Western Technical College

Reaffirmation Quality Highlights

Western's quality journey began in 1987 with TQM, progressed to the Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence in 1997, and continued in 2000 with the adoption of AQIP for institutional accreditation. The Quality Checkup in April of 2006 and the 2006 Systems Portfolio revision provided the opportunity for the College to respond to opportunities for improvement and strategic issues identified in the 2003 Systems Appraisal. Today, Western's commitment to performance excellence is evident in all parts of the organization and tightly woven into its strategic plan.

Western continues to update its Systems Portfolio for the November 1st Systems Appraisal. The College will retire one Action Project this fall and will bring forth three new Action Projects that reflect the most current strategic plan. To highlight some of the most recent quality efforts, Western has structured this update around the College's strategic goals.

Increase Student Goal Attainment

Student Advising Pilot

Since the fall of 2006, 35 instructional programs have entered a formal in-depth quality review. Through the review process, a self-study and an analysis of comparative program data was conducted. Input from faculty, adjunct faculty, administrators, past, current and future students, employer advisory committees, and student services staff revealed some common themes with these programs:

1. Most programs fell below the Wisconsin Technical College System and Perkins targets for Course Completion and Third Year Graduation.
2. In many cases, students who entered these programs had the opportunity to choose similar programs within a cluster of programs. It has been difficult for students to select the most appropriate program given academic preparation, time-management/personal discipline skills, professional experience, and personal interests.
3. In all cases, these programs lacked a formal enrollment management plan that allocates resources, defines roles, and provides a framework for faculty advising. A program-level process for identifying at-risk students and conducting regular one-to-one academic advising had yet to be developed.

Using Program Improvement Grant funding, Western piloted a student advising program in the summer of 2007. A team of faculty and student services staff developed a formal enrollment management pilot to enhance course completion rates, impact 2nd year retention and 3rd year graduation. The students involved in the pilot will be tracked throughout the 2007-2008 academic year. While results can't be determined at this point in time, the response from faculty has been positive and enrollments in many of the programs involved in the pilot are exceeding prior years.

Service-Learning

Western recognizes that all students learn differently and has identified service-learning as one way the College can enhance the quality and increase the variety of learning opportunities and environments. Through combined efforts, Western students and instructors took service-learning to greater heights in 2006. Each division of the college included service-learning within program coursework. Twenty-six instructors incorporated service-learning into thirty-one courses. Through these efforts, over 557 students partnered with 46 local agencies to make a difference in area communities. These students provided 14,383 hours of service to the community, helping to increase the scope and capability of both the organizations and the people they served.

Students were enthusiastic about their experiences, as were the community organizations and individuals they served. Of 126 students surveyed, 120 students reported having had a positive experience. In one class surveyed, 90% of students said they would encourage others to take part in service-learning and 100% stated that they believe that combining service to the community with coursework (service-learning) should be practiced in more courses at Western. One student commented, "I think [service-learning] was a good experience that will stay with me for many years. I believe it has given me a good foundation to be successful through the rest of my school career and even afterward."

Violence Prevention

In 2006, Western took non-traditional steps to increase student goal attainment. Recognizing the need to educate members of the Western community about signs and dynamics related to sexual assault, stalking and relationship violence, the College hired a Violence Prevention Specialist supported by renewable grant funding. As a result of this initiative, Western has a plan in place to help reduce the incidents of violence, increase the

reporting of incidents, and help victims and perpetrators obtain assistance. This will not only minimize the impact of the violence on individual student goal attainment, but make the campuses safer overall so that all may participate in helping students realize their potential.

Enhance Program Effectiveness and Efficiency

Instructional Program Review Process
The Quality Review Process (QRP) was developed in 2001 by the Wisconsin Technical College System to evaluate educational programs in the System. While it has been a key part of Western's continuous quality improvement efforts, the College recognized the opportunity to revitalize the process and integrate it with evidence-based decision making, strategic planning, budgeting, grant procurement, program marketing, and new program development. In 2006, Western launched a new approach to QRP with 35 occupational programs. This comprehensive approach provides the following:
- An opportunity to look at and enhance all elements that contribute to a healthy program
- An opportunity to analyze data, information and evidence that can be used to make sound decisions
- An opportunity to gain input from external stakeholders such as employers, future students, former students, and other colleges with similar programs
- A forum for non-threatening conversations regarding programs
- An opportunity to identify and prioritize resource needs and to seek alternative funding
- An opportunity to integrate with strategic planning process or program-level accreditation needs
- A process that helps programs stay on track with improvement initiatives

