

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

College of DuPage

Glen Ellyn, IL
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Quality Checkup team members:

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Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained, experienced AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification);
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewer(s) trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*. The report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluator(s). Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. A copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

As members of the College of DuPage's 2004 Systems Portfolio Appraisal Team, both members of the Quality Checkup Team had reviewed and responded to the College's 2004 Systems Portfolio. Prior to the Checkup Visit, the Team compared the original 2004 Portfolio with the March 2007 updated version. The Team noted that the Systems Portfolio, Appraisal Feedback Report, and Executive Summary were posted on the College's website.

During the visit, the Team verified and clarified the contents of the Systems Portfolio through discussions with the President, Institutional Effectiveness Council, Leadership Council, Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Assessment, and Portfolio Technical Editor. In addition, the Team met with a number of cross-functional groups that included students, administrators, faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees.

The various College of DuPage (COD) constituency groups agreed that most of the comments presented in the March 2005 Appraisal Feedback Report were accurate. In several instances, however, the original Systems Portfolio lacked sufficient detail or context, or the reviewers' understanding of the information in the Portfolio was incomplete. In some of these cases, the updated Systems Portfolio provided a fuller explanation of the College's processes and results. These additions enabled the Team to conclude that some items in the original Portfolio had been incorrectly labeled as opportunities for improvement. For instance, the Systems Appraisal Report noted declining enrollments in both credit and non-credit courses, but did not find a context for these trends. The Appraisal Feedback Report concluded that declining enrollments were problematic for the College. In discussing the reasons for these declines during the Checkup Visit, the Team gained an understanding of the context for these trends, i.e., conversion from quarters to semesters.

In other instances, the Quality Checkup Team observed that the original Systems Portfolio understated the status of progress at COD. For example, the College had made significant strides toward achieving the goals of its first three AQIP Action Projects that were not apparent in the Portfolio. It is possible that data documenting this progress were not yet available when the original Portfolio was written. The Quality Checkup Team commended the members of the three AQIP Action Project Teams for the comprehensive and significant results of their work over a three-year period.

Alignment of employee reward, recognition and compensation systems with the College's objectives (4P7 in Systems Portfolio) was another area where actual progress exceeded the

achievements documented in the 2004 Portfolio. As a result of discussions with COD faculty and administrators and review of Program Review documents, for example, the Team noted that instructors are expected to identify how their assessment projects link to specific items in Category #1, Helping Students Learn. This and other evidence convinced the Team that the College was making progress in aligning its systems with its mission.

COD has many formal processes and systems in place, including feedback mechanisms to determine its effectiveness. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the College has a process to update its Systems Portfolio continually. The institution demonstrates its support for ongoing documentation of progress in the Systems Portfolio by allocating resources to this effort. These resources include faculty release time for the Portfolio Technical Editor and incorporation of these responsibilities into the position of Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Assessment.

In the judgment of the Quality Checkup Team, COD presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

The Systems Appraisal review team identified one accreditation issue, which was related to Category 1, *Helping Students Learn*:

The team has serious reservations about the definition of General Education learning outcomes at the College. Although some definition has occurred, the COD Portfolio does not define the outcomes for specific programs. While the College uses direct measures for its cognitive outcomes, results shown in the Portfolio do not provide useful information that would be used to "close the loop" and lead to improvements in teaching and learning.

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report noted that "It is unclear whether General Education, as well as program- and course-specific, learning outcomes are consistently and systematically communicated to students." The Report goes on to say that "current assessment measures at the classroom, discipline, and College level are insufficient," and that "the institution should consider expanding the depth and breadth of student learning outcomes assessment

measures.” Heavy reliance on standardized tests that were not specifically designed with a focus on the COD context was one major concern.

Since the 2004 Systems Appraisal, the College has made substantial progress on general education and assessment of student learning outcomes. A 2005 General Education Assessment Task Force, appointed specifically to address the accreditation issue discussed in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, carried out an extensive review of the literature on general education assessment and developed a set of eight criteria or guidelines for establishing a systematic approach to general education outcomes assessment and improvement. At about the same time, the College’s Student Outcomes Assessment Committee published and distributed a booklet that explained assessment concepts and discussed how assessment related to general education learning, improvement, and institutional planning.

Subsequently, a QIP (Quality Improvement Project) Team was chartered and charged with developing recommendations for “a systematic, aligned and congruent approach to general education student learning outcomes.” In a meeting with the QIP Teams, members of the Quality Checkup Team noted that COD faces special challenges in defining campus-wide general education outcomes, because of its mission to offer both transfer and career programs. This dual mission means that the College has no single core curriculum or set of distribution requirements that apply to all students; COD students have widely varying educational needs and goals. At the time of the Quality Checkup Visit, the team’s work was still in progress; it was expected to issue recommendations shortly.

The Quality Checkup Team affirms that the College has taken the necessary steps and is well on its way to defining its general education program. In the Team’s judgment, the institution’s approach to assessing and improving general education outcomes is acceptable and complies with Commission and AQIP expectations. While we encourage the College to continue its work, we believe that this is no longer an accreditation issue. The assessment portion of this issue is addressed further under the first strategic issue below.

Review of the institution’s approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the *Strategic Issues Analysis*.

The College is addressing all six strategic issues identified in the 2004 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report:

1. *Curriculum development and approval process, particularly for programs that respond to local employers' needs. Expansion of assessment approaches beyond indirect measures and standardized tests to yield assessment data that can be used for improvement.*

A QIP Team on the Academic Program Development and Approval Process recently completed a report recommending improvements to the current process. The team addressed such issues as the lack of a consistent college-wide system for new program development, the need for documentation of market needs, communication with the Illinois Community College Board (which must approve proposals for new academic programs), and resource identification and allocation. Under COD's new QIP team model, the team's recommendations will be passed on to a successor team for implementation.

In addition to the work on learning outcomes assessment noted above in the section on accreditation issues, COD has taken other steps to improve its practice of assessment. For example, as part of the College's regular program review process, programs under review now undertake an assessment project focused on a learning outcome important to program faculty. These projects are expected to extend beyond the life of the program review itself. The Quality Checkup Team was provided with a packet of materials on these assessment projects that documented the broad range of assessment questions addressed and assessment approaches used across the College. Questions focused on both learning processes and outcomes, while approaches included a wide variety of assessment methods, including pre- and post-tests, role-plays and interviews, analysis of student portfolios using rubrics, and evaluation of capstone projects by industry professionals, among many others.

The Quality Checkup Team commends the College for its work on enhancing both its assessment approaches and its use of assessment findings for improvement. In particular, we are impressed by the creative use of a required process—program review—as a structure to address assessment concerns. The College should continue to move forward with its assessment initiative and should consider ways of systematically disseminating good work on assessment across the campus.

2. *Alignment of college-wide and unit goals and of short- and long-term goals; alignment of "other distinctive objectives" with substantiated needs and strategic*

planning processes; alignment of employee reward system with stated mission and priorities.

Two years ago, the College implemented a new strategic planning process that has identified major challenges and related goals—e.g., the changing demographics of the College’s service area and needs to serve growing numbers of ESL and under-prepared students; student retention and completion and the need to improve student academic readiness and engagement; alignment issues; valuing people; and others. The goals are encapsulated in the current QIP projects and charges to the QIP teams. For example, one series of QIP teams planned and developed an automated prerequisite checking system, which was scheduled for implementation the week after the Quality Checkup Visit. The new system is part of the College’s strategy for improving student academic readiness. The strategic planning cycle will be aligned with the four-year AQIP cycle by 2009.

Wide participation in the QIP process is one strategy for improving alignment between units and the whole institution. QIP teams are carefully composed of members who represent a cross-section of units and departments, with particular attention paid to collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. At a number of meetings over the course of the Checkup Visit, faculty, administrators, and staff noted much higher levels of collaboration than in the past.

COD administrators agreed somewhat with the observation in the Systems Appraisal Report that the College’s “other distinctive objectives” were not always systematically developed in the past, but noted that those objectives were responsive to community needs. The new strategic planning process has begun to systematize identification of needs and objectives. The College is also working to improve its information systems so that they provide needed data in a more user-friendly and timely way. Administrators noted an abundance of data and a need for more analysis of available data.

Finally, a new merit pay system for administrators will be explicitly coupled to the College’s mission, vision, and goals. As noted earlier in this report, the faculty evaluation process appeared to be more closely aligned with the mission and goals than was evident in the Systems Portfolio. The Checkup Team suggests that the College might review the faculty evaluation process with an eye to linking faculty rewards more explicitly with Helping Students Learn.

3. *Improved communication about the strategic planning process to ensure that all employees, whether full- or part-time, understand the process and their roles in it. Improved communication, collaboration, and morale. Analysis of impact of turnover in the upper administration. Implementation of effectiveness measures for "Leading and Communicating" and of succession planning.*

A QIP team on Valuing People had already been chartered prior to the 2004 Systems Portfolio Appraisal. At a 2004 retreat, the team decided to focus specifically on internal communication, noting that this in itself is a broad issue, ranging from effective use of e-mail to leadership development. The team solicited and received a large number of suggestions for improving communication at the College. Understanding that communication issues are endemic to large institutions, the team focused on how to make information more accessible and determined that communication should be open, honest, frequent, concise, and brief.

A second phase of the QIP project has adopted eight strategies for improving communication. For example, a new Assistant Dean for Communication position will focus on improving communication with part-time faculty, a need identified in the initial Systems Portfolio. The Teaching and Learning Center is helping to teach employees how to use the College's communication processes. In the longer term, the College plans to implement a benchmarking project aimed at helping employees to feel that their work is valued. An advisory committee to the College's Quality Improvement Council will work on improving campus climate and morale through enhanced communication processes. Participation in AQIP and the structure of related teams, committees, and forums has been cross-functional and broadly representative and is helping the College to improve communication.

The current Systems Portfolio outlines a succession process for administrators at the Cabinet level. The Quality Checkup Team encourages the College to continue discussing succession planning for administrators. A strategy that COD might consider is to establish a range of mentoring options for its mid-managers and administrators as a path to upper management. Mentoring approaches could be both formal (encouraging participation in a leadership academy) and informal (hiring a respected retired administrator to mentor specific employees).

4. *Meeting the educational needs of growing numbers of minority and ESL students and of local businesses for employee training and education. Development of marketing strategies and other efforts aimed at achieving enrollment growth.*

Several QIP teams are addressing aspects of this strategic issue. QIP 5 has been a four-stage effort to improve student academic readiness and preparedness through pre-enrollment and pre-course requirements. Successive teams have identified prerequisite high school courses, demonstrated competencies, minimum grade requirements, and minimum placement test scores necessary to document readiness. The registration process has been modified to accommodate the pre-enrollment criteria and automated enforcement of college-level prerequisites was scheduled for implementation the week after the Quality Checkup visit. The fourth phase of this project was development of a College-wide communication plan to ensure that all faculty and staff understood the automated prerequisites process. The effectiveness of this effort has been evaluated throughout.

Another QIP team is working on improving student engagement, focusing on students in learning communities at COD. The team has developed a survey instrument to determine levels of engagement among students enrolled in learning communities and not enrolled in such communities and plans to assess the impact of learning communities on student success, including persistence and retention rates and learning outcomes. The expected outcome of the current phase of the project is a “statistically sound, data-based comparison of the two groups.”

To help meet the needs of local employers for training and education, the College is a key player in a new Alliance for Economic Development in DuPage County, working with area businesses and community agencies to identify and address economic and educational challenges arising from the county’s rapidly changing demographics and the changing global economy. The revised Systems Portfolio notes dramatic increases in the number of businesses provided with technical assistance, as well as in the number of individual employees receiving customized training through the College’s Business and Industry Centers over the past few years. Discussion during the Quality Checkup Visit revealed a need, recognized by the College, to examine its tuition structure for non-credit and credit courses, in order to offer competitive pricing to meet the training needs of area employers.

College administrators also noted that COD is more interested in determining the “right” size for the institution than in maximizing enrollments; College facilities are currently at capacity, and the institution is aiming for sustainability, not growth.

One way to address several aspects of this strategic issue would be to adopt an enrollment management perspective. Such an approach could focus on analyzing ways to ensure that

students experience well-coordinated and seamless processes at the College by removing barriers to their success. Discussions based on enrollment management principles could also result in decisions regarding the optimal size of the institution, marketing strategies to attract specific student groups, and strategies for prioritizing and sustaining key initiatives. These discussions would be a logical fit with the College's quality structure and processes.

In addition, the Quality Checkup Team encourages COP to continue to assess the needs of its increasing population of immigrants and students of color. Many of these are undoubtedly first-generation college students. Given COD's large size, assisting these students in successfully navigating their college experience will be an ongoing challenge.

5. *Lack of a formal process for measuring effectiveness. Performance measures for planning processes. Need for results, historical trend lines, targets, and comparisons for some processes. Centralized, integrated system for collecting, sharing, and interpreting management and student data, and information for improvement. Integration of Continuous Improvement model into the College culture.*

The College has made impressive progress since 2004 in addressing this strategic issue. The Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC), which is responsible for assessing the College's overall effectiveness, has been re-formed; it now comprises 12 members representing classified staff, faculty, and administration. The IEC has developed a formal process for measuring effectiveness and plans to address the need for measures of the system for measuring effectiveness. Currently, it is working on aligning the College's planning processes with the four-year Systems Portfolio/AQIP cycle. The IEC is the working arm of the new Quality Improvement Council (QIC), the official oversight body for the quality initiative at COD. Chaired by the President, the QIC formally charters QIP teams and hears and votes on the recommendations resulting from the teams' work.

The QIP model is an example of how the College has institutionalized AQIP and integrated Continuous Improvement into its culture. Based on experience with its first four AQIP Action Projects, the College modified the AQIP Action Project approach. The initial Action Projects were massive multi-year undertakings. The QIPs, by contrast, take a staged approach to these large initiatives. Typically, the initial QIP gathers data, performs a needs assessment, and formulates recommendations; a second QIP might be responsible for implementation; a third QIP might carry out assessment and/or dissemination of the entire project. Each individual QIP lasts no more than one academic year. Several members carry over from

one QIP to the next related QIP and each QIP has a designated liaison with the QIC to ensure that the project remains on track with the original charter. At a meeting with the QIP teams during the Quality Checkup Visit, team members agreed that the new process is more manageable and effective in ensuring that improvements are identified and implemented. Moreover, the process expands the number of people involved in the College's quality initiative and may increase campus-wide buy-in to the work of the QIPs.

In addition, the College's Systems Portfolio now includes two years' worth of comparative data on performance in several key areas, including student engagement (CCSSE) and employee satisfaction (PACE). Participation in the National Community College Benchmarking Project has enabled additional comparisons of progress with peer institutions. These data have led to further study and to the work of the current QIP team on student engagement through learning communities. A Balanced Scorecard is under development and will provide a single overall view of the College's effectiveness.

Finally, to address concerns expressed in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report about the need for centralized, integrated data management and sharing, the College is converting to the Datatel and Business Intelligence systems. Datatel is a student records system and provides an integrated data warehouse. The system is adding data analysis capabilities that will support Continuous Improvement processes. Business Intelligence provides additional power and utility for information management. Together, the systems will address COD's data needs, ability to set targets for improvement, and capacity to communicate results to appropriate stakeholders. They will offer more user-friendly, on-demand access to data, assist with documenting key processes, support use of the resulting information to encourage knowledge sharing and innovation, and help align data and information with planning processes and priorities.

6. *Full integration of non-academic areas and functions into the culture of the College—e.g., the community cultural center, Continuing Education programs, and the COD Foundation.*

COD is actively engaged in community initiatives, as exemplified by its participation in the Alliance for Economic Development in DuPage County and its extensive work with local businesses. Offerings at its six regional sites are tailored to the needs of their geographic areas; for example, the West Chicago site has a focus on ESL for the Hispanic community in that area, while the Carol Stream site has programs geared to the needs of adult learners.

The College has also increased distance education offerings and is the second largest provider of distance education programming in Illinois. COD's Academic Alternative and Instructional Services unit focuses on alternative program delivery methods.

The COD Foundation is assisting with funding for specific programs, with fund-raising targeted, for example, to health care programs. The opportunity to hire a new Associate Vice President for Community Affairs and Academic Development will be used to strengthen collaborations with the local community and other area higher education institutions and agencies.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

Discussions and review of documents during the Checkup Visit provided ample evidence of the College's strong commitment to quality processes, structures, and systematic improvement.

