

Quality Program Summary

Aims Community College

September, 2009

Much has happened to change the college since our last accreditation visit. While maintaining the institutional strengths mentioned in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (Feb., 2009), Aims Community College's (ACC) changing student demographic, students' academic readiness, and economic times present challenges for every student and all ACC's employees.

Strengths

Student Learning

Assessment of student learning continues to evolve as faculty work toward building course and discipline assessment grids and work through the state mandated competencies in the appropriate disciplines. Links to the Learning Outcomes Committee can be seen here:

http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Fcommittees%2Findex.htm. The college continues to improve

the way it uses state system (CCCS) and internal criteria to improve the system of assessing student learning. Comparative state results are presented in two places through website reports

at: <http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/General/NCHEMSNationalComparison/default.html> and

<http://www.cccs.edu/Docs/Research/Remedial%20Completion%20Status%20Report.pdf>

Student Services

Campus services for students continue to administer a comprehensive one-to-one advising service, utilize the Accuplacer testing system, use an intensive advising model, incorporate an active Academic Reporting System to help students early in the semester, track and monitor

student retention data, continue the SSS/Trio and Emerging Scholar programs, continue College for Kids, (http://www.aims.edu/student/studentlife/resources/student_clubs.html), make use of committees to send and receive department/institutional information, and try to form critical connections for students in student orientation sessions and active student clubs and organizations

(<http://www.aims.edu/student/services.php>).

Data Driven Decision Making

ACC continues to use data to inform their understanding and decisions concerning enrollment, retention and persistence, completion, degrees conferred, three-year graduation rates, pass rates for licensure exams, special grant-served population, the preparedness of its graduates, student GPAs, transfer rates, changing student demographic, student recruiting, and protects and maintains data security and operational environments through continued upgrades, data integrity, and safety features (<http://www.aims.edu/about/ire/index.php>).

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction with programs and campus services remains high as evidenced by results from ACC's pilot of the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) where 87% of first time students surveyed agree or strongly agree with the question "The very first time I came to this college, I felt welcome" compared to the national norm of 80%.

http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Freports%2Findex.htm

Challenges

Over the past few years, changing times have brought new challenges to ACC. Opportunities prompting recent change are inter-connected and blended, affecting everyone on every campus.

Changing demographics

Aims Community College has and continues to have an open-door policy for all students age 16 years and older. Many of our students enrolling in courses for general interest are not required to have high school diplomas or GEDs to attend college courses. However, over the past few years, college leaders and faculty noticed a dramatic increase in the numbers of younger students attending classes due in part by the increase enrollment in ACC's High School to College Transition Programs (<http://www.aims.edu/considering/highschool/index.htm>). Fall 2006 enrollment reported 77 students under the age of 18 (1.6% of the total enrollment) while fall 2009 enrollment reported 510 students under the age of 18 (9.6% of the total enrollment). At the same time, enrollment in the traditional age group (18 – 19 years old) doubled from fall 06 (11.8%) to fall 09 (22.0%). Typically this age category contains the largest group of students in need of remediation.

Greater developmental needs

Longitudinal data indicate new students require more remedial attention than in the past. College leaders saw a consistent, steady rise in new students needing remediation from fall 2004 (46.5%) to fall 08 (51.9%). In addition, students needing remediation in all three areas of math, English, and reading increased from 14.2% in fall 2004 to 18.6% in fall 2008. These areas require both intensive student support and increased funding and learning resources.

State-wide budget shortfalls

As everyone in the country felt the effects of our financial dilemma over the past year, ACC's enrollments and funding structure were also dramatically impacted. We have learned how to do more with much less. Our enrollment has increased 14% (Day 15 data) past last fall's enrollment while state and county funding cuts are estimated in the millions of dollars. (Budget process and funding structure for ACC can be found at:

http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Fdepartments%2Findex.htm.)

