

## TOUCHSTONE 8: PLANNING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

### 8C1 & 8C2: Institutional vision; short and long-term strategies

The five- to 10-year vision for CCD is to set the standard for community colleges in learning, innovation and student success. CCD has a long-standing reputation as a national model for community college innovation in developmental learning, student success and retention, professional development and educational strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As stated in the CCD's Annual Report for 2003-04, CCD will align current activities with both AQIP priorities and the college's long-term strategic goals:

1. **Increase student learning and success** by providing access to higher education, and support programs and services that ensure academic and personal success.
2. **Strengthen the organizational culture to support learning** by pioneering innovative educational programs that meet higher education and workforce needs; enhancing CCD's integrated advising and case management systems; creating learning communities and communities of leaders.
3. **Attain and maintain fiscal stability** through increased enrollment and resource development and by remaining thoughtful stewards of our human and financial resources and the public's trust.

CCD addresses the vision and the goals through the following college priorities:

1. **Develop early college models** with the local school districts CCD serves to help retain, remediate and graduate more high school students and ensure their successful entry into higher education at college level or into the workforce;
2. **Create strategic campus and venue expansions** to provide undergraduate education and job training to anyone, anywhere and anytime;
3. **Develop a model planning process** incorporating Academic Quality Improvement Project criteria as touchstones, including
  - Helping students learn
  - Accomplishing other distinctive objectives
  - Understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs

- Valuing people
- Leading and communicating
- Supporting institutional operations
- Measuring effectiveness
- Planning continuous improvement
- Building strategic relationships

4. **Strengthen our community** 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.

5. **Help ensure Colorado's economic stability** and enhance and protect our nation's tenets of freedom through education of today's workers for tomorrow's workforce.

### 8P1: Planning process

CCD's strategic planning process is a college-wide annual cycle including three major activities: setting strategic priorities, developing unit plans, and aligning strategic priorities and unit plans with budget allocations. In 2003, CCD modified its strategic planning process from a survey of individual annual priorities that resulted in a cumbersome compilation of detailed, individualized plans to a more streamlined approach that embeds the AQIP criteria and college goals directly into defining strategic planning priorities. This improved model was named Thin-to-Win to reflect the simplified method of strategic planning.

The Thin-to-Win annual planning process (Table 8.1) is a cyclical institutional activity that incorporates the college's strategic goals into each academic center, department, and individual employee performance plans. The college incorporates and synthesizes the goals of each center and department. The college has an opportunity to review goals as they emerge from Executive Staff, and budget allocations are determined after Executive Staff does a final review. Following the budget allocation and finalization of the annual plan, college departments and centers formulate their individual plans, which are incorporated into employee performance evaluation plans. The annual plan is reviewed mid-year at the individual, center, department and Executive Staff levels. (See [www.ccd.edu/APR](http://www.ccd.edu/APR))

While the college believes this planning process to be optimal, it recognizes that there has

been some discrepancy in the full implementation of this model in 2005. During this time, the college budget crisis, subsequent layoffs and reorganizations usurped the planning process. College staff, faculty and administrators all recognize that this situation was both unplanned and unsatisfactory. The college intends to follow the Thin-to-Win cycle in all subsequent fiscal years.

**8P2: Selection of short and long-term strategies**

The annual selection of short- and long-term strategies begins and ends with the individual employee and consistently is linked to the college's strategic action priorities (See 8P1).

Table 8.1 **Thin to Win Chart**



**8P3: Developing action plans**

Action plans are developed through a consultative process among department staff and incorporated into the center's overall plan (See 8P1). Action plans are part of annual goal setting and evaluation.

**8P4: Coordinating and aligning planning process with institutional strategies**

The planning process is aligned with institutional strategies in conjunction with college-wide goal setting, and assessed through the annual appraisal process and center reviews.

**8P5: Selecting measures and setting performance projections**

The three major areas of the college, Learning & Academic Affairs, Student & Enrollment Services and Administration, select performance measures and expectations. Executive Staff reviews and approves performance projections for each area.

The college examines multiple data sources including enrollment trends, program viability, revenue sources, community and economic trends. CCD's development of local early and middle colleges in partnership with Denver high schools is a strong example of the college's response to community and national data.

**8P6: Accounting for resource needs**

Resource needs emerge from the annual planning process, and ultimately are determined through Executive Staff review and state board approval.

Funding for new and existing initiatives is determined with consideration of state revenue projections, foundation contributions, existing grant funding and identification of potential new revenue sources.

Over the past several years, the college has recognized an increased need to diversify its funding resources and because of decreased state funding, is increasingly dependant on non-public revenue sources.

**8P7: Developing faculty, staff, and administrative capabilities**

Probationary full-time faculty – within the first three years of employment – are required to complete 30 hours per year of faculty or professional development. Non-probationary full-time faculty are required to complete 90 hours of professional or faculty development over five years.