- The Quality Checkup Team met with the President and the Leadership Council (the President, Cabinet, and leaders from each campus constituency group) several times during the visit. The President articulated a clear understanding of AQIP and a firm commitment to quality improvement. He enthusiastically presided over the closing session of the Quality Checkup Visit, introducing a video about the College's AQIP journey and encouraging participants to celebrate the College's progress in embedding quality in its operations.
- In addition to those staff members with formal responsibility for promoting quality initiatives and structures, the Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Assessment and Portfolio Technical Editor, other champions and supporters of quality are in plentiful supply at COD. In particular, the twelve members of the IEC were knowledgeable and committed to the College's quality initiatives. Over the course of several discussions during the Checkup Visit, IEC members and other College employees offered insightful suggestions and comments about quality at COD. The Quality Checkup Team encourages the IEC to continue discussing identified areas for improvement and refinement, such as the role of QIP liaisons, improvement of QIP charters, and clarification of General Education outcomes.
- COD strives to expand knowledge of quality initiatives across the campus and to involve a large number of faculty, staff, administrators and students. For example, the College

incorporated a review of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report into a faculty development day in Fall 2006. Faculty groups examined comments and opportunities for improvement for each Systems Portfolio category, and submitted ideas for addressing these issues.

The College is using other strategies to increase participation in quality initiatives. One example is the practice of breaking Action Projects into sub-projects (QIPs), which has created an opportunity to involve additional participants for shorter periods of time. Another example is the new program review process, which incorporates quality and Continuous Improvement principles, and is approached as a strategic planning exercise rather than as a compliance activity. While participants are not necessarily aware that they are using “quality” principles, they have begun to see program review as an opportunity for improvement based on data.

Given the size of the institution, it will be an ongoing priority for the College to continue to expand the number of employees who participate in quality initiatives.

- COD demonstrated its commitment to AQIP by hiring a consultant to assist in developing a formal quality structure. As a result, the College created a unique structure and incorporated quality tools and processes into its operations. For example, the role of the QIC is to oversee the College’s quality initiative, and to ensure communication and understanding between the IEC and the Leadership Council. The IEC is a working group with responsibility for assessing the College’s overall effectiveness; its members serve as liaisons to QIP teams. These expectations promote the active involvement of all IEC members with COD’s quality initiative. Rotating terms of service will facilitate the involvement of other faculty, staff and administrators without unduly burdening a small number of employees.
- COD is making noteworthy progress in aligning its quality initiative with other planning processes. The College has created a formal cycle in which Strategic Planning now occurs within the AQIP process. COD has also begun preparing its submission for the Lincoln Award (Illinois award based on Baldrige criteria). Furthermore, the College has undertaken a major effort to harness and effectively utilize its abundance of data, embarking on large-scale projects to migrate to the Datatel information system, implementing Business Intelligence software, reporting its key performance indicators in a Balanced Scorecard format, and participating in the Community College Benchmarking

Project. Implementating these projects and managing institutional change while expanding its quality initiative may present the College with significant challenges to planning, communication, and allocation of human resources.

- COD capitalized on the program review process required by the Illinois Community College Board. The College created a comprehensive program review system that addresses several issues raised in the Appraisal Feedback Report and helps to spread participation in quality efforts to the department level. Areas for further discussion include refinement of the student evaluation tool for individual courses.
- It was apparent to the Quality Checkup Team that the College has incorporated quality tools and processes into its operations. Templates for decision-making, agenda development, and meeting minutes were shared with the Team. Several examples illustrated that COD employees now notice when quality processes and tools are not followed, as an exception to usual practices. These examples support the Team's observation that quality is becoming embedded in the College's daily operations. The Team encourages COD to continue to provide training and reinforce the use of quality principles and tools throughout its operations.
- The Quality Checkup Team observed a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, and pride when results of COD's original three Action Projects were presented. Each of these projects targeted student learning and success.
 - AQIP #1 focused on creating an infrastructure for Developmental Education. The project fostered an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to student learning, building students' capacity for independent learning, rather than pursuing separate strategies for English and Math. It resulted in a Developmental Education mission statement, re-examination of placement cut scores, and improved retention data.
 - AQIP #2 established a comprehensive advising system and led to a wide range of advising strategies and improvements. Given the size of the College, the Quality Checkup Team encourages it to continue its efforts to standardize and communicate the benefits of timely and accurate advising to employees as well as students.

