

Criterion 8: Planning Continuous Improvement
Core Values: Commitment, Excellence, Accountability
Strategic Plan Goals 1, 2, and 3: Enhance, Strengthen, and Advance Teaching and Learning, Collaborative Relationships, and Institutional Operations

8C1 Institution’s vision

With the adoption of AQIP in 2001, Richland Community College has begun the process of shifting all planning to a continuous improvement process by infusing the 9 AQIP criteria into its student-centered work. This has been a slow, challenging trek but one that the College administration, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees have embraced.

In the last three years, over 75% of the College community has been trained in Continuous Improvement, and the staff and faculty have used the concepts, tools, and tactics to develop the Strategic Plan, to change the committee structure to a participative, stakeholder-driven model, and to modify, strengthen, and implement other important planning documents. As a part of this process, the Board of Trustees adopted a new vision for RCC in Fall 2003: *To be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships, and economic development.*

This vision reflects the general mission of an Illinois community college as well as offers specific goals for RCC. It allows RCC to enhance its current high quality credit and noncredit programming and explore new possibilities for training and education with all categories of stakeholders in the RCC District. Faculty, staff, and administrators can work with advisory groups, community organizations, transfer colleges and universities, and other community colleges to meet the needs of students, businesses and industries. The Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and other planning activities can be connected to the vision as well as to the mission.

8C2 Short- and long-term strategies

The 3 primary goals of the current strategic plan are to **enhance, strengthen, and advance teaching and learning, collaborative relationships, and institutional operations**. For each goal, stakeholders at all levels have developed subgoals and strategies that relate to all areas of the College. The following table outlines the general strategies for each goal, with the appropriate AQIP criterion and RCC Core Values also indicated:

Goal 1: To Enhance, Strengthen, and Advance Teaching and Learning

Strategies	AQIP Criteria and RCC Core Values
Increasing College Preparedness	Helping Students Learn (1), Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs (3) <i>Excellence, Accountability</i>
Maintaining or Increasing Retention and Persistence	1, Planning Continuous Improvement (8) <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Improving Academic Effectiveness	1, 3, 8, <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>
Increasing Community Education and Services	1, 3, Building Collaborative Relationships (9), Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives (2)

	<i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Diversity</i>
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Goal 2: To Enhance, Strengthen, and Advance Collaborative Relationships

Strategies	AQIP Criteria and RCC Core Values
Increasing Employee Engagement	3, 8, 9, Valuing People (4), Leading and Communicating (5), <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Maintaining and Cultivating External Partnerships	2, 3, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Accountability</i>
Meeting Other Stakeholders Needs: Board of Trustees, Foundation, Alumni, Retirees, Donors, Etc.	2, 3, 4, 5, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Accountability</i>

Goal 3: To Enhance, Strengthen, and Advance Institutional Operations

Strategies	AQIP Criteria and RCC Core Values
Maintaining and Improving Fiscal Responsibility	2, Supporting Institutional Operations (6), 8 <i>Excellence, Accountability</i>
Developing and Implementing an Integrated Marketing (Communication) Plan	3, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>
Developing and Implementing a Comprehensive Technology Plan	3, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>
Developing and Improving Human Resources	3, 4, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Developing and Improving Employee Recognition	3, 4, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>

Underlying all of these goals and subgoals is the AQIP Criteria 7, Measuring Effectiveness.

8PI Planning process

Planning involves all areas of the College. The President, Vice Presidents, and the Institutional Effectiveness Group coordinate components of planning depending on the areas involved.

The new pattern for Strategic Planning was instituted in Summer 2003 with the adoption of a 3-year strategic plan. The process is still being refined, but the general timeline is as follows:

January	Feb.-April	June	July	Sept.–Nov.
Board Adoption of 3-year plan	Budget creation tied to Strategic Plan initiatives	Board of Trustees Update	Budget approval (reflects SP initiatives)	Development of New year for SP

Since this is the first full year of the new planning process, procedures are still being determined. In October and November 2004, meetings of stakeholders will be conducted to determine how to integrate the REACH recommendations, AQIP Action Projects, previous CIP team recommendations, and other division activities into the Strategic Plan update that will go to the Board of Trustees in January 2005.

8P2 Selecting short- and long-term strategies

As a part of the planning process, the following groups participate in sessions to strategize and prioritize goals:

- ❖ Deans and Vice President of Student and Academic Services
- ❖ Institutional Effectiveness Group
- ❖ President's Cabinet
- ❖ Department heads reporting to the Vice President of Finance and Administration
- ❖ Divisions and academic areas

These planning sessions also include discussion of AQIP Action Projects, enrollment trends, employment needs in the District and in Central Illinois, budgetary concerns including state and federal funds, employee compensation and benefits packages, impending retirements, and other District influences that may be out of the control of RCC. The discussions help administrators determine priorities of various stakeholder groups and develop justification for funding a particular initiative. This discussion also supports the increased collaboration of divisions in program development, marketing, and other indirect support services needs. This collaboration reduces conflicts by trying to maintain open lines of communication throughout the College. While results are not always completely accepted by all groups, efforts to reduce these conflicts are ongoing.

