QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Des Moines Area Community College

Ankeny, Iowa
March 25-27,2009

Quality Checkup team members:

Maura Abrahamson
Vice Chair, Faculty Assembly
Instructor, Social Sciences
Morton College

David Todt
Provost and Vice-President for
Academic Affairs
Shawnee State University

Academic **Q**uality Improvement Program

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.

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

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations. The Des Moines Area Community College presented the team with a document titled "Quality Program Summary and Federal Compliance Information." This document provided evidence of the campus response to the Systems Appraisal opportunities.

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

No accreditation issues were raised in the Systems Appraisal and none appeared during the Quality Checkup visit. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

Four strategic issues were identified by the Systems Appraisal team. These issues (use of data, student and employee satisfaction, succession planning, and placement of students) were addressed in the "Quality Program Summary and Federal Compliance Information." The Quality Checkup team discussed these issues in detail with appropriate constituency groups while on campus. The team was impressed with the breadth of discussion that has occurred around these issues in the context of continuous quality improvement. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

The Quality Checkup team was impressed by the extent to which continuous quality improvement has been imbedded into everyday life at DMACC. All employee groups were able

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to discuss quality initiatives in their area and put their work in the context of the institution's quality initiatives. Both the AQIP Action projects and the LEAN process are indicative of the commitment to quality improvement. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

The Quality Checkup team reviewed the documents relating to the USDE default rate. The documents indicated that the default rate changed minimally between 2004-2006 (see Table 1). Compared to other Iowa community colleges, DMACC has the seventh highest default rate out of a total of fifteen institutions which range from 2.4 - 14.2%.

Table 1: DMACC's Cohort Default Rate

2004	2005	2006
8.7%	8.8%	8.8%

In order to reduce the default rate, DMACC has implemented the following measures:

- required entrance counseling sessions for all student borrowers;
- required completion of a budgeting module for students who are on Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Warning;
- annual district-wide Financial Literacy Day; and
- a partnership with the Iowa State University Financial Counseling Clinic which provides financial counseling to students with high levels of consumer debt.

In the Quality Checkup team's judgment, DMACC presented satisfactory evidence of a three year history of student loan default rates that is within the acceptable guidelines set by the USDE and therefore, met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations. The relevant data and information packaged in a Federal Compliance

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Material Packet was sent to the AQIP reviewers in advance of the visit and provided clear and concise responses to the compliance requirements.

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

DMACC took steps to ensure third party compliance by using the following venues for soliciting third party comment via public notice publication: (1) the College's website; (2) and, 44 major district newspapers.

The Quality Checkup team received a memorandum on March 18, 2009 indicating that the Commission had received six third-party comments. Each comment was positive, praising the College for its educational offerings and ability to provide exceptional support, especially for non-traditional students.

In the Quality Checkup team's judgment, DMACC presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The methods utilized by DMACC are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

The institution's approach to Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition is well documented and approval systems are in place. Credit hours and competencies for courses and programs are evaluated by the DMACC Curriculum Commission to ensure competitiveness with similar offerings at other institutions of higher learning. Plans for new programs are proposed by the Commission and submitted to the Iowa Department of Education for review and final approval.

Tuition for the 2008-2009 school year (see Table 2) is the lowest in the State of Iowa. There are no additional fees outside of a $20 technology fee per credit hour for students enrolled in online classes. The Board of Trustees is considering raising tuition fees while continuing to uphold the College's third of its Firsts Goals: **FIRST in Affordability –** *We are committed to making a quality DMACC education as affordable as possible*.

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Table 2: DMACC's Degree Credit Charges Per Credit

	Tuition fees
Resident Program and On-line	$107
Non-Resident	$214

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

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

DMACC advertises its accreditation status in the College catalog, student handbook, and on its website. The College catalog and a wide range of other information can be accessed on the DMACC website.

DMACC's Marketing Department uses a variety of methods to recruit and advertise, including (but not limited to):

- a DMACC viewbook;
- College Planning Timetable brochure;
- Pre-Professional Program Brochure;
- Adult Learner brochure; and
- two DMACC newspaper adds.

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

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

DMACC has one institution-wide accreditation relationship, with the Higher Learning Commission. There are eleven individual programs that are accredited through professional organizations including:

- Automotive Technician Programs: General, GM ASEP, Chrysler CAP—National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence;
- Caterpillar Technology Program—The AED Foundation's Technical Training;

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- Dental Hygienist-- Commission on Dental Accreditation;

- Diesel Technology Program-- The AED Foundation's Technical Training;

- Legal Assisting Program—American Bar Association;

- Machinist—Standards of Apprenticeship & U.S. Department of Labor;

- Mortuary Science—American Board of Funeral Service Education;

- Nursing Program—Iowa Board of Nursing;

- Surgical Technology Program—Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs;

- Veterinary Technician Program—American Veterinary Medical Association;

- Welding Program—American Welding Society.

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

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

DMACC's complaint process encompasses twelve procedures. These procedures are outlined in the College catalog, student handbook, and on the institutional website.

According to DMACC representatives, students are instructed to launch complaints with the Campus Ombudsperson. However, as mentioned in the Other AQIP Issues section of this report, students indicated that, particularly at smaller campuses, policies and procedures for initiating the complaint process were not always known. AQIP team members discussed this concern with staff members at DMACC.

