AQIP Quality Program Summary

Brief History

Eastern Arizona College began its quality journey when President Mark Bryce took over executive leadership of the College. Being a W. E. Deming advocate, President Bryce embraced the philosophy of the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) presented at the Higher Learning Commission’s Annual Meeting in March 2002. In December 2002, the College sent a group to an AQIP Vital Focus Workshop in Chicago. Upon the group’s return, AQIP information was presented campus wide and the campus community consented to gain Board approval for AQIP. On March 29, 2003, the Graham County Community College District (GCCCD) Governing Board resolved to seek continued accreditation through the AQIP process.

EAC was accepted as an AQIP Member Institution on August 4, 2003, and preparations for its self-assessment activity, namely, AQIP’s Vital Focus process, culminated in a Constellation Survey conducted August 11-21, 2003, followed by a Conversation Day on September 24, 2003. Continuing conversations and meetings resulted in the narrowing down of 13 proposed Action Projects to five projects to take to the Strategy Forum in October 2004. EAC’s first three Action Projects were officially declared and accepted January 13, 2005.

The primary focus in 2005 was getting the Action Projects “off the ground” and soliciting input on processes related to each AQIP Category. A team of three attended AQIP’s Crafting Your Systems Portfolio Workshop August 18-19, 2005. Finally, in March 2006, Systems Portfolio Category Teams were formed and meetings began in earnest for crafting the Systems Portfolio. Two proud moments were when EAC’s Systems Portfolio was submitted November 1, 2007, and on November 26, 2007, when its AQIP Web site went public.

Since receiving its Systems Appraisal Feedback Report in March 2008, EAC’s AQIP Leadership Team and AQIP Team have been busily engaged in reviewing and analyzing the feedback, attending a 2nd Strategy Forum, and preparing for a Quality Checkup Visit scheduled for April 1-3, 2009. Three new Action Projects were recently declared, Action Project Teams have been formed, and work is progressing. The level of engagement throughout the College campuses remains strong and the culture of continuous quality improvement has gradually become a reality.
Quick Fixes

EAC opted to add a fourth conversation to Conversation Day and asked employees to offer ideas that could be acted upon relatively easily and quickly. Thus, “Quick Fix” became and remains a common word in the College’s continuous improvement vocabulary. A summary of quality program initiatives must, therefore, begin with a report on Quick Fix ideas generated from Conversation Day and from the Constellation comments.

EAC decided to begin quality improvement immediately after Conversation Day—not to wait until viable Action Projects were selected or until attendance at a Strategy Forum. AQIP Action Committees led by AQIP Steering Team Members reviewed numerous ideas generated from Conversation Day and Constellation Survey comments and submitted fifteen (15) Quick Fix Ideas. Five of the thirteen Action Project ideas submitted by the AQIP Action Committees were selected for the Strategy Forum. The remaining eight Action Projects were proposed as Quick Fixes. Numerous other items were incorporated from Constellation comments and from Quick Fix cards from Conversation Day. The following samples of initiatives were instituted in the spirit of Quick Fixes:

• The *Gila Monster Communicator*, an electronic employee newsletter, was inaugurated January 2004 in response to numerous Constellation comments about not getting timely information to all employees. In President Bryce’s words, the *Communicator* is “our effort to make Eastern Arizona College more open, more friendly, and more informed.” In addition to monthly articles from groups such as executive leadership, faculty, support staff, and adjunct faculty, the *Communicator* serves as a forum for consolidation of tidbits of news about people on campus. Now in its sixth year of production, the *Communicator* has fulfilled its purpose of providing a positive and productive method of communication among various groups on campus.

• One of the 15 Quick Fix Ideas was a more in-depth orientation process. A new course—EDU252, Teaching in the Community College—was developed and is mandated for all new faculty. The goals of the course are to help instructors learn their administrative duties and proper protocol, provide instruction in classroom management techniques, and introduce them to various teaching methods in an effort to help them become more effective teachers. The course was initially taught by a Dean of Instruction, but has more recently been assigned to the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).

• One of the proposed projects not selected for the first Strategy Forum was to streamline EAC’s course/curriculum processes; in essence to rethink using the Wisconsin Instructions Design Systems (WIDS) for designing and revising courses. A Quick Fix that put smiles on faces and applause in the air was to simply quit using the awkward software and provide the same information in a Microsoft Word document.
• The proposed project to hire a full-time grant writer came to fruition following approval of the FY2004-2005 budget. EAC’s grant writer has been instrumental in securing a six-year Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduates Program (GEARUP) grant totaling almost $6 million and a Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant with a total budget of $611,230.

