

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Moraine Park Technical 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. 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*

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 would benefit from reviewing its responses to the Category questions with a critical eye aimed at direct, cogent, and specific answers that accurately describe the College activity related to that question. The Visit Team shared the views of the Portfolio Appraisal Team in that it initially had concerns about the shortage of data-based results and the generality of the responses both in the Portfolio and the Appraisal Update. College personnel are doing truly amazing and inspiring quality-improvement work that addresses the Category questions. However, the context, processes, results, and improvements of that work is not always reflected in the narrative of the Portfolio or the Update.

For example, the Portfolio appraisal identified leadership succession as an issue in 5P8. The Appraisal Update includes a response to that issue, but falls short of clarifying the real work that has been accomplished in the issue and the fact that the College is actually responding to the issue in a manner which exceeds the scope of actual leadership succession. As part of the institutional Vision One initiative, the MPTC HR unit has forwarded Leadership Succession to the College Planning and Leadership Team as a focus strategy. Resources have been committed to address not only the issue of leadership succession, but the entire scope of position description, performance evaluation, and future staffing needs.

During the course of the Quality Visit, MPTC personnel provided examples and documentation which answered and verified the questions of the Visit Team regarding the Portfolio appraisal and update. Perhaps the most significant focus of the institution is their ongoing drive to truly become and remain a data-driven decision-making college. They have made a significant investment in transitioning their data system to PeopleSoft. Much of their work prior to the creation of their Portfolio was in the selection of and conversion to PeopleSoft. That work continues and holds high potential for meeting the College's desire for data to drive its decision-making processes.

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 of 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 Visit Team was provided in advance of the Quality Checkup Visit the complete documentation of the changes to the Systems Portfolio that responded to the comments and recommendations of the Systems Portfolio Appraisal. The Visit Team was impressed with the high level of attention MPTC personnel paid to the Strategic Issues identified by the portfolio appraisal team. That perception is based in part on the changes to the Systems Portfolio and in part on the conversations with the staff of the College during the Checkup visit. The Systems Appraisal cited the College in a number of Categories for lack of results. It was the observation of the Visit Team that the College had in fact gathered and analyzed data to report on the College's effectiveness for many areas. In fact, large poster boards with graphics illustrating the College's performance on the most important strategic goals were on display in public locations throughout the campus. Furthermore, when asked to provide examples of strategies that focus on improving the targeted results, College personnel cited several explicit and relevant examples. MPTC is currently in the middle of a transition from a legacy student information system to PeopleSoft. Thus, the trend results that would clarify the progress the College has made with its implementations relative to the Systems Appraisal were not available in some cases. However, the Visit allowed the Team to get a more comprehensive view of the extent to which MPTC is applying the principles of quality improvement and having public and transparent evidence of their goals, targets, and available results. It is the opinion of the Visit Team that the College has processes, results and improvements in place. The documentation

as provided by the revisions to the Systems Portfolio continued to provide less than concise descriptions of the College's impressive response to the Strategic Issues Analysis.

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.

Principles and practices for quality improvement are firmly embedded in the College operations and culture. MPTC has in fact a long tradition of continuous improvement practices, and there was clear evidence that many employees embraced the framework. There was some concern expressed by some faculty that they were not adequately involved in new initiatives, notably the determination of the Action Projects, but the Visit Team found evidence of opportunity for involvement in and information about the process.

The institution of the Quality Council and the College Planning Leadership Team were recent structural changes that demonstrated the centrality of continuous quality improvement and institutional planning to the College. The Quality Council was perceived by all constituents as having great promise for the College's continuing focus on quality improvement. The fact that 34 members of the faculty and staff stood for election to the Council is clear evidence of the widespread interest in and commitment to quality improvement. A significant number of new initiatives or process changes have occurred during the past two years, which also corresponds to the change in Presidential leadership. For whatever reason, there was ample evidence of MPTC's commitment to be a data-driven and quality-focused institution.

One example of using evidence to improve is the revision to the assessment of student learning at the program level. After a three-year effort at requiring all programs to use portfolio assessment, the College had evidence that the portfolio assessment model, although very effective and appropriate for some programs, was less so and even inappropriate for others. Thus the College changed its policy regarding assessment to allow programs to select from a menu of options, including portfolio, capstone, and competency checklist and rubrics.

The College's planning process is focused on the identified priority goals and specific annual targets relative to those goals. The participation of two Board of Trustee members in several of the Visit Team meetings demonstrated the Board's support for the direction of the College.

There were no third-party comments prior to the visit.

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.

