participation by some departments

	3: Not enough personnel support for the planning, reporting, and improvement functions of the college
4) Little interpretation of results given indicating increased insight and understanding	3: Not enough personnel support for the planning, reporting, and improvement functions of the college 4: Uneven access to data and analysis tools and lack of widespread training on use of tools
5) Unclear understanding of how AQIP is infused throughout the college	1: Unclear strategic focus 2: Little coordination of CQI processes and lack of participation by some departments

The next section of this report will address each institution-wide issue, and the processes and plans that the college has already implemented, or is in the process of implementing, to create a stronger culture of continuous improvement at DMAACC.

Institution-wide issue 1: Unclear strategic focus- The FIRSTS strategic plan is set to sunset in December, 2016. As the last year of the plan winds down, the college has reviewed the successes and areas of lack of progress for the strategic goals, the strategies used to communicate all aspects of the plan to the college, and how effectively all improvement projects were coordinated with the FIRSTS goals. The President’s workgroup learned that although faculty, staff, and other stakeholders were aware of and understood the yearly Scorecards for each goal, it was difficult for many to directly connect campus and departmental goals and projects to the FIRSTS goals. The Strategy Feedback report confirmed that as DMAACC develops a new strategic plan, it needs to include more detailed goals and metrics that connect directly to departmental and campus initiatives. The new strategic process must guarantee that every DMAACC employee will be able to easily relate the work they do to the strategic plan.

Institutional Action: Significant institutional involvement in defining a clear strategic framework- As a first step to improve strategic focus and attention on all CQI activities, the college created a new position within the Institutional Effectiveness Department specifically to direct and coordinate the planning and improvement functions of the college. The Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives and Planning reports to the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and is responsible for monitoring and coordinating all strategic planning and improvement efforts in support of the college’s strategic plan. In 2015, the Director and other OIE staff were tasked with the process of leading the creation of a new 2017-2027 strategic plan capable of directing all improvement activities of the college. This process began by reviewing the 2006-2016 strategic plan and FIRSTS Goals to identify positive results, unmet goals, and ongoing challenges. Scorecards for all 10 years were analyzed for trends in student performance, enrollment trends, and affordability, and incorporated into annual planning processes. (All Scorecards are available on the DMAACC website in the About DMAACC/Accreditation section: www.dmacc.edu/aqip/Pages/welcome.aspx). Yearly results were mixed and it was difficult to find consistent and reliable trends from which to develop specific action plans. While this plan provided guidance in monitoring student enrollment, service area population penetration, retention, persistence, and completion data, and affordability rankings, it was difficult to measure the effectiveness of many of the CQI projects against the Scorecards.

A gap analysis was also conducted to identify key areas of the college that needed to be represented in the planning process to ensure that the work of all DMACC employees toward student success is reflected in the strategic plan. A draft framework of the strategic plan was created and vetted with faculty and staff at each campus. Five campus forums were conducted by the President, Executive VP of Academic Affairs, and Director for Strategic Initiatives and Planning to share the draft document and gather input about the new planning framework. The result of this work was a final document with college-wide input that will direct the next steps of determination of specific goals and measurable metrics. As part of the analysis of the previous strategic plan, it was determined that a strategic plan closely related to the student life-cycle (enrolling in and attending college, successfully finishing college, and life-long learning) is more focused and will be better understood by stakeholders, faculty and staff. Also included in the final strategic framework is a strategic area for improving college processes. The final framework was also shared with the Board of Directors at their annual retreat to gather their ideas and feedback. The input into the new strategic framework is available on the DMACC website accreditation pages.

