Category Six: Quality Overview

Introduction

LCCC has embraced a commitment to quality but recognizes that there is more work to be done to accomplish this goal. In many ways, the College is still recovering from an era of turmoil resulting from organizational unrest in its culture, its leadership, and its organizational structure. Yet, the Institution sought a new future grounded in authentic acceptance of some of the most brutal facts about the state of the College at that time. These included:

- LCCC was the largest of the Wyoming Community Colleges but was the worst performing by many measures such as graduation rates and course completions;
- Many of the College's facilities were dated and failing, with increasing deferred maintenance issues and, even in totality, not adequate enough to serve current and future students;
- There was a lack of instructional coherence with academic programs not designed for students to complete or to assess student learning and development through them;
- Key aspects of the College's student services were on the brink of major compliance and operational issues and not fully integrated to serve students from a holistic perspective;
- There was inequity in the application of existing policies and procedures, and several critical processes had extremely outdated policies or, worse, no policy or procedure at all;
- Employees were not being developed or managed to encourage growth and success within the primary roles and responsibilities needed by the Institution; and
- There were many strained relationships at the College – internally between employees, between the Trustees and Foundation Board, with the community, etc.

Once the Institution embraced these facts and accepted them, a new platform for organizational reinvention and rebirth emerged. Today the College firmly believes quality is found at the intersection of hard work and high standards that are consistently met. LCCC is committed to promoting a culture of evidence that compels the Institution to continuously strive for greater competence and productivity while always seeking to transform students' lives through inspired learning. This is its commitment to quality.

Likely evidenced within this Systems Portfolio, LCCC is well underway of an institutional transformation. Following traditional change theory, the Institution has gone through periods where internal and external influences have caused a destabilization of the organization as traditional approaches are challenged and new ones emerge to shape culture and functional design. During this time, traditional values are tested to see if they can persist into the future, individuals are challenged, relationships are strained, yet the hope for a more prosperous tomorrow, while elusive, begins to emerge.

This is where LCCC is at in its quality journey. The foundation has been laid with quality philosophies grounded in policy; processes are improved or developed and take shape within administrative procedures, and cycles of assessment, planning, resource allocation, and implementation are emerging at all levels of the Institution. Some are formalized, while others are still informal and adapting. However, a culture of evidence is taking shape, and a dedication to honest analysis and hard work is in its early stages. These are all the pillars of quality.

Quality Improvement Initiatives

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6P1 Quality Improvement Initiatives focus on the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives the institution is engaged in and how they work together within the institution. Describe the processes for determining, and integrating CQI initiatives, and who is involved in those processes. This includes, but is not limited to, descriptions of key processes for:

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Selecting, deploying, and evaluating quality improvement initiatives

Early on in the College's adoption of the AQIP Pathway to accreditation, AQIP became something the Institution did, often in addition to business as usual. Quality initiatives were identified and created as additional, separate initiatives that often fell completely outside of the primary roles and responsibilities of those individuals working on them. This is not to say the initiatives themselves were not on target or needed, but because they were separate from the daily work or central to the recognized priorities of the College, they often floundered at best, and failed at worst.

Today, continuous quality improvement is what the Institution does, and AQIP is the mechanism that helps the College evaluate how well it is doing it. At every level of the Institution, the cycle of assessment, planning, and implementation ensures that quality initiatives are consistently selected, deployed, and evaluated to achieve continuous improvement.

As described in 4P2, the College conducts a comprehensive strategic planning process that results in a multi-year Strategic Plan. Within the plan there are goals, and each goal has a series of accompanying strategies. These strategies form the primary quality improvement initiatives for the Institution, many of which become the College's formal AQIP Action Projects. These strategies are grounded in evidence derived from the environmental scanning process, through the identification of critical issues, and the SWOT analyses completed during strategic planning.

The College has also created an institution-wide innovations funds program to help identify and support quality improvement initiatives. The Innovation Funds Program is designed to encourage innovative approaches to helping the College better meet its mission. The program accomplishes this by funding (1) pilot projects that will investigate and implement ideas initiated by creative faculty, staff, and students; and (2) one-time planning projects by a faculty/staff member or student to investigate whether an idea is relevant and feasible. The program fosters an entrepreneurial culture by promoting an environment that is conducive to experimentation and imagination.

To promote creative thinking, no project is off limits; however, the project must have the potential for significantly impacting the ability of the College to meet its mission and motivate student completion by addressing one or more of the following areas:

1. Instructional Effectiveness
2. Success after Completion
3. Student Support
4. LCCC Strategic Plan
5. Program Start-Up
6. Organizational Effectiveness

Innovation funds proposals are reviewed and scored by the broadly represented College Council using an objective criterion rubric containing the six items listed above. The rubric also scores on criteria relating to the proposal's evaluation plan and outcomes. This process further promotes continuous quality improvement by not only aligning funds to areas with the greatest potential for improvement, but by involving the Institution in a process that develops an understanding of quality improvement aspects.

