

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 College Operations

8C1 Institution’s vision

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

As a part of this process, the Board of Trustees adopted a new vision for Richland 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 Richland. It motivates College administrators and faculty 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 Richland 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. Since the “economic development” portion is a new emphasis for Richland, in April 2008 a Vice President of Economic Development and Innovative Workforce Solutions was hired to focus on this critical part of the vision and mission. This Vice President balanced the work of two other Vice Presidents in Finance and Administration and in Student and Academic Services to address all components of education at Richland.

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 College operations**. These goals were a part of the 2003-2006 Strategic Plan, and the Strategic Planning Team determined that they should be continued into the 2008-2011 Plan. For each goal, the Team, comprised of stakeholders at all levels, developed strategies and actions that relate to all areas of the College. In order to focus efforts and resources each year, priorities are created and then approved by the Board of Trustees each February. Divisions then identify activities that support these priorities, and quarterly reports are presented to the Board and to the College community to explain progress. All information is posted on the College website for District citizens to view as well. The following table outlines the general strategies for each goal, with the appropriate AQIP categories and RCC Core Values indicated:

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

Strategies	AQIP Categories and Richland Core Values
Improve the effectiveness of programs and services that support and/or enhance student success.	Helping Students Learn (1), Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs (3), Planning Continuous Improvement (8) <i>Excellence, Accountability</i>
Improve the effectiveness of programs and services that support and/or enhance college preparedness	1, 8 <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Enhance and expand a global perspective within the curriculum.	1, 3, Valuing People (4), 8, <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>

Align curriculum with local, regional, and global stakeholders' needs.	1, 3, Building Collaborative Relationships (9), Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives (2) <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Diversity</i>
Enhance alternative methods of curriculum delivery to meet student needs.	1, 3, 6, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Diversity</i>

Goal 2: To Enhance, Strengthen, and Advance Collaborative Relationships

Strategies	AQIP Categories and Richland Core Values
Cultivate and enhance external partnerships that support teaching and learning and that promote a seamless transition to college.	3, 8, 9, Valuing People (4), Leading and Communicating (5), <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Cultivate and enhance external partnerships for workforce training and economic development that promote employment opportunities.	2, 3, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Accountability</i>
Increase activities that build a positive sense of community for current students, alumni and friends, and the District.	2, 3, 4, 5, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Accountability</i>

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

Strategies	AQIP Categories and Richland Core Values
Ensure sustainability of the College's human resources.	2, 4, Supporting Institutional Operations (6), 8 <i>Excellence, Accountability</i>
Enhance processes that promote financial sustainability.	3, 5, 6, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>
Increase effectiveness of institutional infrastructure.	3, 5, 6, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Excellence, Accountability</i>
Promote awareness of RCC programs and services.	2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>
Enhance processes that measure the effectiveness of Richland Community College.	3, 4, 5, 8, 9 <i>Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Diversity</i>

Underlying all of these goals and strategies is AQIP Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness.

8PI Planning process

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

The 2008-2011 Strategic Plan was developed in the following stages:

Jan. 2007	Jan-Sept. 2007	July 2007	Sept. 2007	Sept. 2007- Jan. 2008	February 2008
Creation of Environmental Scanning Team; Board discussed new Strategic Plan	Creation of Environmental Scan	Board Retreat to discuss Strategic Plan	Creation of Strategic Planning Team	Creation of Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan Approval by Board of Trustees

The 2007 Environmental Scan was developed using the structure of the two previous Environmental Scans. It is composed of three sections: an external scan of national, state, and District demographics; an internal scan of fiscal and human resource issues, governance, and other general areas of the College; and a section on teaching and learning, which includes student demographics and an examination of programs and services related to teaching and learning. One of the primary changes in the scan's structure was to include a ten-year trend line in order to identify external and internal opportunities and challenges that might affect Richland's future.

The Strategic Planning Team then used the Environmental Scan as a primary source of information and compiled additional information, including the results of visioning activities completed by the Board of Trustees. Documents such as the 2005, 2006, and 2007 Strategic Plan Priorities, the REACH public engagement recommendations, CIP Team research, and planning activities completed by internal stakeholders all were used as Team resources.