8P3 Developing key action plans to support institutional strategies

The work of the Strategic Planning Taskforce was the first step in the new focus on continuous improvement and an ongoing College-wide planning and implementation process. While the College has created Strategic Plans in the past, the emphasis this time was on greater participation by the College community and on supporting the Plan with division tactics to support the goals and subgoals. In that planning, small groups focused on certain areas of interest, and Taskforce members wrote and distributed white papers on these top 10 topics. The Taskforce conducted focus groups on these topics on a College Staff Development Day, and the results along with other research were used in formulating the goals listed in 8C2. Once the Board of Trustees adopted the Plan in Summer 2003, divisions created tactical plans and the President's Cabinet, with input from other stakeholders, chose College-wide tactics. An update with accomplishments was presented to the Board in June 2004. Plans created by CIP teams followed a similar process, including data collection, stakeholder participation, and reporting to the Steering Committee. Now the questions in planning are starting to be, "Should this be a CIP Team? And "What data do we need?"

This plan and other reports are available in Division Offices, on the Intranet system, and in the Library Archives. If appropriate, reports such as the Strategic Plan and the recommendations from the REACH public engagement process are also linked to the College website for access by the District residents. Regular presentations by stakeholders about planning and key activities are made to the Board of Trustees, and during the College Spotlight on the Board agenda faculty and staff to showcase new initiatives and the results of previous initiatives. These Board meetings are open to the public, and the Marketing Office sends press releases to District media both prior to and after each meeting.

8P4 Coordinating and aligning planning processes, strategies, and action plans

Coordination for planning is done through the Institutional Effectiveness Group, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and the President's Cabinet. The College has consistently tried to include stakeholders at all levels in planning. For example, the Strategic Planning Taskforce was comprised of 15 people, including faculty, Deans, and other administrators. The AQIP Steering Committee included representatives from all job classifications, including support staff and professional technical personnel. CIP teams and committees include stakeholders representing all areas of the College, including adjunct faculty and students. Each division created tactical plans to support the Strategic Plan, and the Deans and Directors reporting to the Vice President of Student and Academic Services created an academic tactical plan. Since the advent of AQIP, various groups have scheduled open forums to allow input from anyone who is interested, and any suggestions are examined and included when appropriate.

8P5 Selecting measures and setting performance projections

As outlined in previous sections, the Strategic Plan came from collaboration of stakeholders across the College. The Taskforce selected general College measures based on information from reports, surveys, focus groups, and division meetings as well as measures set by external agencies such as grant providers and the State. Measures and performance projections are set for other activities by examining baseline data already collected or by collecting necessary information. Divisions set performance goals for their tactical plans also based on data collected, and the College is looking at new key performance indicators for the Strategic Plan.

8P6 Accounting for appropriate resource needs

The budget planning cycle each spring requires that cost center managers include any new staff, equipment, or space requests to accompany new initiatives. Financial trend information related to enrollment, State funding, reimbursement, equalization, and local property taxes are made available for planning as well. Divisions also update a three-year equipment request to include new programs. One of the CIP Teams has begun a new equipment justification initiative that will be piloted with the FY06 budget planning process. The general planning cycle over a six-month period includes the following steps:

- a. Budget meeting with managers to review process, including projection of funds available for next fiscal year
- b. Planning at division level with directors, coordinators, faculty, and staff to reflect Strategic Plan, AQIP, and other initiatives
- c. Submission and compilation of all budget requests to Controller, done on Administrative Data System; this includes prioritization of equipment and staff for new programs and initiatives
- d. Budget meeting with managers to review areas of overage
- e. Meetings of stakeholders to determine collaboration to reduce budget request
- f. Submission of tentative budget to President
- g. Presentation of Tentative Budget to Board of Trustees for approval.

Continuous discussion has improved the budget process by reducing conflict and increasing an understanding of funding options, available resources, and College priorities.

8P7 Developing and nurturing faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities

Underlying all three goals of the Strategic Plan is the need to ensure that all individuals at the College are ready to support programs and students as well as to support each other. This need requires ongoing training and continuous communication of goals and outcomes. Training projects for faculty and staff have been described in 4C4. Some programs are supported by the Human Resources Office budget and by the Schwandt-Albert Professional Development Fund supported by the RCC Foundation. Faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in both internal and external training opportunities. Special funding priorities are given to programs that “train the trainers” so that individuals can bring their new knowledge to colleagues on campus.