Both Strategic Plan strategies and innovation funds projects (at times one and the same) are expected to utilize a project management approach for implementation and evaluation. Although this process is not yet fully formalized, many projects already incorporate elements of this process. These include the formation of interdisciplinary project teams, development of project timelines and deliverables, project reporting, and project evaluation.

Quality initiatives may also emerge from the sub-cycles of continuous improvement at the unit, department, or division level. These may be connected to the Strategic Plan, or they may be a reflection of needs identified in unit-level assessment activities, translated into unit-level operational plan goals and objectives. For example, various assessments are conducted as part of regular and ad-hoc review of services and operations in many co-curricular areas (e.g., facilities conditions inventory as part of regular master planning, campus safety assessments, financial aid audits, strategy forums, etc.). Evidence from these assessments inform operational planning within the units, planning that leads to area-specific quality improvement initiatives.

Currently there is an expectation that areas carrying out these initiatives follow a similar approach to the project management process employed for Strategic Plan strategies and innovation funds projects. However, being truly focused within specific departments, project teams may be smaller and less interdisciplinary than those at the institutional strategy level.

Aligning the Systems Portfolio, Action Projects, Quality Check-Up, and Strategy Forums
In the simplest explanation, the many accreditation activities are all feedback mechanisms to inform the Institution about the efficacy of its continuous improvement model. The Systems Portfolio is clearly the most comprehensive self-assessment of how the College's processes integrate and contribute to an institution-wide continuous improvement process. It helps the College demonstrate where processes are well-established and effective, as well as identifying outcomes that guide improvements. Action projects derive from the results of process improvement and continuous improvement in meeting the Institution's mission and vision (explained in greater detail in the above section and in 4P1 and 4P2). The Quality Check-Up has served as a formative evaluation mechanism to provide an external status perspective on the Institution's processes as well as to show how effectively it is targeting improvements in areas identified as opportunity for increased effectiveness. Last, the Strategy Forums allow the Institution to spend concerted time and effort in planning for improvement in needed areas, while also building the institutional capacity for understanding the continuous quality improvement.

6R1 What are the results for continuous quality improvement initiatives?

In only three short years, massive change has occurred, and continuous improvement across the Institution has emerged. For example:

- New leadership exists across the Institution's executive and administrative structure, including a new president, vice presidents, academic deans, and key directors;
- The Board of Trustees has established the LCCC model of policy and procedure governance to guide the Institution into the future;
- After a campus-wide organizational assessment, the College completed a strategic reorganization to better align its human and functional resources;
- The Institution made a new commitment to shared governance and accelerated its integration into the campus culture through its new College Council;
- This led to a community-wide strategic planning process resulting in a new mission, values and vision, and Strategic Plan goals and strategies; and

- An integrated model of continuous improvement has been established, supported by new processes for assessing institutional effectiveness, institutional planning, and resource allocation leading to the multiplication of continuous improvement efforts on campus.

These changes have already resulted in significant accomplishments. For example:

- The College has made a commitment to completion, with a goal of increasing completions 5 percent each year. One year after this commitment, completions were up 12 percent, and LCCC had its largest graduating class in history;
- Course completions have continued to improve significantly over the past two years demonstrating success in the instructional effectiveness of the College;
- The College secured $43 million in funding for two new buildings on campus, and many other facilities improvements have been implemented and/or completed;
- There have been numerous improvements in instructional coherence including the development of institutional student competencies and rubrics, new competency-driven general education, curriculum development processes and reform, policy and procedure on degrees and certificates, program articulation with four-year partners, developmental English and math redesigns, and more;
- Complete overhaul of student services, including financial aid clean up, new admissions approach, stronger Title IX and judicial affairs oversight, development of a holistic advising model, etc.
- Strong relationship fostered between Trustees and Foundation through the establishment of a new institutional advancement model;
- Employee development and management efforts have led to the establishment of the Center for Teaching & Learning and its faculty development programs, a new program for internal LCCC leadership development, stronger student leadership development, improved employee recruitment and onboarding, etc.; and
- Stronger processes for the objective analysis of needs and resource allocations including a new collaborative model for budget development and allocation, a human resource priority planning process, institutional KPIs, and the College's performance report card, etc.

