

Category Improvement Worksheet

Institution: Red Rocks Community College	City & State: Lakewood CO
Identify one AQIP Category that your institution would like to target for focused improvement (in the form of a campaign consisting of one or more Action Projects.) Category 5 – Leading and Communicating	
Within this Category, identify a significant challenge — one or two processes or performance results data that you consider targets for change. -Improve the decision making process by increasing the engagement of college stakeholders in making recommendations and carrying out and measuring the outcomes of the decisions. -Become a “data informed” institution evidenced through data collection and analyses incorporated into the decision making process.	
Which specific <i>opportunities for improvement</i> (identified as O or OO in your Systems Appraisal) are core to this challenge? -5I1. & 5I2. No indication of systematic benchmarking to document measurable improvements as a result of quality improvement initiatives. -5P3. RRCC has widespread involvement through councils and committees, however, it is not clear what communication and decision-making processes are taking place within and between the committees/councils.	
What feedback from other external sources (consultant reports, other accreditation reports, research studies, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution? From the Systems Portfolio Feedback -- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The college appears to be positioned to continue collecting and analyzing data on the effectiveness of services in meeting stakeholder needs and to then use these results to continuously improve. Following a data-driven decision making process may assist the college in providing funding to the areas most in need of improvement”. p. 3 • “RRCC appears to have had many new initiatives implemented within the past year. In addition, its new president is implementing a number of changes within the college. The College may want to consider prioritizing all of these new initiatives to ensure each one receives an appropriate amount of attention and resources. In addition, communicating these priorities internally and externally may allow RRCC to secure stakeholder buy-in.” p. 7 • “While CCCS mandates do appear to provide direction and support for the college, it is unclear how closely the CCCS-mandated outcomes apply to RRCC’s processes. RRCC has an opportunity to define its own, internally-driven measures of effectiveness. Doing so may provide the college with data that is clearly understood and useful for process improvement.” p. 7 • “President’s Cabinet relies on the planning groups to bring forward short term priorities. However, it is unclear if a process exists to determine priorities and how the divergent expectation of stakeholder groups is addressed.” p. 42 	
What feedback from internal sources (performance results data, complaints, system breakdowns, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution? Red Rocks has launched several initiatives to improve the access, retention and graduation rates of students. While the short term results achieved have included the highest enrollment growth of the 13 colleges in the Colorado Community College System for fall 2008, the initiatives are somewhat isolated and not well connected due to the lack of an overall institutional strategic planning process for quality improvement efforts.	

When did you become aware of the need to develop a strategy to address this challenge? What is stimulating you to confront it now?

The success of efforts to increase enrollment of underserved students has magnified the need to address internal structures to ensure the needs of the new students will be met.

Which specific needs of your students, other external stakeholders, faculty, or staff could you meet better if you addressed this challenge? How? Convening a Collaboration Council comprised of representatives from students and all employee groups will improve internal communication so that all staff and faculty have a working knowledge of the programs and services available to students.

How might addressing this challenge change or strengthen your institution's quality culture and infrastructure? The Collaboration Council will establish budgeting priorities used for resource allocation to existing programs. The Council will also establish the processes to justify new program start up. By centralizing these functions within the same group, the goal will be to avoid overextending resources that can jeopardize the success of existing programs and doom new program development.

What enthusiasm and support exists among your leadership and employees for addressing this challenge now? On average twenty percent of the 200 respondents from the staff and faculty climate survey completed Spring 2008 were in disagreement with the statements describing the flow and effectiveness of communication at the college. The foundation of quality improvement efforts lie in the sustained engagement of the college community, which cannot exist if communication channels are muddled or ineffective. The decision to formalize the role and structure of the Collaboration Council as the vehicle by which staff and faculty are engaged in shared decision making, and serving as the communication conduit to the college community is the result of recognizing the need to prioritize this effort as the lynchpin of the college's quality improvement efforts.

Identify two processes or performance results measures included in this Category that you consider significant current strengths (e.g., identified as S or SS in your Systems Appraisal) that might prove useful in addressing this challenge.

5P1. The widespread involvement of faculty and staff in the quality improvement initiatives creates the foundation for an inclusive planning process.

5P3. Evidence of successful planning and implementation of AQIP Action Projects has helped to develop a team approach of engaging individuals from multiple departments to achieve common goals specific to improving student outcomes.

What ideas have you already come up with for potential Action Projects that might help address this challenge? (Provide 3- 6)

-Reconstitute the College Collaboration Council to include representative members from all College constituency groups.

-Provide training of the Collaboration Council members in consensus decision making and planning.

-Define the roles of the Collaboration Council to include specifically the development of the College's Strategic Plan and involvement in the annual budgeting process.

- Define the data required to inform the planning process.

-Develop quality improvement benchmarks as part of the Strategic Plan to facilitate the measurement of the Plan's effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes.