

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Central New Mexico Community College

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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) or staff 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). Up-to-date, complete information about Quality Checkup preparation, procedures, and related information in the *Quality Checkup Visit Guide* available for download from the AQIP website at www.AQIP.org.

Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. Additionally, 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 the institution's Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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

In the 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.

The portfolio appraisal team had concerns with the shortage of data-based results and the lack of specificity in Central New Mexico Community College's (CNM) portfolio. The Checkup visit revealed that the portfolio did not adequately portray the complexity and thoroughness of CNM's processes and systems. In short, CNM is much farther along in its continuous improvement journey than what was reflected in the portfolio. For example, institutional research personnel not only collect and evaluate a wide range of data, they also are actively involved with other CNM personnel in applying that data for daily use and planning. Quality improvement is firmly imbedded in the CNM institutional culture; data is being collected, evaluated, and utilized in decision-making; and processes and systems are functioning which support the institutional mission and operations.

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

In the 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.

There were no accreditation issues identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report of October 2005.

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

In the 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.

The Checkup visit team was impressed with the high level of attention CNM personnel have paid to the Strategic Issues identified by the portfolio appraisal team. One concern was that the writer of the institutional responses to the Strategic Issues fell short of adequately describing the full extent of the College's good work. This concern is epitomized by one phrase used in response to the Strategic Issue of preparing students to live in a diverse world, as expressed in item 1C4. The writer's response was that *The College will continue to strive to improve efforts to prepare students to live in a diverse world.* That response neither addresses the concern of the Strategic Issue nor describes what NCM is doing in that venue.

The visit revealed that members of the College are intrusive in involving students in meaningful internships and volunteer service to their community, a very active Skills USA organization provides national experiences, and the College's diverse student body is both internally and externally interactive, all of which provide enriching experiences for a diverse world.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

In the 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.

Central New Mexico Community College presented a wide array of documentation that it is committed to systematic quality improvement. In the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, one of the areas that is consistently identified across Categories as an "opportunity" is that of data identification, gathering, analysis, and use in decision-making. Prior to our visit, the College highlighted their attention to this issue in their Summary Report. They responded to the Systems Appraisal team's concerns over results and improvement items with extensive data and descriptions of processes, for example, describing the college-wide core competencies and how they are measured in the response to 1R2 and defining the process used to determine the creation of new programs and closing of ineffective programs in their response to IR3. During the visit, the College supported their responses to these and other opportunity items through data demonstrations, open forums with faculty and staff, and conversations with students.

The team received two third-party comments prior to the visit. One of these comments had to do with a concern over the provision of data to faculty who are working on measuring student success in learning. During the visit, the team visited with the Student Academic Achievement Committee (SAAC). During this meeting, the team viewed presentations by program faculty on the data they are using for measuring student success. The team also talked with the staff member from the Planning and Research Department who has been assigned to the committee to help with data acquisition and analysis. The team was impressed with the use of data in assessing student learning. The College has many best practices programs that can provide models for the slower adapters at the institution.

The second third-party comment dealt with the failure of CNM to choose "Communication" as one of its Action Projects. The College was aware of campus concern with communication as an Action Project and had already responded to this concern by imbedding communication in each of the new Action Projects. The visiting team also talked with administration about finding new ways to communicate with the faculty union as well as with faculty senate. The response to this conversation was very positive.

These are just a few of the areas in which CNM demonstrated that it has quality improvement processes in place and that these processes are used, reviewed, and revised as needed to move forward on the quality journey.

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

In the 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.

Of particular note is a trending down in CNM's default rates as a result of implemented improvements in its financial aid processes: 2002 – 7.6%; 2003 – 7.0%; and 2004 3.6%.

Other Title IV compliance issues

In the 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 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

In the 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.

CNM uses semester hours as the basic measure of its learning experiences. CNM operates on a three-term academic year. Divisions in the academic affairs area identified programs that were over 72 credit hours and made an effort to reduce the credit hours in an associate degree to 64 – 66 credit hours, but no more than 72 credit hours for the 2006-07 catalog. Degree programs that remain over 72 credit hours have been encouraged to reduce the credit hours by the next catalog.

The tuition at CNM varies by program and by residency. Tuition for liberal arts courses is \$41.40 per credit hour for New Mexico residents, \$49.90 per credit hour for New Mexico residents outside the CNM District, and \$220.70 for non-New Mexico Residents. Career and technical courses (up to 18 credits per term) have no tuition fees. All students pay a \$40 registration fee each term. The detail for tuition and fees appears on page 20 of the 2006-07 CNM catalog. Book fees vary by course.