Stated previously, early on in the College's journey with AQIP, quality improvement initiatives were identified and implemented as existing outside of the normal operations of the organization. Today, the focus on continuous improvement cycles has provided robust assessment across campus identifying areas that can be improved to aid the Institution in better meeting its mission. As a result, the normal operations of the College now have yielded numerous continuous quality improvement initiatives at all levels of the Institution. Most of the focus, rightly so, has been placed on the implementation of the strategies within the Strategic Plan.

Just a few examples of the quality improvement initiatives based on Strategic Plan strategies and Innovation Funds Program projects that are underway or have been completed include the following:

- Design a mandatory orientation program for all new students enrolling at LCCC that includes advising and registration.
- Redesign developmental coursework and activities to facilitate an accelerated progression to college-readiness for our students. Currently the College has one Action Project on file pertaining to the implementation of an accelerated developmental mathematics curricula based on the Carnegie Statway program. The College also funded an innovations fund project to reinvent the developmental English sequence using supplemental instruction and co-requisite remediation. Both are slated for implementation by the fall of 2015.
- Develop and implement an LCCC General Education Core that stems from essential learning outcomes, ensure it is incorporated into all transfer programs (AA and AS degrees) and, when

completed, results in a Certificate of General Studies. This initiative has been functionally completed, and the new general education core will be offered starting fall 2015.

- Finalize planning and secure funding to construct a new student services, university, and instructional building on the Cheyenne campus. This building is fully funded and currently in the final design stages with construction planned to begin in the spring of 2015.
- Implement an intensive first-year experience for new faculty that exposes them to the Institution and, more importantly, builds the foundational knowledge to become excellent instructors. The College's new Center for Teaching & Learning has successfully offered its first NFL program to one cohort and currently has the second cohort enrolled.

These are but a handful of examples of the various quality initiatives underway at LCCC. All of the examples reflect those initiatives scored within the top tier of importance after the objective ranking process.

6I1	Based on 6R1, what quality improvement initiatives have been implemented or will be implemented in the next one to three years?

LCCC's results and success to date have been inspiring and motivating; however, challenges still remain, and improvements must continue. For example, massive changes in all corners of the campus have led to the fear of too much, too soon. As a result, communication issues remain and perhaps have even escalated, challenging employee morale and campus climate in certain circles. The College has witnessed numerous employee transitions causing some concern over stability of operations, and legislative funding reductions with enrollment declines place external pressure on the Institution at a time when internal pressure is also high.

There is, however, considerable effort underway with a focus on numerous quality improvement initiatives. Prioritization has helped ease the impact of such a significant change agenda at the institutional level, although the Strategic Plan only represents a part of the quality initiatives currently underway. However, it should be evident that the College is very much in the implementation stages of its first major institution-wide continuous improvement push. Therefore, much of the results produced have only been assessed at the formative level – in other words, whether we completed what we said we would. Further summative evaluation of the impact of these initiatives will be conducted using the College's KPIs and its balanced score card.

Mentioned in 4P1, to better manage change associated with quality initiatives, the College is designing and plans to implement a system for managing and monitoring projects related to major improvement initiatives. This project management process is being developed to provide continuity in the way that employees at LCCC manage projects, thus some consistency in understanding the change occurring at LCCC as a result of continuous improvement initiatives.

For the next few years, though, LCCC will stay the course with the Strategic Plan strategies in their entirety, other initiatives that emerge from the Innovation Funds Program, as well as unit-level assessment and operational planning. Please see the LCCC Strategic Plan for additional information.

Culture of Quality

6P2	Culture of Quality focuses on how the institution integrates continuous quality improvement into its culture. Describe how a culture of quality is ensured within the institution. This includes, but is not limited to, descriptions of key processes for:

Developing an infrastructure and providing resources to support a culture of quality
W. Edwards Deming, arguably the father of continuous quality improvement (he also has Wyoming ties and is a graduate of UW), articulated continuous improvement in his Deming Cycle of "Plan-Do-Check-

Act"; its very simplicity is one of the reasons it has withstood decades in the arena of continuous quality improvement. LCCC has embraced the foundational elements of this cycle by focusing the Institution on rigorous assessment of institutional effectiveness, planning for improvement based on the evidence provided by the assessment, resource allocation and implementation, followed by formative and summative evaluation, and the cycle repeats. Integrated within this cycle is the College's belief in shared governance and inclusiveness across all levels of the Institution. This forms the infrastructure to support a culture of quality and continuous improvement at the College.

The LCCC model for continuous improvement was described in more detail in 4P1, but it is important to reiterate how that model has formed the basis for the culture that is emerging at the College. Every day, new processes are developed or existing ones are improved to ensure the elements within a continuous improvement cycle are being implemented across the Institution. More importantly though is the focus on how these processes relate and integrate.

