

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details			
<b>Title</b>	Creating a Quality Council to oversee planning and evaluation efforts	<b>Status</b>	COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	7-Measuring Effectiveness	<b>Updated</b>	09-14-2009
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b>	09-21-2009
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 08-01-2007	<b>Created</b>	11-24-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b> 07-10-0001	<b>Version</b>	2

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** The goal of this Action Project is to create a Quality Council with responsibility for oversight of planning and evaluation at the college. Part of the process will be to integrate planning and evaluation into a seamless process. By creating a Quality Council, we will engage a broader college constituency in planning and evaluation, streamline the college committee structure, and embed quality into the NICC culture.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Over the last few years, we have made considerable progress in planning and evaluation by writing a strategic plan and joining AQIP. We joined AQIP in 2002 and submitted our first Systems Portfolio in 2006. We wrote a strategic plan called Vision 7 (V7) in 2005. We are still in the process of implementing this plan. While these were important steps for our institution, we still have much to do. This Action Project is high on our list of priorities for the following reasons: (1) No integration of planning and evaluation - Our strategic planning and AQIP accreditation efforts have moved us in the direction of informed decision-making and improved accountability, yet the two processes remain separate. We need to combine the two processes into one. Planning and evaluation need to function as one seamless action. (2) Limited engagement in planning and evaluation - We have taken important steps to improve planning and evaluation, but as we bring these processes together, we need to build broad, college-wide engagement. Until now, only a small number of administrators, faculty, staff, and board members have taken an active role in planning and evaluation. We need to create opportunities for all employees to embrace quality improvement, and for a broad-based committee to take charge of monitoring the streamlined planning and evaluation process. (3) Outdated committee structure - Like many colleges, we need to overhaul our committee structure, especially as it relates to planning and evaluation. We have some committees that are active, and some that are inactive. Some of our committees have clear roles. Others have vague or outdated roles, and some even duplicate the roles of others. We need to review our committees and their roles and relationships. Most importantly, we need to tie our committee structure to the streamlined planning and evaluation process by creating a central committee with appropriate subcommittees.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** The following committees will play a key role in implementing this Action Project. Together, they will draw members from all levels of the College. (1) Quality Council – This will be a new committee. It will have responsibility for promoting quality improvement and overseeing the coordinated planning and evaluation process. (2) Quality Council Subcommittees – The Quality Council will have seven subcommittees, one for each area of the strategic plan. Together, the subcommittees will have representatives from all areas of the College. The chair of each subcommittee will report to and serve on the Quality Council. (3) AQIP Strategy Team – This team attended the AQIP Strategy Forum in 2007 and will assist in establishing, training, and supporting the Quality Council. The team will also provide assistance in AQIP accreditation.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:** This Action Project will improve some important organizational processes: (1) Integration of planning and evaluation - Planning and evaluation will be combined into a streamlined process, with evaluation results feeding into planning, and planning feeding into evaluation. Our new assessment plan will document benchmarks and outcomes. It will reveal which strategies work and which ones need to be altered or eliminated. This information will assist in future planning processes. (2) Broader engagement in planning and evaluation - We will establish a Quality Council with responsibility for promoting quality improvement and overseeing planning and evaluation. Quality Council members will receive training in quality improvement principles and will use those to guide their work on the

council and its subcommittees. They will also receive detailed information about the strategic planning and accreditation processes so that they can start the process of integrating them into one process. (3) Meaningful committee structure - Quality improvement will be the guiding principle of our new committee structure. The Quality Council will oversee all planning and evaluation. The council will have seven subcommittees, one for each area of the strategic plan. All other committees will be reviewed to see how they fit into the quality improvement framework, and some may be revised or eliminated. This will create a meaningful committee structure centered on quality improvement.

## 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** This Action Project is a product of our 2007 Strategy Forum. As we reviewed the Systems Portfolio Feedback and identified areas of need, it became clear that integrating planning and evaluation was critical to moving the college forward in quality improvement. We expect this Action Project to take approximately two years. This estimate is based on the following considerations: (1) The AQIP Strategy Team conceived of the plan to combine planning and evaluation in May 2007. The team continued to meet over the summer to develop the concept. The team came up with the idea of a Quality Council with seven subcommittees, one for each area of the strategic plan. (2) The plan was presented to all College employees in August 2007. (3) The President appointed members of the Quality Council during fall 2007. The Quality Council is chaired by the AQIP Liaison and includes seven other members, one for each area of the strategic plan. (4) The Quality Council will receive training in quality improvement principles from the AQIP Strategy Team in spring 2008. Additional training will be provided throughout the summer months. (5) The Quality Council will establish subcommittees in collaboration with the AQIP Strategy Team during spring 2008. Each subcommittee will be devoted to an area of the strategic plan and will include representatives from throughout the college. The committees will receive quality improvement training and will be ready to commence work in fall 2008. (6) The Quality Council will assume complete oversight of college planning processes and improvement initiatives during the 2008-2009 academic year. By the end of the year, the Quality Council and its subcommittees will be using an integrated planning and evaluation process. (7) The Quality Council will make adjustments to the process before starting the second cycle in October 2009.