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

In the 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.

CNM is in the process of aligning all of its advertising and recruitment materials with Commission policy. When referring to an affiliation with the Commission, the College makes a serious attempt to include the Commission's address and phone number. The College provides its contact information so students and other stakeholders know how to reach them.

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

In the 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.

In relation to Commission policy III.A.1, Professional Accreditation, the institution has not received any adverse actions taken by professional accreditation agencies. In relation to Commission policy III.A.3, Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation, when CNM seeks or holds affiliation with the Commission and with another CHEA or federally-recognized institutional accrediting body, it describes itself in identical terms to both associations with regard to purpose, governance, programs, sites, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents. CMN uses centralized and institutional data from the CNM Planning, Budget, and Institutional Research Office. At this time, other accrediting bodies have not taken adverse actions against the institution.

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

In the 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.

The College has a student complaint process that can be accessed by using the complaint form which is available online (http://planet.tvi.edu/Student_Complaint/Index) or from the Dean of Students. The complaint process was improved upon by the Human Resource Process Team that researched the process, established complaint definitions, created a new process from the initial written student complaint to the response from the appropriate college division to the recording of the complaint and its resolution, and communicated the process to students and

the rest of the college community. The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs tracks the student complaint data for the written complaint process. The student may also go directly to the Dean of Students to discuss complaints. According to the Dean of Students, most of the verbal or written complaints are resolved at the point the student contacts the Dean of Students.

Other USDE compliance-related issues (specify)

In the 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 AQIP issues

In the course of preparing for the Checkup visit, the visit team and institutional representatives settled on the key issues on which the visit would be based: HLC and USDE compliance, the upcoming administrative transition, use of data, assessment, student learning support services, and communication. Compliance issues and the use of data are addressed elsewhere in this report.

Administrative Transition: The visit team was aware that CNM's president will be retiring in June. The team learned on arrival that in addition to the president, there are openings for the vice president for academic affairs and several deans. The visit revealed that these openings are characterized at CNM by one concept: opportunity. There is very little, if any, trepidation about leadership for the future. As one faculty member put it, "Regardless of what happens with these positions, the day-to-day work in the classroom and support of classroom activities will continue on its present course." The current president has set the stage for the incoming president to continue the College on its improvement journey. As the result of openings, CNM has already played some musical chairs and filled openings with capable internal personnel. Processes for filling available openings are under way, and there is every indication that those positions will be filled according to appropriate CNM processes.

Assessment: CNM personnel have identified five academic core competencies for all students. In addition, each academic division has identified its own core competencies. The College Student Academic Achievement Committee (SAAC) has documented how those core competencies are being used to assess student learning, and where departments are in the data-for-decision-making journey. Faculty are integrating the competencies, right down to how individual class assignments are made to address individual competencies. Institutional research staff are integrally involved in the development and application of assessment instruments and consistent rubrics, and internal best practices are shared with those departments just starting their own journeys.

Support Services: Experiential learning, internships, student service on internal committees, and Skills USA are imbedded in the CNM culture to the point that personnel are intrusive in the lives of students to get those students to take advantage of those opportunities. Traditional student service functions are well in place, as well as a centralized advising service which includes financial aid. In addition, CNM has employed full-time Achievement Coaches who serve as personal and academic guides for those students in need of such services. Consequently, CNM is truly providing life altering experiences for its students.

Communication: CNM's communication issues are not unique, but they are nonetheless real. In some ways, their communication processes contribute to the issue: there is so much information provided in the formal processes that personnel have become selective in what they access. Consequently, though information is sent, it may not be received, creating a communication breakdown. Like their leadership transition, the communication issue is seen as a golden opportunity to get better. Commitment has been made to have more personal, face-to-face discussions in lieu of emails, and the issue has been imbedded in the College's current Action Projects.

In conclusion, this was a very pleasant and encouraging visit. From the portfolio, we expected more issues. Instead, we found processes and systems firmly in place and competent, enthusiastic people throughout the College. The students were a real joy to visit with because of their appreciation for the CNM experience. CNM is truly changing lives in a positive direction. The new president and academic vice president have a real opportunity to lead a college which is ready to be a premiere community college not only in New Mexico, but also the United States.