Planning for Change

Despite ACC's challenges, employees have been actively engaged in restructuring and rethinking how we can better serve students and create a more positive culture of learning. We conducted multiple discussions and planned sessions with broad campus involvement for those feedback items (Feb, 2009) that provided us with challenges and opportunities for growth and improvement. What we discovered during this process were numerous instances in our Systems Portfolio where our intuitive sense about our internal reporting processes lacked the level of detail to adequately articulate many of our campus reporting mechanisms. We realized we had an opportunity to demonstrate our reporting methods with improved clarity. As our campus culture develops into making decisions based on data, we are becoming more proficient at creating formalized, transparent mechanisms necessary to inform both our internal and external stakeholders.

Aims Community College's mission statement focuses the Board of Trustee's Goals, which in turn drive senior leaders' strategic planning. (Current Board of Trustee goals link: http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Fabout%2Fboard%2Findex.php.) In keeping with our board's goals to "increase access and opportunity for students", college leaders reached out to nationally known educational experts for advice in planning future changes based upon our challenges. Dr. Vincent Tinto and Dr. John Gardner were invited to come to campus to speak to all employees at the college's Fall Convocation, fall 2007 and fall 2008 respectively. In school year 2007-2008, campus wide meetings were held to introduce the adopted the 'Learning Centered' organizational theme. College employees were surveyed at these meetings to enlist and incorporate their thoughts and

ideas into the 'Learning Centered' quality and continuous improvement environment. Student engagement and helping students learn was given a revitalized emphasis for all Aims' campuses/employees.

Our two years of planning for change aided by educational experts, recommendations established from employee suggestions, and AQIP Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, February 9, 2009, led ACC's senior leaders to three major strategic initiatives for change including:

- Learning centered support activities gathered together under one umbrella.
- Senior leadership adopted participation in several national surveys.
- The All College Action Committee's mission took on a tactical nature.

Learning and Organizational Development

Each year in conjunction with long term goals, the Board of Trustees determines Annual Goals utilized by senior leadership at the college for strategic planning. For several years, board goals have included increasing access and opportunity for students and improving student success. In keeping with these goals, strategic planning for on-going campus change incorporated ACC senior leaders' vision of collecting all learning resources for students and employees under one administrative umbrella to facilitate learning across the entire institution. Formation of the new campus area, named Learning and Organizational Development (LOD), involved reorganization of several campus areas. Services forming LOD include: the Center for Professional Development, the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, the Assessment Office, the campus library, the Academic Resource Center (which houses tutoring services, the student computer lab, test proctoring, and Supplemental Instruction), Learning Communities, and ACC's Honors Program. (LOD values: <http://www.aims.edu/about/learningCollege/index.htm>)

As well, planning for construction on campuses included exploration of “learning centeredness” programming so that new buildings (Allied Health, Windsor and Berthoud Campuses) and remodeling of older buildings (Ed Beaty Hall, Horizon Hall, and the College Commons) were created to be dedicated learning spaces and facilities developed for learners. Classroom form followed learning function. State of the art learning technologies were integrated into all campus classrooms to bring the outside world to the students. Special care was taken in choosing classroom furniture so that it would enhance learning. Quiet student study/learning rooms were designed throughout classroom buildings so students would be encouraged to remain in the building to study.

Planning for our current remodeling project in the College Center involved listening and responding to students’ suggestions from campus survey results, fielding suggestions from architects familiar with learning centered design principles, and heeding the advice of educational experts. Senior staff visited other learning centered institutions to develop a student friendly one-stop building where critical services most frequented by students would be housed. The new building, named ‘the College Commons’, brings together offices in the Student Services areas (Dean for Student Services office, Admissions and Records, Student Advising, Career Counseling, Student Disability Services and Placement Testing, Student Financial Aid, Emerging Scholars Program, International Students Program, Student Life, and the Title IV Student Support Services Trio Program), Academic Resource Center services, (Tutoring, Test Proctoring, the Student Computer Center, and Supplemental Instruction), the Cashiers office, the Bistro, the bookstore; and the Library. Construction on this building is scheduled to be completed and in use by the 2010 fall semester.