## 6: Project Success Monitoring

**A:** The President and Board of Trustees will monitor progress on this Action Project. Benchmarks will include establishment of a Quality Council and subcommittees, training in quality improvement principles, engagement by a wider College constituency, and establishment of an integrated and well-functioning planning and evaluation process.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

**A:** The following will serve as indicators of success in achieving the goals outlined in this Action Project: (1) Establishment of a Quality Council to oversee college planning processes and promote a culture of quality improvement (2) Establishment of Quality Council bylaws (3) Quality Council training in quality improvement principles (4) Quality Council orientation regarding strategic planning and AQIP accreditation processes (5) Establishment of seven Quality Council subcommittees, one for each area of the strategic plan (6) Monthly review of quality improvement initiatives, with reports provided to the Quality Council by the chairs of the seven subcommittees (7) Establishment of an integrated planning and evaluation process (8) Meeting of all planning and evaluation deadlines

## 8: Other Information

**A:**

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## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

**A:** The Quality Council accomplished the following: • Reviewed and synthesized priorities/goals submitted by departments and programs to derive the strategic goals for the College. • Reviewed, prioritized, and recommended projects to the Cabinet for funding in the FY 2010 based on the strategic goals derived. • Created a college-wide assessment plan through the efforts of the seven subcommittees of the Quality Council. • Kept the College community and other stakeholders informed of the planning cycle and other projects via newsletters, NICC website, and reports.

## 2: Institution Involvement

A: • The Quality Council consists of seven sub-committees. The members were involved in the creation of the by-laws for the Quality Council and those for each sub-committee. • During the development of the sub-committees, training was provided at an off-campus location for all the members. • Each sub-committee has seven members represented by faculty, administrative staff, and support staff. The members, with representation from both the Peosta and Calmar campuses, bring different perspectives to the committee work. The sub-committees play a vital role in the strategic planning process every year. • The solicitation of priorities at the beginning of the school year enables all staff to participate in the planning process. Their input forms the foundation on which strategic goals for the College are derived. This bottom-up approach enables diverse voices to be heard and transparency in the process to be achieved. • The Quality Council was involved during the visits by the HLC review team during the accreditation process. This ensures that the accreditation effort does not rest with a small group of people in the College. Rather, it is a process that builds on the engagement of the entire College in continuous improvement. • Each sub-committee created an assessment plan for its work and collectively the plans form the college-wide assessment plan. The plan received assistance from the Institutional Research Office. It has been submitted to the Cabinet for review and then onto the Board of Trustees for consideration.

## 3: Next Steps

A: As indicated in the original action plan, the project was to be accomplished by October 1, 2009. Given the work done, NICC considers the action project accomplished and thus wishes to retire it now.

## 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: • A bottom-up approach in the College's planning process allows wider participation in generating ideas and priorities. • The different focus of each of the seven sub-committees collectively supports the mission of the College. It enables the mission to be measurable.

## 5: Project Challenges

A: • Serving on the committees requires investment of time. A few of our colleagues have resigned due to constraints from other commitments. Finding their replacements was challenging but we managed to do so. • The AQIP philosophy and process need to be reiterated because they are new to the College. The learning curve is certainly challenging to both current and new employees.

## 6: AQIP Involvement

A:

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Northeast Iowa Community College has clearly demonstrated its commitment to aqip principles and objectives around measuring effectiveness and planning for continuous improvement. Creating a Quality Council to oversee the implementation of the college's strategic plan is an ambitious plan. The progress your institution has made to date is impressive. The college is staying on target and meeting timelines and outcome goals. Reaching out to the broader community through new newsletters, website updates and reports is imperative to build broad base of support for the Quality Council process.

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: The college should be proud of the progress to date on the development and implementation of the Quality Council and the seven subcommittees overseeing each element of the college's strategic plan. The attention to training of subcommittee and the intentional composition of the committee membership enables the institutional goals and implementation plan to be derived through the diverse voices and perspectives of the college. Equally impressive is the movement in your institution towards creating assessment plans for subcommittee groups and a college wide assessment plan. The institution might want to develop a communication plan to assure all

employee and student groups have an opportunity to give feedback on the work of the quality control committee and the subcommittees.

### 3: Next Steps

A: Based on the progress reported, it makes sense that the institution has accomplished its objectives and should continue to measure the effectiveness of the Quality Control Committee and other sub committees. The institution should also look towards developing another action project to continue its commitment to aqjp principles of continuous improvement.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: These practices, including engaging a broad base of employee collaboration, exemplify several characteristics of high performance organizations, including promote personal growth and institutional improvement. The college should celebrate its successes and should look forward to documenting additional effective processes that it develops over the lifetime of this action project.

### 5: Project Challenges

A: The institution clearly understands the challenges of engaging volunteerism from a representative committee. The success of your college's initiative to date demonstrates your college's commitment to continuous improvement. Potentially the institution might be interested in dialoguing with other aqip institutions that have been using similar types of committees to hear how they have met like challenges.

### 6: AQIP Involvement

A:

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## Project Outcome

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### 1: Reason for completion

A: To merge oversight of strategic planning, quality improvement, evaluation and accreditation.

### 2: Success Factors

A: A very broad college constituency is involved in the Quality Council and supports comprehensive feedback and decision making. The culture of the AQIP philosophy of continuous improvement has been greatly strengthened across the College.

### 3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: Time management and consistency is a challenge with a large group and two campuses far apart. We are committed to improving internal and external communication regarding the work of the quality council.