For example, strategic planning is informed by assessment of institutional effectiveness through the College's KPIs, which are derivative of the mission, vision, and values. The plan is developed, and its goals and strategies are built upon the identified needs for improvement. Strategies are operationalized and implemented, and the resource allocation model of the College objectively assesses the potential impact for these strategies to help guide resource allocation to those areas with the greatest likelihood for positively impacting improved outcomes. Activities are evaluated formatively to assess their success, and the Institution again examines institutional performance summatively through the KPIs, and the cycle repeats.

This process plays out in other aspects of the Institution. Academic program review goes through a similar process based on the cycle of continuous improvement. The student ambassador and leadership program has established formal learning outcomes for student leaders who are assessed regularly; this begins the cycle of continuous improvement within the student services unit. What has been emerging at LCCC over the past few years is a culture of quality founded in the Institution's commitment to the continuous improvement cycle.

LCCC believes that institutional budgets are value statements. The Institution places its resources where it finds the greatest value. To that end, the College has made sure there are resources available to invest in quality improvement initiatives, whereby making the cultural statement that embracing continuous improvement will be rewarded at the Institution. This is evident in the Innovation Funds Program (with over $400,000 invested in the past two fiscal years) and the fact that the FY15 Operating Budget has identified linkages between all resource requests and the Strategic Plan (see 4P1). In addition, the Institution has internally reallocated millions of dollars over the past three years to put existing dollars, not just new ones, towards the areas with the strongest emphasis on improving the Institution's effectiveness.

Ensuring continuous quality improvement is making an evident and widely understood impact on institutional culture and operations (5.D.1)
Over the past few years, and certainly since publishing its first Systems Portfolio in 2010, the College has made results, evidence-informed decision making, strategic allocation of resources, and clearly articulated processes the foundation of its transformation. Although there have been pockets of the organization focused on continuous improvement, and even basic elements of an integrated cycle at the institutional level, until the recent past the organization's culture and operations have not been clearly connected to this concept.

Today, the College openly assesses institutional effectiveness and widely distributes documentation of these results. This is primarily illustrated through the annual assessment of institutional effectiveness and efficiency through the reporting of the KPIs. Each year, during the fall state of the college address, the

President presents and produces the College's report card on these measures (5.D.1). They are objective, authentic, and pertinent to the Institution's performance, and most importantly they demonstrate a commitment to identifying areas where improvement is required.

In addition to measuring institutional effectiveness and driving an overall process for ensuring continuous improvement is evident at LCCC, other processes have been developed and implemented that share this approach. For example, in 2013 the College conducted a comprehensive program analysis to determine the current health of the Institution's academic programs. The Program analysis and ranking system was designed to measure the relative performance of LCCC's programs of study. Twenty-five measures in four key performance areas have been identified for programs of study. Most of these measures can be linked to the College's system of KPIs. The results of the analysis place academic programs into quintiles based on a composite score of program health. This system has informed prioritization for academic program review.

Across the Institution, a culture of continuous quality improvement is emerging. Processes for the assessment of student learning, non-academic program and service review, campus safety, and others are taking shape, and honest conversations are had about where they are succeeding and where they can improve. The College has created a new division of institutional effectiveness led by an associate vice president to help ensure alignment with AQIP and continuous improvement processes and the organization's operations and culture.

Ensuring the institution learns from its experiences with CQI initiatives (5.D.2)
Naturally the required structure of AQIP Action Projects has provided a foundational process for implementing quality improvement initiatives. It has also provided the College a historical record of the successes and failures of improvement initiatives. This process has become the basis for the College's commitment to engaging in continuous improvement initiatives as identified earlier within 6P1. As part of any process leading to quality improvement initiatives, and the assessment and evaluation that accompany them, the opportunity to build institutional knowledge and the capacity for continuous learning becomes a part of the culture.

The College's commitment to this process is evident within the commitment made in the Institution's vision statement: "Every individual has the freedom to innovate and take informed risks based on promising practices and creative ideas. We fail fast, and learn from that failure as much as from our success." Process improvement and institutional learning is central to the model of continuous quality improvement at LCCC (5.D.2).

More specifically, the Institution has developed a centralized, technology-based system to facilitate the documentation, review, and archiving of continuous improvement efforts. The system, called "Aquila," was described in more detail in 1P2. The Aquila system is center to the processes developed for implementing quality improvement initiatives. Through its planning module, the College has integrated its system for Strategic Plan strategy implementation, monitoring, and archival, as well as for innovation funds projects and assessment planning. Through its program review module, the College has integrated its system for academic program review and is developing a process for non-academic program and service review. Its systematic generation of organizational learning ensures the gradual manifestation of an improvement culture.