Collection of use and satisfaction data from the older in-house Student Satisfaction Survey and the new ACT Student Opinion Survey will be utilized to realize how students perceive changes and upgrades to the space. Survey results will be seen in the Calendar of Annual Division/Committee Goal Progress Reports link:

http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Fabout%2Fboard%2Findex.php) and through the Executive Summary posted on the reports and surveys link:

(http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Freports%2Findex.htm).

National Survey Participation

Senior leadership at the college recognized shifting demographics, the need to improve student learning outcomes, and opportunities listed in several places in the AQIP Feedback Report (Feb, 2009) as reasons to improve our participation in measuring, setting benchmarks, and regularly comparing the results of our efforts in helping students learn through several national student/faculty/employee surveys. Aims Community Colleges' senior leadership examined national surveys reputed for allowing appropriate student cohort comparisons. While systematic feedback and goal setting in this regard is in its infancy, the college participated in the pilot of the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) in spring 2009. Senior leadership and staff identified as the SENSE steering committee participated in an educational planning conference, the Entering Student Success Institute (ESSI), in conjunction with our survey participation.

Faculty and staff have been more capable of planning, implementing, analyzing and utilizing results to insure continued improvement and effectiveness. We learned how to set benchmarks for our students based upon our experience with our own longitudinal data and other cohort institutions. Data from this survey helped us determine where systemic improvements and goals could be made for our advising process in student services (25% of students surveyed

responded they had never used advising services), learning services (42% of students reported participation in on-campus orientation; only 11.7% reported participating in the extended orientation course), and within classrooms (46% of students surveyed said they turned in assignments late, 28% did not turn in assignments, 56% came to class unprepared, and 42% skipped class altogether) for students in developmental and entering freshmen level courses. Our goal setting and planning based upon survey results were recently highlighted in the “Talking SENSE Newsletter”, Su, 2009.

(http://www.ccsse.org/sense/resources/publications/Talking_SENSE_Summer_2009.pdf)

We participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement/Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE/CCFSSE) in late spring 2009 and received the results in early August. While our goal setting based upon the data from this survey is ongoing, we have a better sense of collecting, utilizing, goal setting, and assessing improvements and setting up feed-back mechanisms for reporting student improvement and engagement. Currently we are collecting data for the fall cohort of the SENSE for comparison with our spring data. We have also scheduled the ACT Student Opinion Survey to take place in late October and early November of this semester. Participation in this instrument has wide reaching applications as we look at membership in the National Community College Benchmark Project that may help us to make comparisons with other institutions.