- AQIP #3 targeted the College's relationships with its feeder high schools. Quantitative results of this highly successful initiative were well documented in the original Systems Portfolio. COD has benefited from its efforts to seek input and suggestions from area high school personnel. The project enhanced the College's relationships with area high schools and contributed to COD's increased market share of recent high school graduates.
- After the initial Action Projects were completed, the College implemented a new strategy for chartering, managing, and monitoring its large-scale quality improvement projects. The Team heard progress reports on several current QIPs.
 - QIP #4 was an early example of the College's decision to break large-scale projects into manageable chunks. Its focus on Valuing People through Enhanced Communication is a continuing priority for COD employees. The Quality Checkup Team commends the College for taking formal action on this recommendation from the Appraisal Feedback Report. While the Quality Checkup Team could not draw firm conclusions during its brief visit, comments by employees and students suggest that communication remains a concern for the College.
 - QIP #5A-D provides another example of the College's approach to tackling a comprehensive issue by segmenting it into four units. The project, Improving Student Academic Readiness, resulted in the implementation of automated enforcement of course prerequisites. The project culminated in a new system, which became operational on April 30, 2007. The Quality Checkup Team encourages the College to continue the work of QIP #5D, which focuses on ongoing communication and discussion of the implications of the change to enforced prerequisites.
 - QIP #6 focuses on assessing student engagement and success in learning communities. The QIP team's work could result in a comprehensive analysis of learning communities as a pivotal strategy to increase success and retention among specific student groups, e.g., English Language Learners, first-generation students, and students taking developmental courses.
 - QIP #7A focuses on reviewing General Education Student Learning Outcomes. This project was chartered in response to the Appraisal Feedback Report. The team is examining documents and models that are viable for large colleges with

multiple program missions such as COD. The Quality Checkup Team commends COD for tackling this difficult issue and encourages the QIP team to continue its work in preparation for the College's next AQIP milestone, Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

- QIP #8A focuses on the Academic Program Development and Approval Process, with a goal of creating a clear pathway for new program development and allocation of resources. As an example of process improvement, the QIP team met with the Vice President for Academic Affairs to review and refine its charter. The QIP team created a flowchart and submitted its recommendations to the QIC, per the College's process to monitor the effectiveness of its QIP teams. The Quality Checkup Team commends the members of QIP #8A for their comprehensive response to an identified opportunity for improvement in the Appraisal Feedback Report.

Discussions during the Checkup Visit confirmed that participants in the AQIP and QIP teams and members of the QIC have a commitment to continuous improvement of quality processes and structures. COD's analysis of the benefits and challenges of the recently-implemented QIP process reveals a clear understanding of quality principles and tools. There appears to be consensus that the QIP system for breaking up large projects into manageable units has contributed to a sense of accomplishing goals in a shorter period of time. This structure enables team members to benefit from the knowledge and findings of previous teams, while avoiding myopia or groupthink. Participants commented that the process functions best when some members continue to serve on subsequent teams, when charters are very specific about expected outcomes, and when communication is ongoing. The Quality Checkup Team commends the AQIP and QIP participants for their hard work and insightful analyses, and encourages them to continue to discuss and refine their processes and structures.

USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions)

The Quality Checkup Team spoke with the College's Director of Financial Aid to verify the institution's default rate. The College participates in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), including both the Stafford Loan Program for students and the PLUS Loan Program

for parents. Each year the U.S. Department of Education calculates a cohort default rate for loans made to students while attending COD. The cohort default rates for the past five years are:

COD DEFAULT RATE HISTORY				
<u>FY2001</u>	<u>FY2002</u>	<u>FY2003</u>	<u>FY2004</u>	<u>FY2005</u> <u>(draft)</u>
9.5%	13.1%	17.4%	16.7%	12.4%

A FFELP default rate can affect an institution's eligibility to participate in federal financial aid programs. Participation is affected if the default rate exceeds 25 percent for three consecutive years. The Director of Financial Aid noted that the College's default rate is of concern and that it has implemented several default prevention efforts, including loan counseling and financial education.