The purpose of the new strategic plan is to: 1) focus, organize and identify new priorities of the college stemming from the mission, vision and values of the college, 2) involve all departments of the college in the planning processes, and 3) consistently evaluate the processes, goals, and measures to ensure that all areas of the college are improving. This framework is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2- Strategic Framework

<u>Strategic Area</u>	<u>Action Area</u>	<u>Emphasis Areas</u>
Going to College- Increasing the number of students pursuing a college degree/award	<u>Telling Our Story</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-traditional students ● Concurrent students ● Underrepresented populations
	<u>Cultivating Potential Students</u>	
	<u>Becoming a DMACC Student</u>	
	<u>Paying for College</u>	
	<u>Enrolling at DMACC</u>	
Finishing What You Start- Increasing the retention, persistence and completion rates of students	<u>Succeeding in Your Classes</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-traditional students ● Concurrent students ● Underrepresented populations
	<u>Staying at DMACC</u>	
	<u>Completing at DMACC</u>	
	<u>Continuing Your Education and/or Pursuing a Career</u>	
Advancing Your Career- Increasing the number and percent of central Iowans accessing short-term career-related education and training	<u>Training the Incumbent Workforce</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High need workforce areas ● Immigrant populations ● Undereducated ● Underrepresented populations ● Economically disadvantaged
	<u>Teaching English and Other Adult Basic Skills</u>	
	<u>Addressing the Needs of the Unemployed & Underemployed</u>	
Improving What We Do- Utilizing systematic	<u>Enhancing Instruction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students and faculty ● Internal stakeholders
	<u>Serving our Stakeholders</u>	

processes for continuous improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External stakeholders
	Developing Faculty and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular faculty • Adjunct faculty
	Improving Efficiencies (Cost, Time, Sustainability and Service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-academic departments of the college

From October through December of 2016, the College will begin the work of identifying specific goals that address each strategic area, action area, and emphasis area of the strategic plan framework, and then to establish corresponding metrics and identify processes to consistently track, assess, and report the outcomes. This process will culminate in the development of formative and summative goals and to provide measures of short-term progress and long-term success. The metrics and progress towards goals will be made available on a yearly basis (or more frequently, depending on the goals and metrics) to the entire college and the Board of Directors in dashboard format, through the college business intelligence platform, which is available to all staff and the Board.

The timeline for the full implementation of the new strategic plan is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3- Strategic planning timeline

Time	Deliverable
Summer and Fall 2016	Goal statements and metrics developed for each of the action areas
January- March 2017	Final set of strategic goals and metrics will be vetted district-wide for additional input and revision.
June 30, 2017	Final strategic plan in effect with appropriate metrics and dashboards presented and approved by Board of Directors
June 30, 2018	Annual evaluation of strategic plan created and presented to Board of Directors

Note: plan will be evaluated annually

Concurrent with the implementation of the new strategic plan, the outgoing strategic plan will undergo final evaluation. Though an evaluation has occurred each year of the plan, a final summative evaluation of the FIRSTS plan will occur in fall 2016 when annual and benchmarking data become available.

Institution-wide issue 2: Little coordination of CQI processes and lack of participation by some departments.

Dozens of successful LEAN/CQI projects have occurred at DMACC since adoption of the AQIP accreditation process. However, as was documented in the 2014 Systems Portfolio, and was confirmed in the subsequent feedback report, the college lacked a consistent process to ensure alignment of all projects with the strategic plan, participation by all key departments of the college, accountability to the college using goals and metrics developed at the beginning of a project, and sharing of results across the district. Early in discussions by the President’s

workgroup about this issue, it was determined that a new process for coordination of CQI projects would be the focus of the 2016 HLC Strategy Forum. When the Strategy Forum team began their work in January, 2016, they carefully reviewed the current processes for CQI processes, and gathered input from their peers to help develop a more coherent and inclusive plan for improvement processes and projects.

Institutional Action: New CQI planning and implementation process to ensure college-wide implementation of strategic goals, and improving processes and outcomes.