MPTC's approach to its default rate is not only acceptable, it is exemplary and should be used as a Best Practice. MPTC Student Financial Partners (financial aid staff) continually (from the initial discussion of financial assistance available to program completion) provide information to educate student borrowers concerning their repayment responsibilities. Once payment is due, the Partners send weekly letters to the borrower clarifying the borrower's repayment status and responsibility. This effort has resulted in a 1.7 percent default rate.

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.

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.

MPTC is in compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2 by including HLC affiliation information in its primary marketing materials.

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.

Relative to Commission policy III.A.1, Professional Accreditation, there have been no adverse actions taken by professional accreditation agencies against MPTC. Regarding Commission policy iii.A.3, Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation, MPTC holds only HLC Accreditation.

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 MPTC Registrar has the primary responsibility for collecting and addressing student complaints. He has created a Complaints Log which records both "official" and "unofficial" complaints. Official student complaints are those that the student will "own" by filing a signed complaint form. The College then has an established process for the Registrar to follow in addressing official complaints. That process for each complaint is documented in the Log. Unofficial complaints are those that are made without being owned and are generally of a nature that the Registrar can address them or delegate them and have them resolved with relative ease. Process resolutions for these complaints are not documented in the Log.

Other USDE compliance-related 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.

Other AQIP issues

The College self-identified in its Portfolio a Category 3 issue: that it needed to improve its processes with one of its key stakeholder groups – its alumni. Subsequent to the Portfolio appraisal, MPTC has initiated a major marketing effort aimed at establishing and maintaining an ongoing relationship with its alumni. MPTC alums are a fluid group, but the fact that 90+ percent of its program alumni remain in Wisconsin is a major factor in the College's ability to maintain contact.

The Visit Team encountered a Category 5 issue when visiting with faculty representatives: that College leaders needed to improve communication with the faculty about AQIP Action Projects. Communication is a universal issue, and by its very definition a two-way process. Information concerning the College's entire approach to quality improvement and its AQIP activities are posted on the institutional intranet, called Park Place. Park Place has been established as the official internal communication for the College and has been in place for almost five years. Use of Park Place relies on the willingness of individuals to avail themselves of that information.

Additionally, the Visit Team discovered that institutional leadership and faculty union representatives do not meet on an ongoing basis; they did previously, but those meetings were discontinued by the union representation. Decisions that have been made regarding institutional hierarchy in the last two to three years have created a perceived atmosphere of fear, distrust, and lack of ownership by the faculty in some areas. It would be unfortunate if that perceived atmosphere was allowed to affect all the good work that has been done and serve as a roadblock to future accomplishments. There is just too much positive action waiting in the institutional pipeline to have it hindered by fear and distrust that appears to be largely the result of a lack of face-to-face communication and understanding. The Visit Team encourages institutional leadership and faculty representatives to meet regularly to discuss institutional processes, day to day operations, issues of concern, or just the weather in order to maintain

personal touch with each other. The objective of these discussions is to offset any fear, mistrust, or lack of ownership that currently exists.

MPTC is encouraged to revisit the college-wide core abilities to determine if those abilities continue to be appropriate for their students and programs.

MPTC is encouraged to revisit the strategy for assessing core abilities, currently a comparison of student self -assessment of their performance on the core abilities at entrance and exit of programs. This strategy has too many problems with validity, reliability, and quality of data to provide meaningful results. A more comprehensive and objective assessment of the college-wide core abilities would provide the kind of information to inform the curriculum and instruction.

MPTC has instituted changes to the quality review process (program review) to separate reporting into two views, program viability and program quality. This is another example of using results to make improvements. It will be important for the College to track results to examine whether that change produces the intended results.

MPTC is encouraged to review the process for hiring of call staff to ensure that the most qualified candidates are selected and to consider changing the name “call staff,” which implies something other than the significant role temporary part-time faculty play in two-year colleges.

The College is commended for initiating a more intentional and comprehensive method of addressing the level of preparation of their students for the curriculum. It would be expected that improvement in retention and graduation rates should result. The Team urges the College to carefully consider the placement testing process to ensure that it is a process that is efficient and effective and that the important work of developing curriculum to address student learning gaps receives paramount attention. The College is commended for its recent Title III award and for incorporating the concerns about student preparation for the curriculum and the quality of student learning into a major new initiative.

The College is encouraged to engage in a college-wide conversation about the issues to address in the next set of Action Projects. Some faculty expressed concern that the current Action Projects were oriented to operational issues and not student success. Although the Visit Team understood the necessity of addressing the operational issues, we agree with the desire for a broad participation in the process leading up to the selection of Action Projects.