Class Profitability Analysis and Optimal Program Capacity Algorithm
In 2006, Western identified and piloted two tools to assist in enhancing program efficiency. The Class Profitability Analysis tool allows Western to determine what level of financial outlay, if any, will be required with a new instructional offering. In some instances, the results yield positive cash flow to the College. While a new program is not automatically denied if it can't be self-supporting, it does allow the opportunity to identify the level of funding that may be required. The analysis can be used in various decision-making scenarios – such as determining whether to hire full-time or part-time instructors for a particular course or delivery method.

The Optimal Program Capacity Algorithm was developed to provide a more deliberate method of setting new student capacities for Associate Degree programs in the Business Division. The algorithm considers ten variables and returns two calculations of optimal program capacity 1) based on employment demand and 2) based on full-time faculty resources. Once the optimal capacity is chosen from these two options, the algorithm computes the number of new students needed each year to maintain that optimal number, taking into account retention in the program. Western has used this tool to gain insight and make sound decisions.

Enhance Human Resource Development

Computerized Recruiting System
In 2007, Western created a plan to implement an online employment application process. This process will be deployed in fiscal 2008, and will allow the College to eliminate the need to print numerous documents for selection committees. It will also allow for the ability to: fully comply with the requirements of the labor agreement; capture demographic information while maintaining confidentiality; accurately assess applicant flow; analyze the effectiveness of various recruiting techniques; and study key selection processes to assess the equity of those processes.

Population Health Management Program
During the past several years, the College has implemented a number of measures to enhance the health of its workforce and contain the rising costs associated with health care. While the changes have managed to slow the increase in health care costs, none have contained these costs at a manageable level. The College has realized that until there is an effort to address the claims, the costs will continue to increase more rapidly than growth in income can support.

In the most recent year, two measures have been introduced to attempt to stem these cost increases while continuing the focus on employee health. The College changed its plan design to include a front end deductible, a health reimbursement account, and a Population Health Management program. The Population Health Management Program provides the opportunity for employees and their partners to participate in a Health Risk Appraisal. The information collected during the appraisal will be used to provide employees and their partners with specific steps to take to improve their health and reduce medical claims. The information will also be aggregated and used by the College to develop health education programs that address trends identified in the

appraisal. Other components of the program include a newsletter and a web site that can be used to identify health conditions and prompt preventative action, lifestyle changes, and/or early treatment.

Enhance Competitive Advantage

The Western Brand
During the 2006-2007 school year the College launched its brand, *the essential experience,* and changed the name of the College from Western Wisconsin Technical College to Western Technical College. A number of activities have taken place to support the "new" College.

The implementation of the brand campaign and name change, and the redesign of the Web have allowed Western to better define who it is and the role it plays in the community. Anecdotal data provided through conversation with graduates during the Alumni Phonathon indicates that graduates feel good about the *essential experience* brand and are proud to be Western graduates.

In support of the College brand, the *essential experience*, and the College name change, the marketing and communications department redesigned the Western Web site. In addition to creating a brand-friendly design that increases brand presence, the site also reflects a number of updates that improve the navigation and service provided to all users. The current site is almost entirely ADA compliant and provides ease of use for students and other visitors who have disabilities. The information contained in the site was reorganized to improve navigation, and the site was reduced to half its size saving costs associated with bandwidth use.

"Go To College – Stay in College" Project
In addition to Western's efforts to enhance its competitive advantage at the College-level with a new brand, faculty have engaged in projects to promote the College and the value of a college degree. One instructor spent a good deal of time visiting area high schools promoting the Information Technology programs. While the project originally began as a promotional campaign, it took on a much broader and more powerful appeal: "Go to college and stay in college!"

This instructor spoke at 18 area high schools and reached over 850 students. He has been asked to return to every one of them. The message is sincere and the delivery is captivating. Students are asked to identify a budget based upon an income equivalent to that of a high school graduate. They are then asked a series of questions that help them quickly realize they need more than a high school education to have the kind of life they imagine. The instructor proceeds to discuss how much it will cost to go to college; options for paying for it; and the obvious comparisons between technical colleges and universities. He then briefly touches on the Information Technology programs at Western. The success of this faculty-driven project has led to discussions about creating a "Visit Team" designed to spread the "Go To College – Stay in College" message to this broader audience.