During the analysis of DMAC’s strategic challenges, it became clear that a new strategic plan could not be implemented without an improved process to identify, implement, and measure all of the CQI projects throughout the district. The new strategic framework (Table 1) identifies “improving what we do’, i.e., CQI, as a key component of institutional improvement. While the College is engaged in many quality improvement initiatives, (see HLC Action Projects and Strategic Plans on DMACC’s website), regular involvement by all departments, and consistent sharing of results and subsequent measures of improvement have been uneven. Two OIE staff participated in the 2016 Strategy Forum, and the 7-member team spent the entire forum developing the newest Action Project, aligned with the new strategic planning process, identified as the “Improving What We Do (IWWD)” initiative. The OIE was then charged with leading the development of a new process to build on our current improvement efforts, improve participation and accountability in the planning process, and ensure that efforts are aligned within the mission and strategic goals of the college.

One of the outcomes of the 2016 strategy forum was the creation of a new college-wide Commission to direct the “Improving What We Do” initiative and monitor its results. Strategic departments of the college were identified to ensure full participation in CQI efforts relating to the strategic plan. The departments (some combined for common purposes and efficiency) identified through this process are listed in Table 4. The charge to this Commission is: Improve service to students and customers both internally and externally, through assuring all key departments of the college are actively engaged in meaningful quality improvement initiatives. The commission is comprised of a representative from each of the following key departments.

Table 4- DMACC key departments

1. Business Office	2. Institutional Effectiveness
3. Concurrent Enrollment	4. Marketing
5. Continuing Education	6. Physical Plant
7. DMACC Business Resources	8. Student Services
9. Distance Education	10. Metro Campuses and Centers
11. Human Resources	12. Rural Campuses and Centers
13. Information Technology	14. Faculty

The commission is staffed by the Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives and Planning and the LEAN/CQI Coordinators. Each Commission member is charged with representing their department in the process of approving and implementing CQI projects, and also with communicating all information back to the departments they represent.

Operationally, the Commission will oversee and provide accountability for each key college department to ensure continuous engagement in improvement processes, according to the following requirements for each department:

1. Facilitate at least one department-wide or college-wide quality improvement initiative annually (projects may be conducted in phases should they exceed a year in length).
2. Seek approval from the Commission prior to beginning a project by submitting a detailed proposal.
3. Provide regular formal updates to the Commission regarding progress on CQI projects through their commission representative.
4. Upon completion of the project or the end of the project's first year, complete a project progress form, and present findings or outcomes to the Commission.

Online forms have been created for ease of implementation and tracking of the CQI projects. The proposal includes the project lead, project description, purpose of the project, strategic area that the project addresses, list of participants, goals of the project, metrics used to determine progress and success, timeline for the project, and resources needed. The progress report form contains a description of the process as it was prior to the project and how it has improved as a result, baseline metrics, final metrics, analysis of project strengths and weaknesses, anticipated procedure, policy or budget change and next steps for the department conducting the project.

The timeline for implementing this process is aggressive and was determined as part of the 2016 strategy forum. It is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5- Timeline for implementation of Improving What We Do (Action Project)

Time	Deliverable
Summer 2016	Appointment of Commission members
September 2016	First meeting of Commission including orientation, training and other organizing tasks
October 2016	Continuous improvement process is focus of President's In-service Day with sharing of process and progress to date
October 2016-October 2017	Commission meetings each term with departments working on projects shared on President's In-service day
October 2017	First year update at President's Day regarding continuous improvement efforts

DMACC is committed to funding strategic planning and improvement functions of the college, and is providing financial support for the CQI improvement activities in two ways. The Continuous Improvement Commission has designated funds to spend at their discretion either to support approved departmental or college-wide projects. Additionally, a mini-grant program is

available to departments, groups and/or individuals to support improvement initiatives. Oversight of the process for applying for and granting mini-grants is the responsibility of the Continuous Improvement Commission.

Institution-wide issue 3: Not enough personnel support for the planning, reporting, and improvement functions of the college.

