

TOUCHSTONE 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

5C1: Leadership and Communication Systems

The State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) is the governing body for the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) that sets policy and makes recommendations to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE)

CCD is one of 13 community colleges within CCCS. The college is comprised of the downtown Auraria Campus and four community campuses located throughout the metro Denver area. The downtown campus is a part of the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC), a unique campus shared by three institutions of higher education,

including CCD, a four-year state college and a research university. The AHEC Board of Directors – with representatives from the three institutions, the presidents and a governor’s appointee – sets policies and procedures (Table 5.1)

The formal organizational structure provides the framework for leadership and communication to its primary constituency groups: students, faculty, administration, classified staff and community residents.

CCD maintains a “traditional” organizational model with the Executive Staff in the overall leadership position (Table 5.2).

Table 5.1 Department of Higher Education Organizational Chart

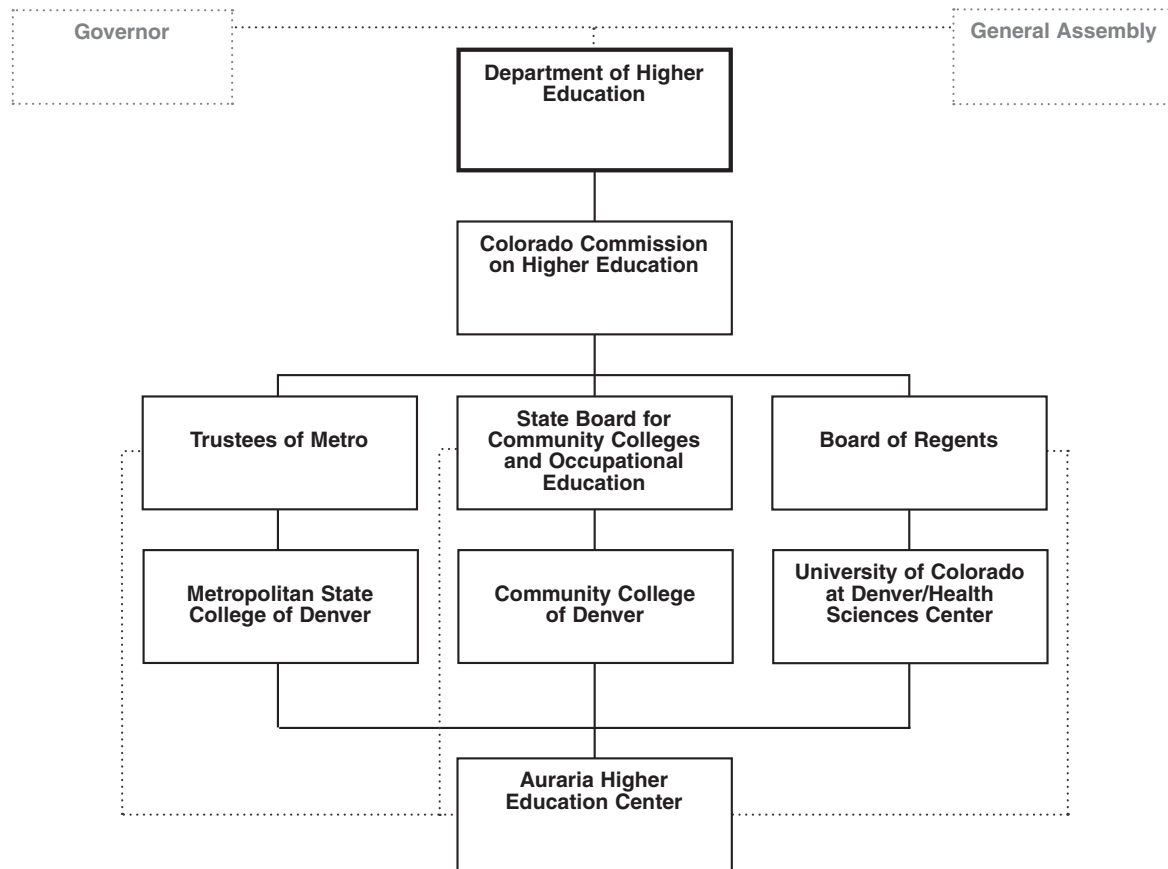


Table 5.2 Executive Staff

| Position | Function/ Responsibility | Reports to |
|--|---|--------------|
| President | Overall authority and direction for the college | SBCCOE board |
| VP Learning and Academic Affairs (VPLAA) | Chief Academic Officer Authority and direction for academic initiatives including academic centers, student support programs, testing and research, and faculty development | President |
| VP Student & Enrollment Services (VPSES) | Chief Student Services Officer Authority and direction for student service operations including enrollment services, financial aid, recruiting, student life, advising, marketing/publications | President |
| Executive Director Human Resources | Authority and direction for personnel policies and procedures | President |
| Chief Financial Officer | Business and administrative functions including technology development and support | President |

Communication Systems within CCD

CCD maintains a variety of communications systems. A weekly intranet newsletter and a daily e-mail update provide current college news, Executive Staff reports, staffing updates, policy changes and pertinent community information. This information is shared internally via e-mail alerts and, when appropriate, externally with the media and the community via news releases.