The Team determined that the three goals of the previous Strategic Plan were still viable. Through several meetings and activities, the Team created strategies, actions, and measures/deliverables that would support the three goals, the vision, and the mission of the College, while reflecting the five Core Values of Commitment, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, and Diversity. In addition, the Team used the concept of sustainability as a guiding principle for the inclusion of strategies and actions.

The pattern for annual Strategic Planning follows the general timeline below:

January	Jan.-Feb.	Feb.	June	July	October	December
Results Report for previous year presented to the Board; Board identifies priorities for coming year.	Stakeholders create priorities.	Yearly priorities approved by the Board; budget creation tied to Strategic Plan initiatives.	Update on status of priorities presented to Board of Trustees	Budget approval (reflects SP strategies and priorities)	Update on status of priorities presented to Board of Trustees	Results Report created; carry-over priorities identified for next year.

The Board approval of the Strategic Plan and the Annual Priorities offers direction for administration in determining focus for the year and also in creating the budget priorities.

Since over 80% of the College community has been trained in Continuous Improvement, the Strategic Planning Team used concepts, tools, and tactics to develop the Strategic Plan; stakeholders also used the Continuous Improvement Process to change the committee structure to a participative, stakeholder-driven model and to modify, strengthen, and implement other important planning documents. Training workshops are held each semester for new employees, and a review of continuous improvement practices occurs each January when new committee and taskforce members are seated.

8P2 Selecting short- and long-term strategies

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

- ❖ Deans and Vice President of Student and Academic Services and Vice President of Economic Development and Innovative Workforce Solutions
- ❖ Quality Council
- ❖ Institutional Effectiveness Group
- ❖ President's Cabinet
- ❖ Department heads reporting to the Vice President of Finance and Administration
- ❖ Divisions and academic disciplines
- ❖ Continuous Improvement Process Teams

Each fall, the Institutional Effectiveness Group, Quality Council, and Continuous Improvement Process Team meet to determine the CIP teams for the coming cycle. Using the Strategic Plan, areas of emphasis identified by the Board of Trustees, and processes identified through other activities, the participants identify team topics, leaders and sponsors, and team members. In addition, discussion focuses on Action Project progress and potential new projects. For example, in Fall 2008, three new action projects were identified and teams were created for those projects. Additional teams were formed for other identified areas, with a total of seven teams to report in Spring 2009.

Other planning sessions include examination of 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 Richland's control. 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 tries to maintain open lines of communication throughout the College by involving stakeholders in multiple phases. 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 described in 8P1 is one component of planning. Plans created by CIP teams follow a similar process. Teams create a project statement, identify operational definitions, conduct research and process mapping (if appropriate), identify recommendations and supporting evidence, and present their report to Quality Council. 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 meeting 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 Quality Council 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 Institutional Effectiveness Group includes 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. Divisions develop annual plans to support the Strategic Plan, and the Deans and Directors report regularly on progress and collaborate on initiatives. This process has matured since the previous Systems Portfolio submission, and conversations lead to initiatives that benefit students, the College community, and the District. The Assistant to the Vice President of Student and Academic Services serves as the facilitator and daily operations overseer of the teams, committees, and taskforces as well as coordinator of updates to the Board of Trustees.

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 selects 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 work plans also based on data collected, and the College is looking at new key performance indicators for the Strategic Plan.

Richland is currently in the early stages of creating an institutional Balanced Scorecard. One of the first steps has been the development of a Retention Study, a Withdrawal Study, and a Persistence Study to use in setting targets for student success and completion. These studies offer detailed analyses of trends for general categories of students as well as students enrolled in high-risk courses such as developmental mathematics and developmental English. The Institutional Data Book and the High School Follow-up Report also offer benchmarking data for goal setting and performance projections. In addition, the College uses information from the Illinois Community College Board that is collected from all state community colleges in areas such as enrollment in credit and non-credit courses, unit costs, and financial aid disbursement in setting tuition and fees and other costs for the College.

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. The general planning cycle includes the following steps:

October-December	Personnel requests for new positions are submitted to the Vice Presidents; equipment needs are also projected and submitted.
January-February	Budget meeting with managers to review process, including projection of funds available for next fiscal year.
February-March	Planning at division level with directors, coordinators, faculty, and staff to reflect Strategic Plan, AQIP, and other initiatives
March	Submission and compilation of all budget requests to Director of Budgeting; this includes prioritization of equipment and staff for new programs and initiatives.
April	Budget meetings with managers to review areas of overage
April-May	Creation of tentative budget and review by President’s Cabinet and Directors of Budgeting and Accounting
May	Presentation of Tentative Budget to Board of Trustees
June	Approval of Budget

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. Programs are supported by the Human Resources Office budget, by Division budgets, and by the RCC Foundation’s Schwandt-Albert Professional Development Fund. 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.