As the President's workgroup reviewed the results of the Systems Appraisal, it became clear that the college needed to better support all comprehensive planning and CQI functions. The geographic span, number of campuses and centers, and size of the college creates challenges in monitoring and communicating all of the continuous improvement projects in progress each year. As the college grew and added centers, programs, and services, the need for stronger connections among quality improvement processes also increased. Yet, the OIE retained the same level of staffing (5 staff members), despite a significant increase in demand for services.

Institutional Action: Additional staff, and consolidated processes for strategic planning, data analysis, and CQI implementation at the college

As described in the Strategic Focus and CQI Processes of this document, significant personnel, organizational changes and financial commitments have been implemented to support the strategic planning and CQI functions of the college. Beginning in 2015, DMACC has added dedicated staff to more formally direct, coordinate, and communicate the strategic plan, improvement efforts and expectations. A Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives and Planning position has been added to coordinate both the development and ongoing maintenance of the strategic plan within the Institutional Effectiveness Department. DMACC's internal LEAN/CQI Coordinator has been transitioned from Business Services into the Institutional Effectiveness Department. An additional LEAN/CQI coordinator was hired to assist with CQI projects. A Coordinator of Innovative Initiatives and Special Projects was appointed to manage specific large-scale projects, and to communicate progress and outcomes throughout the college and in the community. A support staff member was trained in the new Visual Analytics component of the SAS Business Intelligence Platform, and now serves as a Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness, responsible for training faculty and staff across the district in how to access and use the rich institutional data sources available through this tool. This reorganization aligns strategic planning with AQIP and our internal improvement processes and provides adequate support for these functions.

Institution-wide issue 4: Uneven access to data and analysis tools and lack of widespread training on use of tools.

DMACC faculty and staff have had access to useful data regarding enrollment trends, demographics and student outcomes in the college's business intelligence systems since 2005. However, users found the system hard to navigate, and that some aspects of the system required a significant learning curve. The system was also sized for use in 2005 and performance was beginning to become an issue, as the College has grown significantly since its first installation. To improve the use of data across the college and facilitate the ability of faculty and staff to

develop metrics, measure outcomes and interpret results, access to data useful for these functions needed to be readily available and easy to access and understand.

Intuitional Action: Adoption of new SAS platform, and District-wide training and access to data and analysis tools

Access to data and analysis tools is a strategic issue that impacts DMACC's planning and improvement efforts. As data usage by DMACC has expanded, so has the sophistication of the tools available for accessing, analyzing, evaluating and interpreting data.

In 2014 DMACC began to explore options to upgrade its existing business intelligence platform to take advantage of new technologies. To assist in the evaluation and interpretation of data, the college has invested in a major upgrade to its business intelligence platform, including the purchase of two new tools, SAS Visual Analytics and a data explorer tool to support data access, analysis and interpretation. The upgrade of the SAS Business Intelligence platform in 2015 included new hardware capable of improved service and function to all DMACC faculty and staff. In addition to improving access and speed, the visual analytics platform is state-of-the-art and includes interactive access to data using visual representations, and a data explorer tool so users can analyze data sets and do more advanced statistical explorations with the data.

The new SAS system became available to all faculty and staff in March 2016. At this time, OIE staff began offering training to departments across the college. To date, an estimated 150 individuals have been trained in the system. Faculty and staff have begun to use the data explorer to analyze data to support improvement efforts, including analysis of reading placement data and its ability to predict student success, and trends in students referred through the early alert system at DMACC. Faculty, staff, and senior management can now access and monitor longitudinal data over many data points that can be aggregated by campus, term, course, demographics, program, and other factors without the need to rely on an OIE staff member to conduct the research. Deans and Provosts can monitor course enrollments and adjust scheduling. District and Program Chairs can monitor program census, completions, course retention, pass, and success rates; all helping to manage, monitor over time, and make informed decisions. Examples of the selection criteria available and sample longitudinal data for student retention, pass and success rates are included in Figure 1 and 2.

