

QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Kent State University

Kent, Ohio
April 11-13, 2007

Quality Checkup team members:

Dr. Glen W. Davidson
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and
Medical Humanities
Southern Illinois University

Dr. Dwight Smith
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
Miami Dade College

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* is 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*

The team interviewed faculty, students, administrators, and Board of Trustees members at the institution and reviewed the institution's response to the Systems Portfolio appraisal. The team determined that AQIP processes are integrated into the work of the institution from the university level to the work of faculty and staff. AQIP was reported by those interviewed as being beneficial to:

- the strategic planning processes of the institution, campuses, professional schools, and disciplines,
- providing evidence of student learning,
- identifying best practices at the institution,
- focusing faculty and staff time more effectively on the priorities of the institution,
- campus committees responsible for the institution's Action Projects,
- the identification of processes that needed improvement,
- the alignment of competing processes,
- benchmarking activities,
- identification of student needs by different groups of students,
- the use of data and information in decision-making.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

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

No accreditation issues were identified in the last Systems Appraisal.

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

The institution's AQIP website lists the opportunities identified in the Strategic Issues Analysis and provides a response indicating the actions the institution is implementing to address these opportunities.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

Based upon interviews with faculty, administrators, students, and Board of Trustees members, the team determined that the institution is committed to continuous quality improvement in a systematic manner. Institutional representatives reported that AQIP has kept quality improvement and the accreditation process visible. The institution has also identified three new action projects that address institutional priorities for continuing systematic quality improvement.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

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

The institution provided the following documents on April 11, 2007.

- Certification of Eligibility (Student Financial Aid) for the Kent State University eight-campus network, dated February 2, 2007, in which all regional campuses are included. The default rate for Fall 2002 was 5.7%, for Fall 2003 was 5.2%, and for 2004 was 5.3%. It was reported to the Team that, when the 2005 default rate is reported later this month, it is anticipated that the default rate will decline to 5.1%. In conversations with institutional representatives, the Team determined that the institution has a systematic process to monitor and reduce default rates in the eight-campus system. While the regional campuses provide one-third of the enrollment, they provide one-half of the defaults. The Federal Department of Education uses Kent State University as a pilot site for identifying predictive variables for defaults and identifying best practices for reducing defaults. Using advanced technology as part of the analysis process, the Financial Aid Office has provided approximately 200 presentations for the purpose of informing the public about availability and regulations concerning financial aid. The institution received the Model of Quality Award in 2001 from the Federal Quality Assurance Division of the Federal Department of Education.
- The team reviewed the University's process for monitoring Late Stage Delinquency. The University has been informed that it is in the "acceptable" range.
- The team also reviewed the institution's Default Management Plan should it be needed.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets, in

exemplary fashion, this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

Compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

The institution provided the team copies of advertisements in the *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), *Akron Beacon Dealer*, and the *Record-Courier* concerning the AQIP Quality Checkup visit. Only one letter was received by Office of the Higher Learning Commission for Kent State University. This letter was reviewed by the team. The letter testified to the benefits received by a family from attendance at Kent State University over three generations. The team determined that the institution is in compliance with Commission Policy IV.A.8.

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

The institution provided documentation of Fall 2006 tuition and fee schedules, credits and lengths of each program. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup visit. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

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

The team reviewed both printed and electronic advertising and recruitment materials. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

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

The institution provided a listing of programs with specialized accreditation. Each accredited program satisfied the requirements of the respective specialized accrediting agencies. Professional accreditation is also listed in the institution's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. No programs have had their accreditation revoked or been put on probation during the time period under review. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory

evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

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

The institution provided the process by which it handles student complaints, a process first implemented in 1987 with subsequent revisions. The Team reviewed detailed information from the organizational record of student complaints and their resolutions compiled in October 2006. The record provides the institution with information concerning types and ranges of resolutions of student complaints. The institution also provided summary campus reports of student complaints for July 2005 through February 2007. For the past ten years, the Dean of Students Office has monitored student complaint data to determine areas for improvement. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

Other USDE compliance-related issues

The Team reviewed PriceWaterhouseCoopers' Audit Report for June 30, 2005 and 2006. The Audit Report contained no audit notations. In addition, the team reviewed the institution's Crime Report for 2003 – 2005. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it meets this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP expectations.

Other AQIP issues

Following interviews with faculty, administrators, students, and Board of Trustees members, the team identified the following issues the institution may wish to consider as it implements continuous quality improvement processes:

- Strategically implementing the institution's leadership opportunities in the region, state, and nation
- Reexamining diversity, both with regard to student needs and the valuing of people employed by the institution
- Improving integration of learning initiatives throughout the institution

- Improving the WEAVEonline tool for more effective communication
- Aligning specialized accreditation requirements, program review processes, and AQIP reporting requirements
- Recognizing faculty members' preparation of AQIP and specialty accreditation reports in the tenure and promotion process
- Better informing tenure-track faculty of tenure and promotion criteria
- Identifying "peer" and "aspirant" institutions for benchmarking at the institutional, campus, and program levels
- Disaggregating data to better inform campus, program, and student affairs decision-making
- Reviewing institutional AQIP processes, structures and reporting tools to improve efficiencies
- Exploring how the regional campuses can be more autonomous in meeting their roles of addressing community needs through new academic programs.

The Checkup Visit Team believes that the institution has the necessary strengths to address these issues and has many opportunities for greater leadership in higher education than is acknowledged in their reporting documents.