• Other Quick Fixes were: (1) email addresses and mailboxes for adjunct faculty upon request, (2) rotation of Division Chairs every four years, (3) guest passes to EAC athletic and fine arts events for adjunct faculty members and one guest, (4) budget hearings with each Division and Department to present, discuss, and prioritize budget requests, (5) earlier availability of faculty contracts, and (6) additional security cameras and security lighting around campus.

1st Strategy Forum

Eight team members participated in the October 2004 Strategy Forum. The team deliberated over five potential Action Projects, and in the end three projects emerged as most vibrant and actionable for EAC. The Forum was a bonding and enlightening experience, especially as deans, faculty, and support staff met eye-to-eye with executive leadership and governing board representation.

Action Projects

Action Project #1, Systematic and On-going Evaluation for Employment Policies and Procedures, was declared on January 13, 2005. After the Strategy Forum, this Action Project took on a somewhat different focus than originally planned. From the original 35-plus member group that had been involved in the beginning stages of the project idea, 15 volunteered and were formally invited to continue. When the leadership of this Action Project was shifted to a new Dean of Instruction, the project gained momentum.

Accomplishments of Action Project #1 are:

• A new process for extended employee orientation was implemented in August 2006 and continues today. New instructors (and others invited) meet twice a month for the first semester of employment to be trained in College policies and procedures.

• Policy review functions of both the Faculty Association and the Professional Support Staff/Operational Support Staff Association have been recognized by language added to the College’s Organizational Listing.

• Initiated Fall 2006-2007, the Employee Feedback Survey was administered for the second time during 2007-2008. Results have been posted on the College’s Employee Intranet.
• Following recommendations from the Systems Appraisal, the Employee Feedback Survey will be benchmarked with a nationally standardized instrument administered in Spring 2009.

Action Project #1 was retired January 16, 2009. Fourteen (14) committee members continued to serve throughout the project. Because the Employee Feedback Survey was comprised of items which examined the effectiveness of the College’s processes, it was directly relevant to AQIP Principles. The results of the Employee Feedback Survey were reviewed and potential improvement opportunities identified. The PACE Survey has been selected and administrative approval has been obtained to administer the survey in Spring 2009. Plans are to continue to administer the Employee Feedback Survey intermittently with the PACE survey. And, expectations are that the College’s standing committees will participate to a greater degree in review of those policies germane to their respective missions.

Action Project #2, Teaching/Learning Center on EAC Campus, was declared on January 13, 2005. In the beginning this action project seemed to receive enthusiastic support from every portion of the College community, but by Fall 2006 there was a perception of diminishing interest in the subject to the point of being stalled or declared no longer viable. With new project leadership, a plan was developed to move the project forward; and in one semester, with a slightly revised proposal for the CTL, a location was selected, the budget approved, and a search for a Director was in the final stages. However, it took more than a year, and approval to place the position at a higher salary level, to find a suitable Director for the CTL. The CTL is equipped with the latest technology and software, and the Director is going at full speed to address the needs of faculty on all campuses. The administration and faculty are behind the CTL and feelings are that it will provide a valuable resource for all employees. Action Project #2 was retired on January 16, 2009.

Action Project #3, Develop More Effective Ways to Measure Teaching and Learning, was also declared January 13, 2005. In preparation for this action project, eight (8) committee members attended the workshop, “Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy,” sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on April 20-22, 2005. During Fall 2005 Faculty Orientation, full- and part-time faculty contributed approximately 500 formalized comments that directed the goals of this action project. There were three distinct phases: (1) to determine that Pre-Tests did not have to be given if three years worth of baseline data previously existed, (2) to give the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) test (given in spring 2007), and (3) to revise EAC’s Plan to Assess Student Academic Achievement to incorporate the changes in Phases 2 and 3. A most significant accomplishment was offering the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey over a three-week period in April/May of 2008. The process was used to establish a benchmark for further assessment and for comparison with other institutions both regionally and nationally. In summary, the CAAP and Noel-Levitz surveys will be given every three years, the pre-test does not have to be given if baseline data is available, and the Plan to Assess Student Academic Achievement will
be evaluated every fall semester to determine its currency, accuracy, and relevancy to the institutions’ mission. Action Project #3 was retired on January 16, 2009.