Figure 1- Sample selection criteria and retention, pass and success rate data available:

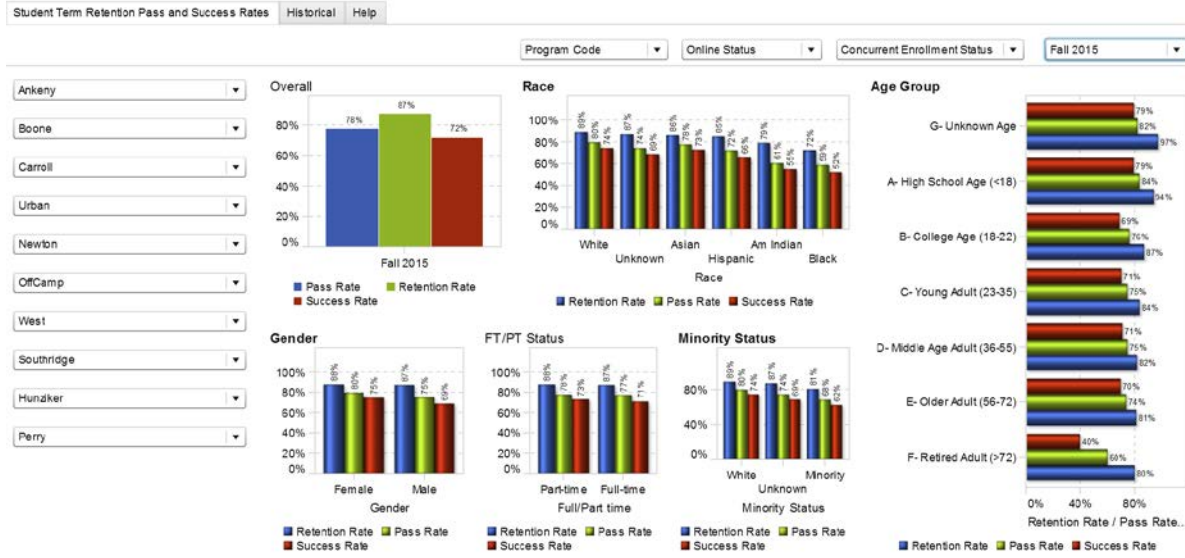
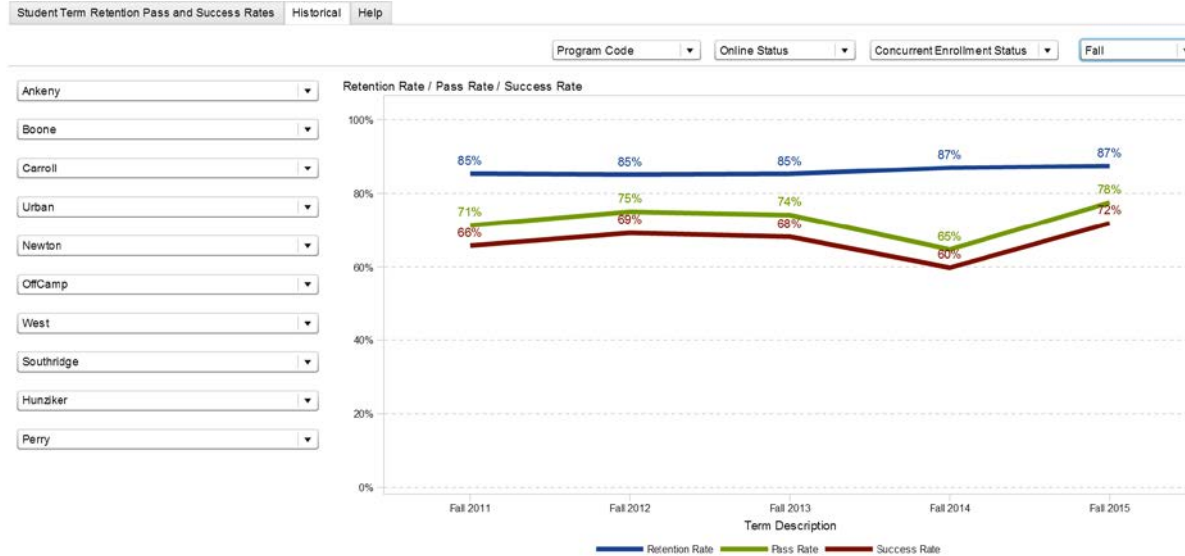


