Enhance Quality through Continuous Improvement

Purpose of the Strategic Focus

This strategic focus ensures on-going continuous improvement through a quality review process for all programs and services of the college. Monitoring emerging technology trends and skill needs and modifying existing courses and training or developing new courses and training to meet the skill needs also helps ensure continuous improvement. It also enhances the employability of graduates by ensuring recognized licensures and certifications are embedded in programs.

The college has gained considerable traction in continuous improvement through the AQIP and Achieving the Dream initiatives. Examples of success in these initiatives are: a successful AQIP Quality Check-up visit (November, 2010) and NC State's designation as a National Leader College by Achieving the Dream.

The college has been tracking nano technology developments and has also developed and now offers courses for bio-technology lab technicians. It recognizes the need to expand emerging technology monitoring and tracking and responding to skill development needs.

There are many programs that incorporate state and nationally recognized certificates and licensures in their curricula. These faculty, department chairs, and deans are available as on-site experts to those programs that need to move in that direction.

This year we are piloting a programs and services review process as an AQIP action project.

Intended Impact on Ends Policies

The Programs and Services Review affects all Ends Policies. More specifically, it helps assure that employers' needs are addressed as required by Job Readiness and High-Demand/ Emerging Technology Ends Policies. The Industry Certifications and Licensures initiative helps achieve the Career Development Ends Policy. Program and Service Development directly affects the High-Demand/Emerging Technology Ends Policy as well as the training aspect of the Enrichment ends Policy.

Strategic Initiatives - Descriptions

Programs and Services Review

Continuous improvement of all aspects of the college is critical to the achievement of the Ends Policies. The on-going, data-informed, systematic review of the results of all the college's programs and services, and the processes used to achieve those results, is fundamental to continuous improvement.

Certifications & Licensures

National and state recognized certifications and licensures are important to the college and our graduates. All programs should use national and state recognized certifications and licensures as available to validate student skill attainment, improve graduate employability and assess program quality.

Program & Service Development

The college needs to monitor and track emerging technology trends that are likely to have an impact on the regional economy. It is important to understand the skills needed to support emerging technology within the region and modify existing courses and training or develop new courses and training, as necessary, to support emerging technology; and do so in a way that focuses college resources in the most relevant areas.

Specific Objectives and Background, Planning and Policy Considerations

Programs and Services Review Initiative

Specific Objective - *Utilize standardized review process to assure continuous improvement.*

Background, Planning and Policy Considerations

With exception of externally accredited programs, programs have not been systematically reviewed. As a result, it is not clear as to what extent the unaccredited programs address the job skills needs of employers, especially in the high demand, emerging technology industries.

An institution-wide process designed to foster continuous improvement across all areas of operation does not exist. At best, anecdotal accounts have been used in most areas to provide evidence of effectiveness. Hard data use has been limited and/or applied inconsistently.

Development of a programs and services review process was an AQIP project in 2010-11. The AQIP Project Committee recommended that the review process be used for all programs and services. The review process is being piloted in 2011. The Committee recommended that the college leadership establish an Institutional Review Committee to oversee the review process.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
- Develop a process that eliminates duplication for the review of programs/services with external accreditation
- Develop a review schedule that considers:
    o Resources required (data and people)
    o Outside accreditation cycles
    o Embedding continuous improvement
- Help eliminate silos

- Recommend who within the college is accountable for assuring that the programs and services reviews are accomplished
- Recommend who is responsible for assuring review results are addressed
- Refine review process based on pilot results in collaboration with AQIP Project Committee
- Recommend appropriate professional development for all participants in the review process
- Complete this phase by January 15, 2012

Certifications & Licensures

Specific Objective - ***Incorporate available national and state recognized certifications and licensures into programs.***

Background, Planning and Policy Considerations

It appears that some national and state recognized certifications and licensures exist that have not been incorporated into our curricula.

The Career Development Ends Policy emphasizes the importance of students to acquire, maintain, and enhance job skills that remain relevant in changing job markets by acquiring necessary certifications and licensures.

Deans should develop a list of the programs where certifications and licensures should be incorporated along with a timeframe and plan for doing so. The list, timeframe, and implementation plan should be approved by the Vice President of Learning by June 30, 2012. The implementation of the approved plan should begin by July 2012.

The implementation plan should include an annual assessment of how well students do in getting licenses and certificates. This information should be made available to track performance.

Program & Service Development

Specific Objective - ***Develop courses & training to provide skills required for emerging technology***

Background, Planning and Policy Considerations

Emerging technology plays an important role in economic development throughout the nation. The region served by the college should be able to take advantage of economic development stimulated by emerging technology as well.

The college should be involved in monitoring and tracking trends in emerging technology. Periodic scans of the emerging technology environment will help the college stay abreast of the skills required by emerging technology businesses. Information on emerging technology comes from a diverse variety of sources. As a result it is very difficult for any one dean or just a few faculty to keep on top of emerging technology trends and related skill needs. All deans and a wide range of faculty and staff should be involved in this effort.

A process for monitoring and tracking emerging technology trends and related skill needs, especially those likely to have an impact on the region needs to be established. There are a variety of ways this can be done and the college should be creative in its approach. Further, the college should seek out businesses and organizations within the region that would collaborate with the college in this effort. Creative approaches and collaborative arrangements are critical given the significant resource constraints the college faces.

As the emerging technology trends and skill needs of the region become apparent, the college should determine the need to modify existing courses and training or develop courses and training to support the development of the skills required to support emerging technology businesses. A collaborative process with regional businesses and organizations for identifying when modification of existing courses and training or development of new courses and training is required and feasible should be developed.

Learning and Growth Strategic Objectives

Human Capital Specific Objective **- *Prepare faculty and staff to carry out the strategic initiatives***

Informational Capital Specific Objective - ***Assure data and information necessary to inform, monitor and evaluate the strategic initiatives is available***

Organizational Capital Specific Objective – ***Assure alignment of all units of the college with the strategic initiatives***

Community Capital Specific Objective – ***Obtain active involvement from individuals, employers, and organizations to help carry out the strategic initiatives***

Background and Planning Considerations for Learning and Growth Strategic Objectives

Human Capital

- The Institutional Review Committee should assure that professional development is provided for all participants of the programs and services review process.
- The Deans should assure that faculty has and maintains appropriate certificates and licenses.
- Professional development opportunities are important in identifying emerging technology and developing courses and training

Informational Capital

- Programs and services review will need the support of IR and IT to assure that the data and information necessary for the review process is available and consistent with the review schedule. IR and IT support will be necessary for the licensures and certifications initiative.

Organizational Capital

- College leadership should appoint an Institutional Review Committee.
- College leadership should assure that the recommendations of the Institutional Review Committee are implemented.

Community Capital
- Deans, department chairs and faculty should engage employers to identify licensures and certifications for embedding in curricula.
- Deans, department chairs and faculty should engage employers in recognizing the value of the skills represented by licensures and certifications for hiring and promotion of employees.
- The collaborative support of businesses and organizations in the region is critical to Program and Service Development in the area of emerging technology.