**Systems Portfolio**

EAC’s AQIP Liaison was charged with development of the Systems Portfolio. Preparatory to putting together its Systems Portfolio, the College sent the AQIP Liaison and two other individuals to HLC’s Crafting Your Systems Portfolio workshop on August 18-19, 2005. At the workshop, the EAC Team identified 47 questions that would best help tell the College’s story by capturing key institutional processes. Rather than one person or a team identifying these institutional processes, the entire College community was given the opportunity to help identify the processes. An AQIP Process Question of the Week (PQW) activity was initiated October 12, 2005, and continued to May 2006. During that time over 60 employees provided input to some of the College’s key processes, and it was from this input that Systems Portfolio Team Leaders and Systems Portfolio Category Teams were formed. The Team Leaders first met on March 23, 2006, and continued to meet monthly until the Systems Portfolio was submitted. The Team Leaders met with their individual Category Teams regularly from April 2006 to October 2007 as well and reported their team’s progress at the monthly Team meetings.

EAC secured the services of a consultant to review each draft of the Systems Portfolio. The first draft was reviewed June 29, 2007, and the second draft September 30, 2007. The final editing and presentation was completed by Dean of Instruction Mike Crockett, Director of Marketing and Public Relations Todd Haynie, and Provost/AQIP Liaison Jeanne Bryce, and EAC’s Systems Portfolio was submitted November 1, 2007. All in all, over 45 individuals contributed to the production of EAC’s Systems Portfolio, which is located at [http://eac.edu/About_EAC/Accreditation/portfolio.shtm](http://eac.edu/About_EAC/Accreditation/portfolio.shtm).

**Systems Appraisal**

Immediately upon receiving the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, Systems Portfolio Team Leaders reconvened to begin reviewing the feedback. New members were added to replace retirees and faculty representation was changed. The AQIP Team as it came to be named met weekly at first and then monthly thereafter until the present time. Team members tried to understand and internalize what the appraisers meant by their feedback and came to the conclusion that in some cases, the appraisers did not understand what was written; in other cases, the Systems Portfolio did not tell our story well enough; and in others, the appraisers were right on. We were disappointed and a little discouraged because of receiving more Os and OO (Opportunities and Outstanding Opportunities for Improvement) than Ss and SS (Strengths and Significant Strengths). We have since learned from other AQIP institutions that our Systems Appraisal is typical. Therefore, the Team highlighted and annotated strengths and opportunities with possible actions that might prove beneficial to the cause of telling EAC’s story better. The Annotated Working Copy of EAC’s Systems Appraisal will serve as a basis for updating the College’s Systems Portfolio.
EAC took the charge to “celebrate” by posting strengths from the Systems Portfolio as Innovative Practices on AQIP’s Innovative Exchange. At the time of posting, EAC’s four Innovative Practices made up over one-third of the practices posted. The four practices we posted were:

1. Creating Partnerships
2. Using historical data as a means for tracking enrollment trends
3. Center for Teaching and Learning
4. Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Effectiveness of the Information System

If there were a central theme in most of the Os and OOs we received in our Systems Portfolio, it would be the need for strategic planning. Thus, one of EAC’s new Action Projects is on strategic planning.

2nd Strategy Forum

Five members of the AQIP Team along with the College President, Executive Vice President and a Governing Board member attended the 2nd Strategy Forum November 19-21, 2008. In preparation for the Strategy Forum, EAC’s AQIP Team put together the following documents that tell better and more of the College’s story:

- Although not required, the Team chose to use the 2008 revision of AQIP Categories and Items for updating the EAC Organizational Overview.

- Reflections for Action on Continuous Improvement explains five truths, lessons, or principles EAC has drawn from its AQIP experience with quality improvement over the past four years.

- EAC summarized its Employee Feedback Survey initiative to demonstrate campus wide involvement of administration, faculty, and staff in the AQIP process in its Continuous Improvement and Quality Performance handout. The document includes EAC employees’ hopes and expectations for quality improvement as well.

Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement – was selected as the Category to work on at the Strategy Forum. EAC’s Team was able to agree on the process for developing a sound strategic plan. The Category Improvement Worksheet spelled out the work ahead and an Action Project Charter was developed. The second half of the Strategy Forum was focused on creating the culture and infrastructure for continuous improvement. EAC Team members brainstormed strategies for improving Eastern’s quality culture and infrastructure. Overall, the Team learned to use various Q-tools for planning for continuous improvement.
New Action Projects

These Action Projects were selected based on ideas from faculty and staff. With the help of Glen Snider, Director of Institutional Research, in correlating all of the ideas received, we narrowed the ideas down to ten possible projects. Then, 10 work groups were formed to put the ideas into more actionable projects. All 10 of these projects were reviewed by academic leadership, as well as executive leadership, and weighted against the criteria of a vibrant Action Project. The three ideas selected were:

**Action Project #4, Developing a Strategic Planning Process and Strategic Plan for EAC** - This project would further facilitate communication of the vision, mission, and goals of the institution to both internal and external constituencies. It would identify areas for improvement and set measurable goals that when accomplished would make EAC a better place for students, staff, and stakeholders. These goals, shared by all individuals at the College, will be centered around, and lead toward, the accomplishment of the vision and mission of the institution.

**Action Project #5, Student Retention Initiative** - This action project’s goal is to positively affect student retention by establishing a coordinated, centrally located “Student Success Initiative” charged with planning, implementing and coordinating services known to impact student retention. These services include but are not limited to:

1. Academic advising
2. Placement testing
3. Career advising
4. Developmental classes (mathematics, reading, writing)
5. Disability services
6. Services for targeted underrepresented students (African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander).
7. Services for non-traditional students (older, reentry, career/job changing, single parents, returning veterans)
8. Student mentoring
9. Support for securing financial aid and scholarships
10. Tutoring.

**Action Project #6, 7-14 Partnerships in Math and Science** - The purpose of this project would be two-fold: (1) increase the general awareness and interest of Math and Science for students that are in Eastern Arizona College’s target region; and (2) increase the understanding, content knowledge and concept application of math and science by students in the target population through a collaborative effort between the College and the school districts involved.
Response to the Systems Appraisal Strategic Issues

EAC has discussed these strategic issues and given priority to those it concludes are most critical, and has taken action as indicated below:

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) – EAC needs to establish key performance indicators (KPI’s)—that is, what will be measured in order to ensure that the College is operating effectively in carrying out its mission. Once these KPI’s are established, the College can identify appropriate assessment tools that will allow them to gather information about relevant results in the form of metrics for those key performance indicators. Analysis of the results can then be used to direct improvements. [Identifying KPI’s has been identified as an initial step in Action Project #4 – Developing a Strategic Planning Process and Strategic Plan for EAC.]

2. Though EAC is justifiably proud of its record of fiscal responsibility, throughout the nine categories there are indications that fiscal soundness has become an end in itself, rather than a means for EAC to carry out its unique educational mission and achieve its vision of becoming the premier resource for higher education in eastern Arizona. [The College needs to articulate how fiscal soundness is a means for EAC to carry out its mission.]

3. In order to encourage and allow for the participation of all stakeholder groups, both internal and external, in its continuous improvement, EAC needs to develop, implement, and communicate a more robust process for planning improvement, including selecting strategies for achieving mission and vision, selecting measures of performance, collecting evidence of performance, and analyzing results. [Again, EAC will focus on Strategic Planning for one of its next Action Projects.]

Next Steps

1. At the Strategy Forum in November, EAC identified strategies for creating and maintaining a quality culture or infrastructure, which will involve the entire campus community in one way or another. The one strategy selected to further develop was the creation and implementation of Quality “Leadershops.” The “Leadershops” will be offered to all EAC employees over the span of two or three years. Each “Leadership” will consist of 20 participants and the objectives will be to help each person understand individual roles in quality improvement and to learn how to use Q-tools for planning within their own areas of stewardship.

2. In addition to three new Action Projects declared in January 2009, a Program Review Ad Hoc Committee has been formed to address one of the seven (7) project ideas not selected as Action Projects. The goals of the Committee are:
   - To streamline data gathering and reporting processes for Program Reviews and End-of-Year Reports.
• To tailor the data gathering process in ways that are more meaningful for individual programs

• To use the data gathered more effectively as feedback in the process(es) of crafting program changes

3. Updating EAC’s Systems Portfolio is EAC’s next big step in AQIP. The institutional overview was revised for the Strategy Forum in November 2008; and with concerted time and effort, the Categories will be updated by December 2009.