Current efforts to address default prevention include the following:

- Information provided at new student orientation on the process of applying, as well as the impact and obligation of various types of aid.
- Active confirmation requirement for students offered loans as part of their aid package.
- Counseling provided to students to understand their rights and responsibilities prior to and once they become borrowers.
- Continued reminders of loan obligations and estimated repayment requirements. As students progress academically and begin to reach borrowing limits, a Debt Management statement is sent as an alert that requires the student to meet with a Counselor/Advisor for educational planning.
- Restriction of the amount students can borrow each semester to one-half the amount of their annual loan limit.
- Review of an optional course offered by the college for credit (EDUC1115) for possible inclusion of information on financial planning and debt management.
- Loan repayment and deferment information provided as students complete exit counseling to insure their familiarity with next steps.

- Planned information sessions on financial planning and debt management to be offered throughout the academic year in conjunction with Student Government, the state guarantor, and lenders.

In the judgment of the Quality Checkup Team, COD presented satisfactory evidence of a five-year history of student loan default rates that is within the acceptable guidelines set by the USDE and, therefore, met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The College's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations. The relevant data and information contained in the College's Federal Compliance Material Packet was sent to the team in advance of the Checkup Visit and provided clear and concise responses to the compliance requirements.

Compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

The institution's approach to Third Party Comment was to place the following notice in the local newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, on March 16, 2007.

On April 16, 2007, the Quality Checkup Team received a memorandum indicating that the Commission had received no third party comments.

The institution also created an AQIP icon on the homepage of the College website, which provides public access to extensive information about the Quality Checkup Visit, as well as the College's quality initiatives.

At the Open Forum during the Quality Checkup Visit, a student submitted a packet of materials concerning COD's operations. The Team reviewed the materials and forwarded them to the Higher Learning Commission. The Commission will follow its complaint process in investigating the issue.

In the Quality Checkup Team's judgment, COD presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The methods utilized by COD are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

COD provided evidence of well documented systems of approval for its credits, program length, and tuition. The institution's standards for offering college credit and awarding degrees are based on regulations set forth by the Illinois Community College Board. COD offers Fall and Spring Semester courses in a 15-week format with a 16th week exam period. Classes include 50 minutes of instruction per credit for 15 weeks, equaling 750 minutes, plus a two-hour exam.

COD offers seven associate's degrees. The College follows a statewide practice of requiring a minimum of 64 academic credits for an associate's degree. In order to earn an associate's degree students must complete 20 credits of course work at COD, earn a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 and meet the "Constitution" requirement.

The College also offers numerous certificate programs, which generally require 30 to 32 credits and are often found in their counterpart Associate of Arts and Science degree programs.

Tuition at COD is calculated based on course credit hours and is comparable to other community colleges within the immediate area.

COD Tuition Rates for Fall 2006:

- Resident \$ 96.00 per credit hour
- Non-Resident \$ 142.00 per credit hour
- Out of State \$ 202.00 per credit hour

In the Quality Checkup Team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, *Advertising and Recruitment Materials*

COD made samples of its advertising and recruitment materials available to the Quality Checkup Team. The Team reviewed a number of publications that the College uses to promote its programs and recruit students, including a new edition of the college catalog, 2007-09. After discussion with the Director of Public Information about the College's approach to advertising and recruitment materials, the team determined that COD presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy III.A.1, *Professional Accreditation*, and III.A.3, *Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation*

COD provided evidence of its affiliation and accreditation history with the Higher Learning Commission. In addition, the College provided evidence of accreditation for six programs:

- Automotive Technology—National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)
- Diagnostic Medical Imaging Nuclear Medicine—American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (AART) and Nuclear Medicine Technologist Certification Board (NMTCB)
- Diagnostic Medical Imaging Radiography—Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology
- Health Information Technology—Commission on Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM)
- Occupational Therapy Assistant – Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
- Physical Therapist Assistant—Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)

The College's programs are all in good standing with their respective accreditation agencies.

