



Quality Highlights

August 2010

Iowa Lakes Community College is a public, rural, multi-campus institution. Our five-county district covers nearly 2,900 square miles in northwest Iowa with a population of over 69,000 residents. Iowa Lakes, a non-profit institution, was established in 1967 under provision of Chapters 260C and 260D, Code of Iowa. Our mission is *to provide opportunities for quality lifelong learning and promote economic development for our communities.*

Iowa Lakes submitted the [AQIP Systems Portfolio](#) October 31, 2008. The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report was received April 14, 2009. Our onsite Quality Checkup Visit was held September 23-25th, 2009 and received the team findings October, 2009. Below are brief descriptions of new projects piloted or refined since the onsite visit less than a year ago. The pilot projects focus on student success through advising, enhanced student services and meeting the needs of our constituents.

Advising & Adult Student Retention

Advising Informational TV sessions

Six Advising Informational Sessions were held throughout FY10, with an average of 18.5 people per session. Taped sessions have been placed on CD s for future professional development.

Summer Student Advising Pilot

Starting summer 2010, Success Centers on the Emmetsburg, Estherville and Spencer campuses became Success/Advising Centers; providing advising services for students during summer months (July 15 - August 30). The Success/Advising Centers were staffed with two people, from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday through Thursday to advise and help register students during the time most faculty are off contract.

Online Advising

The following activities have been implemented to improve communication and advising with online students:

- Updated acceptance letters to include online registration instructions.
- Added new hyperlinks to Portal/Web Advisor that include: pay tuition online, transcript request, graduation application, etc.
- Established a process to fully utilize the *At-Risk* and *Participation* reports received from ICCOC (Iowa Community College Online Consortium) staff; and implemented a three-phase follow up, via email, to students.
- Surveyed online students to assess satisfaction with our information, processes and customer service in both the Financial Aid and Records and Registration areas. Data has been used to refine services.
- Developed an informational piece for students and parents to encourage students to take higher-level math courses.

Adult Student Retention Plan

With a large influx in dislocated workers and underemployed adults, a series of adult student retention initiatives were developed and implemented. A series of focus group sessions were held to determine adult student's greatest challenges and needs. Based on the feedback received, the following events and services were offered to adult students, ages 25 and older.

- Returning to Learning sessions: informational sessions for those interested in exploring college options.
- College Readiness: a week long program to assist adult students with computer skill development and introduce them to available support services.
- Adult Student luncheons: monthly luncheons held to "support" adult students and allow them to share challenges and best practices with each other.
- Adult student questionnaires: data was collected from adult students identifying the challenges that still remain for them and triumphs they could celebrate.
- Non-trad student blog: a blog developed by an adult student for age non-traditional students for information sharing and communication between other adult students.
- Computer classes: basic computer classes were offered to assist adult students building computer usage skills.
- Workforce Investment / Iowa Workforce Development office presence and collaboration: an Iowa Lakes employee spent two days per month at the WIA / IWD office, assisting dislocated workers with their college search and application process.
- Extended hours offered: Business Office hours were extended on the Estherville and Emmetsburg campuses to assist evening class students.
- Certificate program development: certificates including Payroll & Bookkeeping and Bio Renewable Fuels were developed for adult student enrollment.
- Program informational sessions: program informational sessions were held in the Bio Renewable Fuels area as well as Accounting and Online Education.
- Identify returning dislocated workers in college database for easy tracking, additional services and reporting purposes.

Telepresence

In order to better serve students, a television system interconnects our campuses with two classrooms at each location. The latest version of the technology is over 12-years old and consists of standard (low) definition audio and video. Today's graphic rich computer content is difficult to read when transmitted over the standard definition television circuits. Moreover, many new instructional methods such as content on demand and the ability to invite guest lecturers from anywhere in the world to participate in a class is beyond the capability of our current system.

In order to address these issues, a Telepresence committee consisting of administrators, faculty who teach on the current system and technology staff was formed. The purpose of the

committee is to evaluate new technology available to update our current system and to design a system for Iowa Lakes based on needs of current users; both faculty and students. The committee's design goal is not only to meet the current needs but also to design a system that will be adaptable to new technology without becoming obsolete in a few years.

Among other things, the upgraded system will provide:

- Reduced transmission costs
- Ability to connect to guest speakers anywhere in the world
- Content on demand: the ability to record a class for playback at a later date
- Better student-instructor interaction through immersive technology
- Flexibility to add additional classrooms/capabilities as educational delivery methods evolve

Surveys were conducted with student and faculty users of the existing system. The intent of the surveys is to determine what current users feel are shortcomings of the current system and also to determine what new technologies they would value in an upgraded system. After completing the survey evaluation process, the committee plans to design an RFP and determine a funding source to complete the project.

General Education - Assessment

Iowa Lakes Community College has a stated and supporting position on the importance of general education as follows.

General education is intended to provide breadth of learning to the community college experience. General education imparts common knowledge, promotes intellectual inquiry and stimulates the examination of different perspectives, thus enabling people to function effectively in a complex and changing world.

General education is not exclusively related to a student's technical, vocational or professional field but is a part of a degree or diploma that prepares all students to meet personal, social and lifelong learning needs. (Catalog 2009-2010 p. 10)

Both the Iowa Department of Education interim accreditation visit report (2009), and the Systems Appraisal Feedback report (2009), showed a need for Iowa Lakes to review the college definition of general education, develop and assess general education outcomes for all graduates and outline student assessment practices for direct and indirect measures of student learning.

General Education outcomes and assessment through collaboration has been identified as one of the continuous quality improvement themes. The Chief Academic Officer and campus Deans worked with the Assessment Review Committee to develop an action plan, which includes a review of general education outcomes and assessment at peer institutions, revisit current general education outcomes for Iowa Lakes' programs and consider past and future assessments of general education.

Recent experiences with Math-in-CTE (Career and Technical Education) provide one model for enhanced interaction of Arts & Science and CTE instructors around general education and curricula. Funded through the Iowa Department of Education, faculty in Mathematics, Construction and Agriculture have worked together to develop math-enriched and program-relevant course materials and activities. This model has been proposed for expansion within Iowa Lakes and one potential method to transition (back) to a collegewide consideration of general education outcomes and assessment.

Refining the grad follow-up/ before grad survey process:

A pilot has been put in place to better track alumni and, at the same time, use resources wisely. Previously, alumni and former student surveys were mailed to the last known student mailing address. An online pilot has been tested using last known student email address and an online survey company. Survey return rate increased to 40% and resource usage greatly decreased. A goal of a 5% increase from the previous year has been set.

In addition to the online alumni survey, changes to the Before Graduation Survey are in the works. Previously, this survey was done through program faculty and staff, who may or may not remember to administer or return the surveys. A pilot starting FY11 will move the survey online and as a requirement of applying for graduation. Survey results will be entered into Datatel, allowing for information specific queries and a broader use of the data by more areas of the college. The goal is both a better survey return rate (5%) and better use of the data.

Through the guidance of the Collegewide Improvement Council, consisting of employees from all classifications, processes will continue to be selected for improvement to ensure Iowa Lakes continues to improve and strive for success.