Mentioned previously in 1P2 and 4P2, the various processes for conducting planning and program review incorporate teams of individuals in both the management and the monitoring and review of quality improvement projects. This broad involvement, coupled with the technology system to collect and archive quality initiative information, provides a body of knowledge with which the College will continually engage to understand and learn from the various attempts it makes at continuous quality improvement (5.D.2).

Reviewing, reaffirming, and understanding the role and vitality of the AQIP Pathway within the institution

It is the goal of LCCC that the concept of AQIP and focus on it as something the Institution does is eventually replaced with the over-arching concept of continuous quality improvement. Accreditation is important, but, in and of itself, accreditation is an evaluation process that validates how well the Institution is designed and performs in accordance with educational standards and effectiveness in meeting the organization's mission.

To those ends, the College has taken great strides to build a model of continuous quality improvement that exists at the core of the Institution's culture and operations. Through strong processes for assessing effectiveness, planning, and resource allocation, coupled with a vibrant shared governance structure, educational criteria associated with the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation standards, assumed practices, and the continuous improvement elements within the AQIP Pathway are present in the core components of the organization's operations. Where applicable and necessary, a direct focus on AQIP and accreditation is present (such as the work of the Institution in developing this Systems Portfolio), but more important is the establishment of a culture that supports the AQIP Pathway without focusing on AQIP itself. For example, the College's program review is modeled in alignment with the AQIP framework of Process, Results, and Improvements. The College's Innovation Funds Program has aligned its reporting requirements in similar fashion to that of AQIP Action Projects. These are examples, but it is the belief of the College that the evidence presented in this Systems Portfolio clearly demonstrates it has embodied the role of the AQIP Pathway into the Institution.

6R2 What are the results for continuous quality improvement to evidence a culture of quality?

For two years now, the College has openly shared an authentic assessment of the Institution's performance, even when the information presented demonstrates areas in which the Institution does not perform well. At the fall convocations, the President delivers the state of the College address and shares the Institution's report card. Figure 6R2-1 includes the results of the 2013-2014 LCCC Institutional Effectiveness report card. More information about the annual results and presentation of the information can be found on the President's web page.

Figure 6R2-1: LCCC Key Performance Indicators Report Card		
	2012-13	2013-14
Overall Grade:	C	C
Key Effectiveness Indicators		
A. Student Participation and Achievement	C	C
B. Academic Preparation	C	C
C. Transfer Preparation	B	B
D. Workforce Development	B	B
E. Community Development	B	B
Key Efficiency Indicators		
F. Instructional Productivity	B	B
G. Fiscal Stewardship	D	C
H. College Affordability	B	C
I. Campus Climate	B	C

Figure 6R2-1

More information on the results of the College's KPIs and institutional report card can be found on the College's Institutional Research webpage.

Mentioned previously, the College has implemented a Program Analysis and Ranking process to help inform continuous improvement and programmatic health of the Institution's academic programs. The results of the 2012-2013 analysis that were shared with the Institution are displayed in Figure 1R3-2.

These represent two of the most high profile examples of evidence shared and communicated effectively to drive a culture of quality at LCCC.

6I2   Based on 6R2, what improvements to the quality culture have been implemented or will be implemented in the next one to three years?

Two broad areas exist where the College plans to strengthen the quality culture at LCCC. The first is the planned quality improvement initiatives as described in previous sections and categories within this Systems Portfolio. Action and example are believed to be two of the most effective ways to influence culture, and the Institution takes this to heart by fully committing to a cycle of continuous improvement at the highest levels of the organization and within its most critical processes (e.g., strategic planning, budgeting, etc.). Conducting authentic analysis of the College's effectiveness in meeting its mission, planning for improvements to influence those outcomes, and placing resources, including the reallocation of existing ones, into these areas, all enforce and demonstrate the commitment LCCC has to a culture of quality. The more often the Institution honestly moves through this cycle, the stronger the culture of quality will become.

The second area of improvement has also been described in previous sections of this Systems Portfolio, and those pertain to process improvements. While the College has made great strides over the previous few years toward implementing strong processes for different aspects of the Institution's operations that help build and strengthen a culture of quality, others remain to be improved or developed. These include the aforementioned work in developing a comprehensive project management process to aid in the implementation and review of quality initiatives. In addition, the current AQIP Action Project to develop a non-academic program and service review process will further strengthen the use of quality improvement cycles within co-curricular areas at the College. In all areas of LCCC's operations, it is committed to improving processes that build a quality culture grounded in continuous quality improvement.