The college's Annual Report is produced and widely distributed to college employees and the community and is available both in print and online at www.ccd.edu.

An all-college Convocation takes place semi-annually and sets the tone for the upcoming semester. It is a full-day meeting required for all full time faculty and staff and includes presentations on the state of the college and other distinguished initiatives.

An emergency communication system is in place to notify all college employees of important unplanned events such as inclement weather, national and local emergencies.

Within the college, several standing teams and committees provide opportunities for involvement and cross-functional communication throughout the college community (Table 5.3)

5C2: Leadership system alignment

The college has two main methods for assuring alignment of practices and viewpoints throughout the various levels of the college. First, there is the strategic planning process which sets the action priorities and annual college goals (See 8P1).

Once identified, action priorities are achieved through operational objectives at the department level. Accountability for these goals and objectives is monitored through Executive Staff review and

annual performance appraisals. Regular meetings within each employee group strengthen accountability.

The college president attends monthly SBCCOE board meetings and presents a state of the college report that can be used as a performance indicator for each of the respective components of college operations.

5C3: Institutional values and expectations

CCD utilizes implicit and explicit methods to communicate its goals, mission and vision. Specifically, Human Resources maintains a variety of policy-related documents including a code of ethics, privacy policy, electronic communication, and drug and alcohol policies – all of which become part of the employee's personnel record.

The college goals are implicitly embedded throughout the day-to-day work of the institution and appear in all print and online publications, within performance evaluations and as part of the strategic planning process.

"CCD promotes students as full partners in a collaborative learning experience" (CCD Values). "CCD looks at its service area and offers transfer education and occupational programs that meet community and workforce needs and create positive change in individuals. Respect, integrity and honesty are the hallmarks of the CCD education". (CCD Annual Report 2003-04)

Based on interviews, many employees maintain that a personal code of values and ethics supersede the institutional standards. The college president encourages community involvement, especially that which addresses the needs of CCD's diverse student population and personal values.

| Table 5.3 Committee Membership | |
|--|--|
| Team/ Committee | Membership |
| Executive Staff | President, VPLAA, VPSES, Exec Director HR, CFO |
| Learning Team | Instructional administrators |
| Student Services Directors | Student Service Administrators |
| Faculty Council | Full time faculty representatives |
| Part-Time Faculty Relations Council | Part-Time faculty representatives |
| Student Success Committee | Cross functional representation including administrators, faculty, students, staff |
| Classified Staff Council | Classified staff |
| Technical Professional Staff Council | Coordinators, case managers, and other exempt staff |
| Administrative Staff Council | Exempt staff representatives including deans, directors, associate deans/directors |
| Academic Standards | Representational faculty |
| AQIP Steering Committee | Cross functional representation including administrators, faculty, and staff |
| Deans Committee | Deans from both LAA and SES |
| Teaching /Learning Center Advisory Team (T/LC) | Full and part-time faculty and staff, director T/LC |
| Student Government | Elected student representatives |

5P1: Setting Directions

Each center and department sets goals specific to its area, based on the three overall goals of the college: increase student learning and success; change the culture to support learning; attain and maintain fiscal stability through increased enrollment. Goals are centered on CCD’s mission and values and connect with AQIP’s nine criteria.

The college leadership group is aware that CCD is working toward becoming a total quality improvement organization. While some communication and planning systems are well developed

and implemented, many others are in early development stages.

The strategic plan, Thin to Win, (See 8P1) is reviewed in the spring and amendments that continue to meet the college mission, vision and values are considered. Developing the plan is a collaborative process involving all leadership teams.

5P2: Future opportunities and sustaining a learning environment

The college strives to strengthen its organization by building relationships and partnerships that target regional labor markets, focus on employment sectors and combine education, training and on-the-job learning opportunities to support career advancement and self-sufficiency.

CCD has developed a model plan process incorporating AQIP criteria to build and sustain strong learning environments.

CCD’s partnerships with Denver Public Schools (DPS) have created a pipeline for high school students to continue their education, to graduate from CCD and transfer into a baccalaureate program. Concurrently, DPS and CCD, through their early/middle college initiatives, prepare high school students for college-level courses. High school juniors and seniors take college courses that offer dual-enrollment credit toward secondary graduation and college.

5P3: Making decisions

The ultimate authority for higher-level decisions belongs to the college president. Cross-functional teams like the Student Success Committee make direct recommendations to Executive Staff. Individual departments take responsibility for decisions that impact day-to-day operations.

Standing committees such as Learning Team (L-Team), Academic Standards, Student Success and the AQIP Steering Committee, work with ongoing issues of planning and improvement.

Task forces are established as needed to develop, implement and evaluate timely, specific college strategies such as improving advising models, strategic recruiting and the College Opportunity Fund (COF) implementation (See O6).

CCD is aware that there is a need to strengthen the decision-making process to be more inclusive when appropriate, to include appropriate voices and to strengthen systems to communicate outcomes of this process. The leadership team strives to create a more transparent and inclusive process.

5P4: Information results and decision-making

The leadership team strives to make decisions based on information and recommendations from task forces, committees, and enrollment and fiscal data.

Responses from individual interviews indicate a perception that departments are more adept than the leadership team at making and communicating information-based decisions. Individual interview respondents also indicated that leadership team decisions need to be more closely aligned with available college data.

5P5: Communicating between and among all institutional levels

The college employs a variety of methods for communicating to all levels: regularly scheduled meetings, intranet and e-mail newsletters, semi-annual convocation, e-mail, departmental and programmatic annual reports. However, according to recent all-college surveys, (CAT, AQIP Action Recommendations), limited or inconsistent communication is still a primary concern for all CCD employees. In particular, communication with part-time faculty is noted consistently as an area for improvement.

5P6: Communicating a shared mission, vision and high performance expectations

Information about mission, vision and performance expectations is shared in the Annual Report, the CCD Catalog, at the semi-annual convocation, and the CCD Web site. Individual performance expectations are communicated through the annual employee evaluation process.

5P7: Encouraging and developing leadership abilities

The Teaching/Learning Center (TLC) and Human Resources (HR) collaborate to provide faculty and staff development of leadership and to promote teaching excellence. There is an active program of internal professional development opportunities during the year. However, because of budget restraints, professional development opportunities outside the college have been significantly limited.

Within the institution, there are opportunities for promotion and leadership development; however, it is widely recognized that CCD needs to focus more on developing and training of staff for new internal positions and opportunities.

Within many departments, good leadership and individual excellence is recognized and encouraged. Many departmental supervisors act as mentors to promote leaders from within. Out-

standing leadership is recognized through internal newsletters and annual staff and faculty awards.

5P8: Leadership Succession plans

Although there is no formal succession plan that is widely understood throughout the college, Executive Staff articulates individual succession strategies for their areas. Those strategies include: identifying "rising stars" and providing opportunities for development through increased responsibility; encouraging professional development opportunities through outside organizations (e.g., the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Denver program); and discipline-specific professional organizations. In addition, the president requires that each vice president and executive director establish a successor who is prepared to take on the role in the event of departure.

In the event of the college president's departure, the responsibility for succession rests with the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE).

5P9: Measuring leadership and communication

The nine AQIP criteria guide the institution in creating measures to analyze leadership and communication processes. In addition, a system of mid-year reviews and annual performance appraisals for all employees provides a benchmark for performance standards.

In 2003, Executive Staff charged the Communication Analysis Team (CAT) to evaluate communication systems through the college as they related to leadership, management and college culture. The CAT conducted a college-wide survey to elicit levels of engagement of faculty and staff and provide recommendations for improvement of communication systems throughout the college. Results of the CAT analysis were presented to Executive Staff in fall 2004.

5R1: Leadership and communication process results

Two critical recommendations emerged from the CAT survey. The first was that there is a need to address the communication flow from all areas of the college. The second is that issues of trust and collegiality need to be addressed from all employee groups. CCD is committed to addressing these recommendations and implementing selected action items identified from CAT (see 4R1).

In fall 2004, all employees were invited to participate in a series of discussions on the nine AQIP criteria (See 4P3). Each session was designed on the Appreciative Inquiry process model to elicit

action statements. An analysis of these statements produced the following seven action recommendations that are intended to inform institutional planning and programming. Improving institutional communication both informally and formally was a predominate theme arising through these discussions:

1. create informal communication opportunities among employee groups;
2. create opportunities to enhance formal communication with institutional leaders;
3. collaborate and communicate about and with internal and external stakeholders;
4. provide training for professional and personal development;
5. refocus on teaching and learning;
6. create a climate of trust through open lines of communication;
7. revise the institutional and project planning processes.

Recent results of AQIP interviews conducted in spring 2005 among all college employees indicate a perception by the executive leadership that differs from that of employees throughout the rest of the college. In particular, employees are concerned about lack of effective communication channels, feeling left out of the information loop, and that too much information is filtered or not shared throughout the college.

On the other hand, employees respond positively to good communication and leadership at the departmental level, promoting a healthy workplace environment.

5R2: Comparing results with other institutions

Historically, leading and communicating results have not been available from other institutions. As an AQIP institution, CCD hopes to begin comparing communication results with other AQIP community colleges.

5I1: Improving current process

Through the AQIP evaluation, faculty and staff indicate the processes for improvement are not well understood throughout the college. Specifically, there is a consensus that external forces, like the state's budget problems, tend to dictate system changes (i.e., freezing resources and employee layoffs). Current communication systems could better be utilized for improvement, including student faculty evaluations and annual performance appraisals.

There is a sense that tools such as annual performance appraisals, CAT survey recommendations and convocation are not genuinely and

positively incorporated into the culture of the college, but are perceived as routine tasks used in isolation.

5I2: Setting targets for improvement

The primary target for improvement as identified by survey results, interviews and Executive Staff is to improve institutional communication. CCD currently is addressing this priority by implementing a college intranet and requiring each member of Executive Staff to provide monthly updates in the internal college newsletters.

At this time, there is no formal process for sharing results on how we are leading and communicating. CCD is aware of the need to develop a formal process for measuring and communicating results with student, stakeholders, staff and faculty.