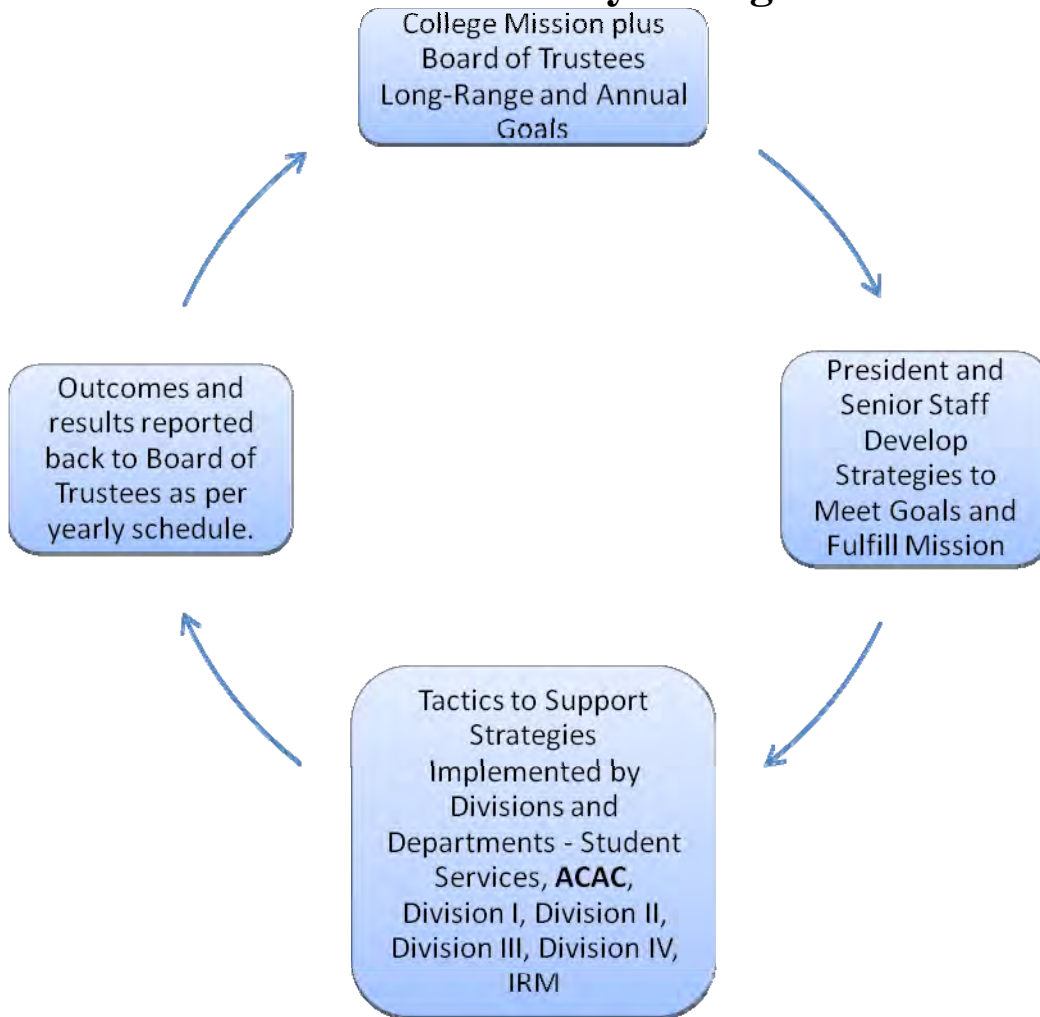
The All College Action Committee

Much of the work in carrying out ACC’s mission is accomplished through the effort of various campus departments and committees. (Committees Links:

http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Fcommittees%2Findex.htm)

Strategic and Tactical Planning Loop

Aims Community College



One such pivotal committee, the All Campus Action Committee (ACAC), was specifically formed with broad campus representation to address issues that are overarching and interdepartmental in nature. At the time this committee was originally created, we knew we wanted this group to be an important intersection between senior leadership's strategic planning and the implementation of special interdepartmental improvement projects across campus. However, we hadn't thought far enough ahead to see how this committee would become a vital tool in achieving a system of quality improvement. The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (February 9, 2009) helped us to see the integrated, tactical role this committee has in planning

from all parts of campus. ACAC has the role of “pulling in information from different leadership groups (i.e. Enrollment Management, Diversity, Curriculum, etc.) and disseminating the information for leaders to understand what is happening in all these areas (Feb, 2009)”, and living its mission, which includes encouraging ideas and cultivating strategies

(http://www4.aims.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aims.edu%2Finternal%2Fcommittees%2Findex.htm). Their information sharing role supports the Board of Trustees’ and senior leaderships’ strategic planning role.

ACAC’s largest tactical role is investigating, implementing, and tracking campus initiatives which have been instituted. ACAC oversees the process where AQIP Action Projects gain approval through an application, selection of sponsoring agent, and review process. ****
Project proposals and tracking through Project Task Maps requires scheduled reporting by chosen project leaders to the ACAC membership which in turn reports back to the BOT and ACC’s senior leadership so improvements can be suggested/executed. Small groups made up of the broad ACAC membership meet regularly to discuss short and long-term program proposals from college departments and divisions.

Opportunity Planning

Many of the areas listed as ‘opportunities’ in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report helped ACC to more clearly articulate our underlying preparation, implementing, recording, and feedback methods. We are learning how to visualize and present planning loops in place of top-down, one-way processes. We look forward to those additional opportunities that will provide us with the prospect of improving of our academic programming in fulfillment of ACC’s mission.