Figure 2- Sample selection criteria and retention, pass and success rate longitudinal data available



These new tools, and a more easily navigated SAS system will provide valuable support to individuals, departments, the Continuous Improvement Commission, and the DMACC leadership team in tracking and monitoring the progress of CQI projects. The upgraded SAS system will also provide access to key metrics that are monitored regularly, such as retention, persistence, and completion rates of students.

Summary of institutional action in response to key strategic decisions

DMACC has used the 2015 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and the strategic challenges as a basis for examining the entire structure for planning for, measuring, and improving the college. This new structure includes the creation of the 2017-2027 strategic planning framework and

process, and a new structure for developing and monitoring CQI projects. The college has evaluated the out-going strategic plan, solicited college-wide input in designing the next strategic plan, and committed additional staff members and financial support to planning. Three major institutional changes demonstrate DMACC's commitment to AQIP and continuous quality improvement, including: a clearer, more focused structure for strategic planning; the appointment of a Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Initiatives who is responsible for ensuring that all improvement projects flow from the College mission and strategic plan; and the creation of a CQI Commission to direct and coordinate quality improvement efforts across the district, ensuring that each project is specifically tied to goals within the strategic plan. The faculty and staff are engaged, enthusiastic, and committed to improving programs and services for students.

AQIP Action Projects since the 2014 systems portfolio

DMACC's last systems portfolio was submitted in year 6 of the AQIP cycle. Since then the college has implemented 5 action projects. All projects are directly related to the AQIP criteria, and most directly relate to improvement of strategic issues addressed in this report.

Early Alert Referral (EAR) Program- Phase 1 and Phase 2 Action Projects

The first EAR Action Project addressing the **Helping Students Learn** Criterion was kicked off during the fall of 2014. A grant from the Great Lakes Foundation provided resources to revise DMACC's existing early alert and referral process, and the first phase began on just two campuses. The intent of the early alert system is to allow faculty to easily send an alert to advisors and counselors as soon as a student begins experiencing academic or personal issues affecting classroom performance. The previous alert system relied upon the never-attended or quit-attending reporting period, which often was too late to save a student from dropping. This revised process encourages faculty to report students as early as the first day of class, and includes a system to better document outreach to students and follow-up action. A key component of this process is the use of technology to route alerts to staff quickly and provides adequate feedback to referrers without violating student's privacy.

At the end of the first EAR Action Project, the Phase 2 Action Project was created to expand the program to all campuses and ensure that the processes developed as part of a grant would continue once grant funding ended. Year one of the early alert project was funded from the grant; year two and beyond have been entirely funded by institutional funds. In the 2 and 1/2 years since the new early alert system was implemented, over 4,000 referrals have been made serving 3,416 unique students. Referrals have been made by 510 faculty and staff with follow-up on these referrals conducted by 85 advisors, faculty, and other staff. Of all referrals, 41% were submitted as a result of early concerns about academic progress in the classroom, 47% were made due to attendance issues, and 28% were referred for personal concerns about the student. Because academic issues represent less than half the issues identified in the early alert process, the institution adjusted interventions from referral to tutoring and other academic support services to training staff to address a variety of personal issues that impacted student attendance. The success rate for resolving personal/attendance issues with students has been 58%. Survey

feedback from faculty and staff has been positive and useful in fine-tuning the EAR program. In 2015, a Lead Advisor position was created to oversee the project and coordinate efforts and measure outcomes across all campuses. Referrals and outcomes are incorporated into the SAS Visual Analytics and are regularly analyzed by advising staff to monitor trends and identify areas for improvement. This Action Project has been fully assimilated into the existing functions of the College.