Though part-time faculty has no formal professional development requirement, the college recognizes their vital role. Because part-time faculty teaches 72 percent of the courses offered each year, CCD encourages their professional development through a variety of compensation opportunities.

All full-time faculty and staff are required to attend the all-college convocation each semester.

Because of budget restraints, opportunities to participate in external professional development have become limited. The college has responded with a focus on strong internal development opportunities through the Teaching/Learning Center and veteran faculty mentoring. T/LC programs are open to all college personnel and include a range of training seminars to address leadership and management, teaching excellence, wellness and balance, technology usage and cultural awareness. Facilitators are drawn from faculty and staff across the college, and representing a variety of expertise.

**8P8: Measuring and analyzing planning effectiveness**

The college utilizes a variety of measures to analyze planning effectiveness including regular reports to Executive Staff from departments and standing committees; results from faculty, classroom and student program evaluations; faculty development feedback; state quality indicator reports; student completion, progress, retention and

graduation rates; and results from national surveys including the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

**8R1: Results for institutional strategies and action plans**

Each action priority identified in the college strategic plan is embedded with measurable outcomes. Those outcomes are linked to target completion dates and timelines and identified lead personnel. Each vice president is charged with ensuring that appropriate measures for success are collected within identified target dates

**8R2: Performance projections and strategies 1 to 3 years**

Performance projections, to a great degree, are established through annual performance contracts that are negotiated at the Colorado Community College System level with presidents for all 13 community colleges. CCHE mandates the development of performance contracts from which CCCS develops goals for implementation.

Five goals are listed in the most recent performance contract.

1. **Access and success:** includes standards for retention rates, graduation rates, underserved students and the College Opportunity Fund process.
2. **Quality in undergraduate education:** includes general education requirements, grade distribution, teacher effectiveness, evaluation and assessment of student learning.
6. **Efficiency of operations:** includes costs, capital assets and maintenance, facilities, efficiency through better information.
7. **Other state needs – teacher education:** includes teacher education programs consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act.
8. **Other state needs – workforce and economic development:** includes workforce training to meet competitive job market demands.

**8R3: Comparison of action plans and results with peer institutions**

The State Board for Community Colleges & Occupational Education (SBCCOE) and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) provides comparative data for CCD other Colorado of higher education institutions that looks at various measures based on graduation and retention rates, class size, and faculty instructional workload. (See 1R4; 1R1; 1R2)

As more institutions adopt the AQIP process and a variety of portfolios are available, CCD will

be able to provide greater detail in comparison data.

#### **8R4: Indications of planning system effectiveness**

The college recognizes that its planning processes – until now – have not had a consistent system in place to measure the effectiveness of our planning processes. The AQIP process (see 4P3) has led to increased employee participation in the college planning process. The AQIP steering committee developed five exploration teams with 26 employees from all areas of the college. The explorers participated in training and orientation on the AQIP model based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques. In the process of interviewing faculty and staff across the college, the explorers engaged a wider spectrum of employees in the AQIP process. The explorers raised awareness of college processes and identified many areas for improvement. In fact, college personnel responded positively to increased involvement in planning processes, and are initiating a paradigm shift. (See 4P3 for the AI-to-AQIP process)

#### **8I1: Improvement of current processes and systems**

While CCD strives to include all departments, centers, and individuals in the planning process, external and internal pressures have created some perceived leadership and communication challenges within the college community, which has impacted the ability to identify and implement improvements.

Based on extensive interviews with college constituents (See 8R4), these challenges fall into two general themes: budget constraints and leadership communication.

A variety of factors impact the budget: annual FTE allocation; the College Opportunity Fund –

Colorado's new college stipend law, which became effective this fall; the reduction in state funding to higher education institutions; and unexpected costs associated with Colorado Community College System's requirements to centralize services. To that end, the budget drives and effectively limits the planning process, rather than supporting initiatives that emerge from it.

Respondents to a college-wide communication survey expressed the critical need to increase transparency of the planning process at the top leadership positions. More specifically, communication throughout all sectors of the college needs to be more effective and inclusive. Some of the leadership communication needs that were identified include:

- Using the semiannual convocation more effectively as an inclusive communication venue;
- Continued integration of part time faculty and staff into the life of the college;
- Continued opportunities for cross functional involvement across the college;
- Increased communication – both in method and frequency – from key leaders to constituents, and vice versa.
- Increased accountability and follow-up.

#### **8I2: Setting targets and communicating results**

Based on AQIP discussions and results of the CCD Communication Analysis Team (CAT) survey, communication has been identified as a top college priority. Strategies to address college communication needs include developing an intranet for sharing college information, strategies to include part-time employees in communication and planning processes, and cross-functional representation on key college committees.