Improve Effectiveness and Efficiency of College Systems

Systems Thinking Implementation
Western's most recent Systems Portfolio Appraisal identified the opportunity for the college to document and align key processes with key requirements and strategic priorities. In 2006, Western attended the Pegasus System Thinking Conference and identified the opportunity to create an AQIP Action Project focused on creating a culture of systems thinking.

This Action Project will help to 1) identify the primary college system, the support systems, major processes, sub-processes and to detail policies and procedures and how they impact strategic priorities; 2) create documentation of systems and processes; 3) provide a foundation for measuring key processes and achievement of strategic goals as identified in the College's Strategic Plan and Balanced Scorecard; 4) facilitate and promote systems thinking at all levels of the College.

This project and its goals provide a foundation and "launching pad" for Western to articulate, standardize, measure, and optimize processes that impact student success. This foundation will help create an operational blueprint of how Western's systems interact and connect to support strategic priorities. It will enhance Western's ability to identify opportunities for improvement and to measure outcomes.

Even though the project is in its infancy, Western is beginning to see a merging of ideas and processes with departments working together -- before implementation of new plans -- to minimize negative impact on others. The focus has moved towards working smarter – versus working harder.

Strategic Planning Process and the New Balanced Scorecard

In 2007, Western implemented an integrated approach to strategic planning. The planning process is driven by the College mission, vision and values and is comprised of:

- A strategic plan containing six strategic goals, long term objectives and annual actions driven by the vision, mission and values and Western's commitment to performance excellence through the AQIP and Baldrige quality frameworks
- Master plans for the key areas of facilities, instruction, technology, grants and marketing aligned with the strategic plan
- Progam and department/unit plans aligned with the master plans and the instructional program review process (QRP)
- Budget development process that stems from the program and department/unit plans
- Employee success plans that reflect college goals
- A balanced scorecard that is designed to measure progress at the strategic plan level with future plans to incorporate at the master plan and department/unit plan level

Planning documents have been simplified and adapted for user-friendliness in order to facilitate a more productive and timely planning process.

Maintain Financial Stability

Increased Fund Balance

In 2003, Western recognized that it was operating with a very low fund balance of $604,000 or 1.53% of operating funds. External credit agencies such as Moody's base credit ratings, in part, on fund balance. With a less than desired Moody's rating, the District Board established a policy that required a minimum fund balance of 10%.

Since 2003, Western has diligently managed its budget and has reached a fund balance of 12.7%. This financial stability allows Western to respond to unanticipated events that may require the College to cover costs that might not be anticipated. For example, if a company in the District has a major layoff, and Western is asked to do extensive retraining, the College would have access to funds to cover the costs. The fund balance also provides stability in relation to cash flow. While the fund balance doesn't necessarily equate dollar for dollar into cash on hand, a higher fund balance will mean higher cash levels. This, in turn, prevents short-term borrowing to meet operating expenses such as payroll and utilities.

The Lunda Center (Corporate and Community Training Center)

One of Western's other distinctive objectives is to provide incumbent worker and customized training. The need for additional graduates from Western's degree programs is increasing. This has been reinforced in discussions with advisory committees and employer focus groups. It has taken on heightened importance due to the following:

- The gap between the number of jobs available and the skilled workers available to fill those jobs is narrowing
- The number of entrants into the job market is decreasing while the number of people exiting the workforce is increasing

To meet the needs of employers in the District, the concept of a corporate and community training center was formulated and is receiving final approval from the Wisconsin Technical College System. Fundraising driven by the Western Foundation has exceeded its goals and the Lunda Center is expected to break ground in 2008.

Based on financial projections, the Lunda Center is projected to be profitable in the first full year of operation. As part of the fund-raising effort, a Venture Fund is being established that will enable the Business and Industry Services unit, including the Lunda Center, to invest in growth without draining College resources. The Venture Fund will be held and managed by the Western Technical College Foundation. Key impacts include:

- An estimated 225,000 additional people on our campus over the next three years
- An estimated 1.5 million hours of training delivered to area business and industry over the next three years, which, if converted to FTEs would equate to over 1,000 FTEs
- Profits generated to contribute toward college resources in every year of operation
- College meets a long-term goal of having a large meeting space