Richland’s participation in the Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN), attendance at the Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting/AQIP Colloquium, and conference and workshop

attendance offered through other associations also help faculty and staff develop continuous improvement skills and emphasize quality at all levels.

The ongoing Continuous Improvement Process training also assists employees in understanding the College's 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
- ❖ Program Review
- ❖ Budget Review

Additional methods may be implemented depending on the kind of data needed.

8RI 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. With system development has come the ability to analyze progress and processes and make necessary changes. For example, after the creation of the Institutional Effectiveness Group in 2004, reporting and monitoring Continuous Improvement teams was not as efficient as in the previous system, and the teams seemed to struggle with the process. It was determined that the College had contracted its oversight system too much. The Quality Council was created in 2006, with the charges to oversee quality initiatives, including the CIP Teams. Since then, the teams have been functioning more effectively.

With the approval of the 2008-2011 Strategic Plan and development of annual Priorities, results are reported regularly to the Board and to the College community. Following are selected results from the 2008 Priorities:

- ❖ Continued REACH, the public engagement initiative, to off-campus groups (Goal 2, Collaborative Relationships)
- ❖ Expanded dual credit courses (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning)
- ❖ Developed data collection tool for Cross-Disciplinary Outcomes (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning)
- ❖ Developed new programs (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning, Goal 2, Collaborative Relationships)
- ❖ Completed employee compensation analysis and classification (Goal 3, College Operations)
- ❖ Applied new program review model to assess curriculum (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, College Operations)
- ❖ Opened Culinary Arts Institute and offered new biofuels program (Goal 1, Teaching and Learning)
- ❖ Developed and piloted Workforce Readiness Program in partnership with major local employer (Goal 2, Collaborative Relationships)

Stakeholders review the goals, strategies, and actions to assure that the College is meeting the District's needs and maintaining the focus on the Strategic Plan as it connects to the Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

8R2 Projections of performance for strategies and action plans over the next 1-3 years

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

- ❖ Continue the Strategic Planning Priorities process and prepare for the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan
- ❖ Monitor Action Projects and retire and initiate new ones as needed
- ❖ Train new employees on continuous improvement
- ❖ Develop a level two continuous improvement training for employees
- ❖ Develop an Institutional Balanced Scorecard and begin developing the next levels for divisions and service areas
- ❖ Determine the data collection needed not only for the Balanced Scorecard but also for comparison purposes

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.

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. Continued training assists new employees in understanding the concepts of continuous improvement and how the processes fit into the operations of Richland. With almost 80% of current employees trained, that meets the goal set by one of the first CIP teams in 2003.

The College community participates in CIP teams, committees, and taskforces voluntarily and when asked, they are willing to serve as team members and resources. The key is to connect stakeholders with areas that are important for them and to keep them informed of the ongoing work.

8I1 Improving current processes and systems for planning continuous improvement

Each year, committees and taskforces are asked to review their charges and stakeholder membership to assure that the focus of the group is still appropriate and to make sure that the appropriate stakeholders are part of the work of the group. Adjustments have been made, for example, to include faculty representation from all divisions on Academic Standards, and the Placement Standards Taskforce added a faculty member from Information Technology when one of the topics for the year was identified as student computer literacy. As described in 8R1, the Quality Council was added after an evaluation work of the CIP teams. Evaluation will occur each year to assure that quality is maintained, and recommendations for adjustments will be made to the Institutional Effectiveness Group for final approval. This review will allow the College administration, Institutional Effectiveness Group, and other key stakeholders to make additional changes if necessary.

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

8I2 Setting targets and improvement priorities and communicating results

Using the Strategic Plan and with input from stakeholders both internal and external, the Institutional Effectiveness Group, the Quality Council, the President's Cabinet, committees and taskforces, and the Vice Presidents will continue to establish targets and priorities each year. 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

http://www.richland.edu/system/files/improvement/strategic_plan_08.pdf.