COD does not hold dual institutional accreditation.

In the Quality Checkup Team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.4, *Organizational Records of Student Complaints*

COD has developed a process to monitor the number of student complaints, their nature, and the actions taken for resolution. The procedure is published in several places, including the college catalog and website. A flowchart and examples of the process were provided to the Quality Checkup Team. By using a formal process housed in the Dean of Students' Office, the institution is able to generate a student complaint summary report. The reports are monitored each semester to track trends and identify areas for improvement. In most cases, issues are resolved before becoming formal complaints. Information is distributed to academic

administrators and other appropriate areas within the College for action and process improvement.

In the Quality Checkup Team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Other USDE compliance-related issues

Over the past several years, the College has undergone a variety of financial aid program reviews and audits. The State of Illinois performed a compliance review of state and federal financial aid programs for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years. The state acts as the reviewing entity for the applicable federal programs and reports accordingly. During the course of this review, two minor administrative issues were noted and identified as isolated instances, and closed without necessary response or further action.

The College's annual external audit reviews Title IV compliance. No audit exceptions were noted for the 2004-2005 academic year. One exception was noted for the 2005-2006 academic year and was reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education. The Director of Financial Aid explained that the College had missed the 30-day deadline for Federal Title IV return of funds. The Department of Education's final audit determination indicated that the institution's corrective action would alleviate the procedural issue.

The Quality Checkup Team determined that College of DuPage presented satisfactory evidence of compliance with Title IV regulations. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Other AQIP issues (specify)

COD stakeholders, including students, shared very positive perceptions of the College's role as a major educational provider in the region. Moreover, the College is viewed as a key participant in an emerging economic alliance, as well as a local center for the performing arts. COD is in the midst of large-scale construction projects, yet there appeared to be no major disruption of operations.

Given its large size, the College has placed a high priority on creating a welcoming environment. One example is the recent upgrading of a main parking lot, which included

extensive and attractive landscaping. Another example is the opening of a coffee shop in a highly visible corner of the Library, and the librarians' willingness to allow students to bring some beverages into the Library.

The student leaders who spoke with the Quality Checkup Team held the College and its faculty in high regard, and named the Honors Program and co-curricular activities as especially noteworthy in retaining students and providing meaningful learning experiences. At the same time, the students also commented that some aspects of College operations seem overly bureaucratic, even resulting in competition, rather than cooperation, among some offices. The students noted that COD can be challenging to navigate unless a student is self-sufficient and highly motivated. They recommended that the College continue to refine and promote its academic advising resources.

The Quality Checkup Team appreciated the warm hospitality and well-organized structure of the Checkup Visit, as well as the active engagement of faculty, staff and administrators in the various discussion sessions. It was particularly helpful to start the visit by meeting with the Quality Improvement Council during an informal lunch. The Team was also very impressed with the closing event and celebration, which was open to all employees and students. The presentations were also available to employees at their desks through web-streaming. A short video provided a humorous and informative account of the College's AQIP journey. The Team encourages COD to continue to celebrate its AQIP milestones and achievements in these and other creative ways.

**Table 1: Participation by College of DuPage Stakeholders at the
 Quality Checkup Visit Sessions, April 25-27, 2007**

Day	Session	Number of Participants
1	Welcome Lunch, Introductions and Overview of Visit	27
	Federal Compliance Review	8
	Discussion of Quality at College of DuPage	17
	Status of Systems Appraisal Feedback Report Follow-up on O's and OO's	9
	Follow-up on General Education Accreditation Issue from Appraisal Report	8
	Dinner with Board of Trustees to Discuss Quality at College of DuPage	12
2	Discussion of Completed Action Projects	32
	Review Alignment of Quality with Academic/Student Affairs Strategic Plan	16
	Discuss Progress on Updating the Systems Portfolio	5
	Review Status of Active Quality Improvement Projects	33
	Conversation with Student Leaders	11
	Open Forum with faculty, staff, administrators and student	23
	Discussion with Previous AQIP Liaison to HLC of Historical Context	5
	Discussion of Standardized Testing on General Education Outcomes	5
3	Review Findings with President and Cabinet	17
	Share Impressions and Findings with All College Stakeholders	62