Guided Pathways for Liberal Arts and Sciences Action Project

This Action Project, addressing the **Meeting Student and Other Key Stakeholders Needs** criterion, began in the fall of 2015. DMACC's Completion Task Force, including representation from faculty, deans, provosts, student services staff, and outreach program administrators, and led by the Chief Academic Officer, meets regularly to focus on student retention, completion and success initiatives, and regularly reviews data on student retention, persistence, and completion to determine if projects and services are meeting their intended goals. One group of students the Completion Task Force studied was liberal arts students. In fall 2015, approximately 41% of non-concurrent enrollment DMACC students were enrolled in the liberal arts AA or AS programs, with the percentage of these students with an undecided or unknown major was 62%.

After studying the national literature on Guided Pathways for liberal arts students, and recognizing that many liberal arts and undecided students at DMACC 'wander' their way through their degree programs without a coherent plan, the task force was charged with designing an educational experience for Liberal Arts and Sciences students that promotes student success by focusing on academic planning, degree completion, and efficient transfer. The Guided Pathways Action Project focuses on creating specific pathways for liberal arts and sciences students matched to individual career and/or transfer goals.

The over-arching project goals are:

1. Build guided pathways to completion in AA and AS degree programs to guide students in choosing a personal career or transfer pathway, focusing on program completion and increased efficiency of transfer.
2. Improve integration of academic and student support services to keep students on a guided pathway, to expand student engagement within a program of study, and to increase student completion.

CQI Metrics Action Project

This project was started in 2015 to address Category 5- **Knowledge Management and Resource Stewardship**, and to address the strategic issues identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report. This project is designed to identify and define common metrics that align with the college mission and vision and that can be incorporated in the new continuous improvement and strategic planning efforts. These metrics are under development with input from across the college and stem from the established goals for each strategic planning area. Metrics will measure overall goal improvement in both formative and summative ways when possible. Various dashboards are under development in the college's business intelligence system to give

all faculty and staff easy access to goals outcomes and progress. Samples of these dashboards can be found at <https://www.dmacc.edu/aqip/Pages/strategicplan2017.aspx> .

Improving What We Do Action Project

As stated earlier in this document, DMACC sent a team of 7 to the April 2016 HLC strategy forum, including the President, Executive Vice President and CAO, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives and Planning, a Lead Advisor, and two faculty members. The outcome of this forum, the Implementing Improving What We Do action project was developed. This project is a subset of the larger college continuous improvement process, and an integral component of the 2017-2027 strategic plan in development.

Conclusion

DMACC is very committed to continuous quality improvement and welcomes feedback from the Higher Learning Commission as part of AQIP accreditation. The College has analyzed its planning processes in the context of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, identified trends and systematic issues of concern across the college, gathered input to create stronger processes and action projects to address these issues, and developed a comprehensive and clear plan for ensuring college-wide commitment to quality improvement. As this CQR Highlights Report demonstrates, the College has made significant progress in addressing the strategic issues identified by the Systems Appraisal team. The DMACC staff and faculty are excited about the new strategic planning process, action projects and new structure for CQI projects, and all staff and faculty look forward to hosting the team that will conduct the comprehensive quality review, and to share information about all of the quality programs and services that result in student success at DMACC.

Student Handbook

<http://catalog.dmacc.edu/index.php?catoid=10> (Firefox or Chrome)

Faculty/staff handbook

<https://go.dmacc.edu/hr/facultyhandbook/Pages/welcome.aspx>

College catalog

<http://catalog.dmacc.edu/> (Firefox or Chrome)