

Category Improvement Worksheet—Creating the Climate for Continuous Learning

Complete this worksheet and email it as a .doc or .pdf electronic file to AQIP before the Strategy Forum Homework Deadline. The boxes will expand to fit whatever you write. Questions? Call AQIP at 800-621-7440.

Institution: Concordia University Chicago	City & State: River Forest, IL
Identify one AQIP Category that your institution would like to target for focused improvement (in the form of a campaign consisting of one or more Action Projects). Category 3 - Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	
Within this Category, identify a significant challenge — one or two processes or performance results data that you consider targets for change. 3P3 – How do you analyze the changing needs of your key stakeholder groups and select course of action regarding these needs? 3R3 – What are your performance results for building relationships with your students?	
Which specific <i>opportunities for improvement</i> (identified as O or OO in your Systems Appraisal) are core to this challenge? Designing and implementing a systematic process for analyzing data and using the results to make decisions. We currently carry out this process in some areas of the university but are not consistent across units and colleges.	
What feedback from other external sources (consultant reports, other accreditation reports, research studies, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution? Feedback from Noel-Levitz, our consultants on retention and enrollment planning, indicate we need a systematic process for assessment; NCATE, other specialty professional associations and the State of Illinois require consistent assessment, analysis and decision-making for accrediting our education programs; other accrediting agencies also require consistent assessment (CACREP and NASM for our counseling and music programs); we submit yearly a report to the Concordia University System that requires assessment information; and systematic process is needed to effectively use the normative data we collect with NSSE and BSSE (FSSE which we are scheduled to use in the near future).	
What feedback from internal sources (performance results data, complaints, system breakdowns, etc.) reinforce your conclusion that this Category represents a key challenge for your institution? Internal sources that indicate this Category is a challenge for CUC include: the AQIP Steering Committee as we worked on updating our Systems Portfolio; discussions with Faculty Senate and Staff Council; feedback collected at recent student, faculty and staff forums; climate surveys completed by students, faculty and staff; exit surveys by our graduate cohort students as they completed their programs; withdrawal surveys completed by undergraduates leaving CUC; admission surveys completed by undergraduate students that did and did not enroll at CUC; a recent alumni survey; feedback from our Student Leadership Council and Advisory Councils (parents and president's council); a yearly report on placement by Career Services; and the Strategic Enrollment Planning Steering Committee and Council. All these areas require consistent assessment to understand the needs of the students and key stakeholders. To effectively use the data collected from the various internal sources coordination and dissemination is required. Our systematic process needs to be more than collecting data (which we do quite well) but we need to analyze the data, make decisions based on the data, report the findings and the decisions made and then evaluate the effectiveness of the changes made.	
When did you become aware of the need to develop a strategy to address this challenge? What is stimulating you to confront it now? Our desire for continuous improvement in the area of assessment, as displayed in our updated Systems Portfolio, is driving our decision to tackle this challenge now. In addition, the extensive assessment process needed to complete the reports for our Fall 2010 NCATE accreditation visit is also stimulating us to confront the challenge, as well as the current Strategic Enrollment Planning process initiated by our	

president in December of 2009. Finally, our retention and graduation rates are lower than our target goals as stated in CUC's Strategic Plan. These are two critical rates for any institution of higher learning. To address the rates we will need to systematically assess the situation.

Which specific needs of your students, other external stakeholders, faculty, or staff could you meet better if you addressed this challenge? How?

When we improve our ability to systematically assess critical data, make decisions based on the analysis of the data, communicate the decisions made, and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes we will be able to meet the following specific needs of our stakeholders: improve retention and graduation rates; respond to student, faculty and staff initiatives; increase the engagement of our minority students; offer better resources (academic, social, personal, spiritual and emotional) for all students but especially for our growing under-represented population; engage students and faculty with learning opportunities that extend outside of the classroom but also support the classroom learning; and support our nontraditional and commuting students.

How might addressing this challenge change or strengthen your institution's quality culture and infrastructure?

Increasing the engagement of students, staff and faculty, will result in a more vibrant institution and energetic campus. As the systematic process of assessment is developed across the university, more people will be involved and a culture of continuous improvement will develop. Students, staff and faculty will feel appreciated and take more action as they are better informed about the data, analyses, and decisions made.

What enthusiasm and support exists among your leadership and employees for addressing this challenge now?

The institution has invested a considerable amount of financial resources (money and people) in online assessment (OA) through Blackboard this academic year. Also the Strategic Enrollment Planning process is involving 30 faculty, staff and administrators on the Steering Committee and Council as well as in the past few weeks 12 SWOT analyses were completed on campus. We also in the last month have publically announced a comprehensive campaign for the university which is building interest, enthusiasm and energy with the students, faculty and staff. Finally the overall Strategic Plan for CUC is supported by the Board of Regents, administration, faculty and staff.

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

3P1 and 3P2 – We have developed personal, electronic, and consultative means of identifying student needs with faculty involvement. Data collection was not a strength of CUC when we completed our first Systems Portfolio. Our second Systems Portfolio demonstrated our improvement at collecting data but not the systematic process that we need for our university.

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

During the 2009-2010 academic year we have identified six different potential Action Projects that might address this challenge.

Online assessment for the entire university but developing through steps.

Meeting the needs of our growing diverse student body through faculty and staff development.

Recruiting minority faculty and staff.

Instituting a reading entrance test and developing resources to assist our students in this area.

Developing additional academic resources for our entire student body (graduate students, undergraduate students, and nontraditional students). Supplemental instruction and counseling services are resources that need to be reviewed.

Evaluating the distinctive objectives of the University.