The Continuous Improvement Process training conducted for three semesters has also assisted in the change in the College culture to a greater emphasis on reasonable measurable outcomes and continuous improvement.

8P8 Measures of the effectiveness of system(s) for planning continuous improvement

Information regarding satisfaction and effectiveness is collected through a number of methods:

- ❖ Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory
- ❖ Faces of the Future Survey
- ❖ Needs Assessment (Business and Industry)
- ❖ All-College Survey
- ❖ Graduation Survey
- ❖ Classroom Survey
- ❖ All-College Meetings
- ❖ Student satisfaction surveys for Student Services
- ❖ Budget Review

With the new Strategic Plan, additional methods may be implemented depending on the kind of data needed.

8R1 Results for accomplishing institutional strategies and action plans

The Strategic Plan, organizational restructuring, and new committee structure are all results of the cultural changes to systems thinking and long-term planning. Since all of these elements are in their early stages, no information is currently available on long-term impact on the College and its operations. However, the College has met some immediate subgoals:

- ❖ Completed REACH, a public engagement initiative (Goal 2, Collaborative Relationships)
- ❖ Started negotiations for re-establishing distance learning to one area high school (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning)
- ❖ Established Outcomes Assessment Taskforce to initiate assessment strategy planning (Goal 3, Institutional Operations)

- ❖ Established Employee Recognition Taskforce to improve employee morale (Goal 3, Institutional Operations)
- ❖ Initiated demographic study of each K-12 District in the RCC District to examine potential student enrollment, job training needs, economic development collaborations, and program needs (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning)
- ❖ Realigned responsibilities and revised job descriptions to meet changing needs of students and community (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning, and Goal 3, Institutional Operations)
- ❖ Held first All-College Reunion (Goal 2, Collaborative Relationships)

The College is currently in its first review of the Strategic Plan, and the CIP Teams responsible for committee restructuring are in the process of gathering and reviewing feedback and data to determine successful meeting of project statements.

82R Projections of performance for strategies and action plans over the next 1-3 years

Over the next 3 years, the College plans the following:

- ❖ Affirm the planning cycle for Strategic Plan (04/05)
- ❖ Determine what Action Projects to retire (04/05)
- ❖ Determine new Action Projects (04/05)
- ❖ Develop College calendar for data collection and reports (05/06)
- ❖ Refine tactical plan creation to support Strategic Planning (04/05)
- ❖ Train new employees on continuous improvement (ongoing)
- ❖ Determine review cycle for Mission, Vision, Core Values (05/06)

8R3 Comparing action plans and results

As more institutions adopt AQIP and publish their Systems Portfolios, the College will be able to compare results more easily. This comparison will be done by attending relevant conferences and workshops, examining other Systems Portfolios, and continuing collaborations with other AQIP colleges in Illinois. The College will apply for the Pacesetter Award through CQIN in 2005 and will use the criteria for the Malcolm Balridge Award as an additional benchmark.

8R4 Evidence of effectiveness of system for planning continuous improvement

The push to train as many College employees as possible in continuous Improvement was an effective way to bring the College together in its understanding of the process. In three semesters, over 75% of full-time faculty and staff were trained as a part of 30 CIP Teams. In addition, 16 individuals completed facilitator training to be able to continue the work of the consultant. The CIP teams responsible for the committee restructuring are currently examining the outcomes based on their project statements, including amount of time spent in committee meetings, number of decisions made, and number of people participating. The College-wide Survey administered in Fall 2005 in the bi-annual cycle will include questions related to satisfaction with the planning process, committee structure, and other continuous improvement issues.

811 Improving current processes and systems for planning continuous improvement

The College is in its first step of checking the planning processes instituted in the last two years. This review will allow the College administration, Institutional Effectiveness Group, and other key stakeholders to make additional changes if necessary; at the same time, these groups recognize that making too many changes now will not be based on a long-term evaluation but just on quick responses.

Additionally, with greater emphasis on the links among all the planning done at the College, employees will gain a greater understanding of College operations and the integration of all components in the Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and the budget. This new approach will promote communication, respect, and accountability throughout the College.

812 Setting targets and improvement priorities and communicating results

The Institutional Effectiveness Group, the President's Cabinet, committees and taskforces, and the Student and Academic Services Deans and Vice President are currently developing subgoals and targets for the coming year to support the Strategic Plan, outlined in 8C2. In addition, decisions related to Action Projects and committee work will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan where appropriate.

Communications will continue through postings on the College Intranet, open committee and taskforce meetings, and open forums, including the All-College Meetings at the beginning of each semester. The Strategic Plan is posted on the College website at www.richland.edu/about.