After consulting with the Ombudsperson, the students are directed to continue with the process (if the issue is not resolved at this level) depending on the nature of the complaint:

- Complaints of an academic nature are brought to the appropriate academic dean;

- Complaints concerning student-to-student conduct are sent to Human Resources and the Judicial Affairs Office;

- Complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment are investigated by Human Resources and the Judicial Affairs Office.

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The log of complaints was shared with the Quality Checkup team. This log included:

- 5 civil rights (discrimination) complaints between 2000-2008;
- 907 discipline cases between 2004-March, 2009, including: 224 of which were of an academic nature and 683 of which were of a non-academic nature;
- 36 grade appeals between 2004-2009;
- 9 re-enrollment requests between 2007-2009; and
- 1 complaint made to the Better Business Bureau during 2008-2009 academic year.

DMACC has provided evidence that the institution has dealt with or is currently dealing with the aforementioned cases. Incident reports which include discipline cases are sent to the DMACC Safety Officer, the Executive Dean of Student Services, the Judicial Affairs Officer, and the appropriate campus provost for follow-up.

Students, staff, and community members may use a confidential hotline which is described on the College website to report a concern. These incidents are investigated by DMACC Cabinet members. Students informed the AQIP team members that when a complaint was launched, it was dealt with in a timely manner.

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

Other USDE compliance-related issues

None noted.

Other AQIP issues

The Systems Appraisal noted: "Due to changing demographic patterns, an area of stakeholder needs that may require more attention is the development of processes that support non-English speaking groups. The institution does not appear to have a systematic, formal process for recruiting leaders who mirror the diversity of the student body, leadership development, and succession planning."

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The Quality Checkup team noted that the institution has responded to this concern and that Cultural Diversity is a high priority for DMACC. The creation of the Diversity Commission is evidence of this commitment. While visiting the campus the team looked at data and met employees and students. It was evident that this issue needs continued attention and should be maintained as a high priority.

The Systems Appraisal also noted: "The flow of the communications process is not clear and its effectiveness is not yet fully measured to enable identification of areas of importance."

The institution does not appear to have a systematic process for deciding what data are needed, what trends are important, and analyzing and using data for decision making and tracking institutional performance.

Although the institution has determined a limited number of sources for comparative data, it does not appear that comparative data are being used to set targets that will improve the institution's capability to meet current and future student and other stakeholder needs and expectations. Establishing benchmark institutions and organizations will allow the institution to analyze comparative data and set improvement targets."

After reviewing DMACC materials and speaking with different employee groups we recommend that benchmarking and comparison with peer institutions become more intentional and brought to the institutional level. This was happening in many offices, but did not make its way in to the Systems Portfolio. Capturing those peer comparisons currently occurring and having more institutional level comparisons should be a focus during the next Systems Portfolio preparation.

Several other observations by the Quality Checkup team are listed below:

- Distance Learning growth and commitment is clear at DMACC. There is a need for more support services for distance, online, and blended classes – instructional designers is an example of moving in the right direction and plans for help desk expansion are on the right track.

- Students did not seem to know the complaint system, possibly better advertising and awareness could be done.

- While assessment of student learning is widespread and effective, there are still opportunities to engage faculty who are not participating in assessment activities.

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- The Action Project with CAAP is recognition of the need to assess general education. Expanding that assessment and then reviewing general education competencies might be next steps in improving General Education.

- Student and staff satisfaction surveys and analysis are infrequent. In addition to homegrown instruments, there is value in participating in national initiatives such as CCSSE and Noel-Levitz to have comparative data.

MEETING SCHEDULE AND NUMBER OF ATTENDEES

Wednesday, March 25, 2009	Topic	Number of Attendees (not including team members)
11:00-11:30	Welcome and Introduction	3
11:30-1:00	Cabinet Joint Deans • DMACC FIRST Goals Planning Processes	21
1:00-1:50	AQIP Leadership Team	14
2:00-2:50	Commission Chairs	21
3:00 – 4:00	District Chairs and Program Chairs	22
4:00 – 5:00	Open time for Reviewers	
5:00 – 7:00	Dinner with DMACC Board of Directors (Bldg. 7, Lakeview Inn)	8

Thursday, March 26, 2009	Topic	Number of Attendees (not including team members)
8:00 – 8:50	• Innovation Grants • Action Project Leaders	12
9:00 – 9:50	Assessment Team	11
10:00 - 10:50	Lean Projects _____ Federal Compliance Review	16 _____ 1
11:00 - 11:30	Union Representatives	6
11:30 - 11:50	Union Representatives and Labor Management	10
Noon – 12:50	Metro Student Groups	Approximately 25 at five

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Thursday, March 26, 2009	Topic	Number of Attendees (not including team members)
	Rural Campus Student Groups	different sites
1:00 – 1:50	**Student Services/Development Enrollment Mgmt. Financial Aid**	17
2:00 – 2:50	• **Online Staff** • **High School Programming Staff**	9
3:00 – 3:50	**Open Forum** • **Professional Staff** • **Support Staff** _____ **Open Forum** • **Faculty**	16 _____ 9 + faculty from 4 other campuses
4:00 – 5:00	**Wine and Cheese Reception/Celebration of AQIP**	

Friday, March 27, 2009	Topic	Number of Attendees (not including team members)
8:00 – 8:50	• **Information Technology** • **Physical Plant** _____ • **Action Project Leaders**	12 15
9:00 – 10:30	**Open Time for Reviewers**	
10:30 – 10:50	**Rob Denson, President**	
11:00 – 11:50	**Exit Report to Campus Community**	

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