QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

Crowder College

Neosho, Missouri
March 21-23, 2007

Quality Checkup team members:

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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* 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.

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Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

The management and updating of the portfolio at Crowder fulfills the basic goal of building and maintaining it as a living document. The original version has been extensively re-written and it reflects more generally the present state of implementation and development of AQIP at Crowder. At present the Steering Committee is considering ways to better manage the process of updating it as they look forward to the next submission date in November of 2008. The Committee is considering questions such as, how frequently it should be updated, whether to establish "owners" of specific pieces of data, how to organize the updating in order to ensure widespread participation, as well as write a more unified document. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to documentation and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

In the AQIP feedback report of March 2005 the Appraisal team raised a question regarding Board meetings and selection of new Board members as a possible accreditation issue. A closer review showed there was no reason for concern; the original portfolio was not clear on the point. As a result of the Checkup visit the team found no accreditation issues.

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

Crowder carried out a thorough analysis of the feedback report and used it as a basis for establishing a series of Action Projects to respond to the opportunities identified.

Action Project on Planning – As was made clear in the 2004 portfolio, Crowder's Board of Trustees gave a good deal of attention to planning. The AQIP appraisal team believed that perhaps there had been too much emphasis on the "top-down" approach. Without a planning process that grew from lower levels it could result in the Board having too little data about operations. Crowder created an Action Project on planning and this committee has made significant headway in developing the capacity at the lower or operational level of the organization. This committee has designed a process that could strengthen planning with the development of several tools. These tools have yet to be tested in practice, however they may make it possible for the committee to more closely align budgeting with planning. This Action Project may make it possible to draw a more direct link between the levels of planning. It could also make it possible for organization-wide planning and budgeting to be more widely understood by faculty and staff, and Crowder's key stakeholders.

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Action Project on Data Warehousing – Crowder is in the midst of determining whether to move from its present practice of data storage, which is relatively widely fragmented, to a unified data base system. As an interim step, the college is attempting to design a "warehouse" that will create a space limited for "business data." This project has made a good deal of headway in determining the type of data that could be most useful, and the committee has aligned the data elements with AQIP categories.

Action Project on Student Learning Assessment – Crowder has made major strides in designing an assessment system for courses and programs. The strategic framework, the nine skill areas, is well designed. Tools for assessing student learning have been created and implemented in several areas. A broad-based 17-member committee is the primary group that has developed and implemented the program. The nine skill areas have been in place for several years at Crowder and they have been the key feature in helping to create the strategic idea of assessment of student learning. The committee has also created a series of tools to help faculty design classroom and program level assessment and has also developed plans for phases II and III of the project. These phases are expected to extend over the next two to three years.

Action Project on Developmental Education – An analysis and re-design of the developmental education program has resulted in the formation of a separate academic department encompassing student success coursework and support services, math, English, and reading courses and support services, and mandatory placement. Other areas under review are establishing linkages between COMPASS and CAAP scores, tapping into student enthusiasm for learning, monitoring of student progress, and enhancing partnerships with feeder schools. Twenty-one specific actions have been determined to help guide this improvement process. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

It is clear that Crowder has made great strides in implementing quality improvement throughout the organization. The institutional culture, "the Crowder Family," is compatible with the values of continuous quality improvement because of the natural development toward greater unity that springs forth from strongly embedded quality programs. For example, the membership of Action Project teams is made up of faculty and staff, which supports the development of unity and a sense of mission and common purpose. Those from the satellite campuses are able to participate as well.

As a result of discussions with senior leaders, and in hearing presentations from administrators,

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faculty, and students, the Quality Checkup Team believes that Crowder College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

Crowder College presented evidence that it has had official cohort default rates of 4.7% in FY 2002, 6.6% in FY 2003, 4.6% in FY 2004, and 5.2% in FY 2005. A description of steps taken to address default rate issues was provided and in the team's judgment, the institution has presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Crowder's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Other Title IV compliance issues

After reviewing the Program Participation Agreement (PPR), the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR), retention and completion rates for FY 2003 – 2006, and the audit prepared by Mense, Churchwell & Mense, P.C., the team believes the institution has presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

Crowder College offers the Associate of Arts Degree with opportunities for concentration in 26 disciplines, the Associate of Science Degree with 3 concentration areas, and the Associate of Applied Science with 22 concentration options. Thirteen (13) different Certificates of Study may be earned at the college. After reviewing the Programs of Study sheets for these degrees and certificates, along with the college's Web site that posts tuition and fees, the team determined that Crowder presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. Areas of study and semester hour requirements are clearly defined; tuition costs for in-state and out-of-state students, room and board fees, and other fees and charges are publicly displayed. Crowder's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

The team reviewed a number of publications that Crowder uses to promote its programs and to

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recruit students. It appears the college's approach to advertising and recruitment materials is similar to other like institutions within the area. In its approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

Crowder College offers two programs requiring external accreditation other than that with the Higher Learning Commission. Their Associate Degree Nursing program is approved through the Missouri State Board of Nursing through 2008 and the Industrial Technology program is approved through the National Association of Industrial Technology through 2012. In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

By reviewing the student complaint logs from both academic and student development areas of the college, and through discussions with staff and students, the Quality Checkup team has determined the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

Other USDE compliance-related issues

In the team's judgment, Crowder College presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to Third Party Comment was to communicate with its stakeholders to request comment to the Commission. An article in area newspapers, *The Joplin Independent, The Neosho Daily News, and McDonald County Newspapers*, along with a link on the Crowder College web site explained the intent of the Checkup visit and provided an email link and the Commission mailing address. On March 12, 2007, the Quality Checkup team received a memorandum from the Commission indicating there had been no comments received. The methods utilized by Crowder are acceptable and comply with the Commission and AQIP's expectation.

Other AQIP issues

Meetings with students, Board of Trustee members, and employee stakeholders posted very positive comments with regard to the college's role in supporting educational needs, personal

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support and development, and the introduction of culture and diversity within learning environment. It is clear that Crowder College is held in high esteem by both students and the communities it serves.

Participation by Crowder College Stakeholders at the Quality Checkup Visit Sessions March 21-23, 2007			
Day	**Session**	**Topic**	**Participants**
1	1	Preliminary Meeting with AQIP Contact	1
	2	Introductory meeting with Administrators and Board of Trustees	15
	3	Federal Compliance	4
	4	Review of Systems Appraisal	7
	5	Institutional Profile	5
2	6	Summary of Action Projects	2
	7	Meeting with Students	4
	8	Action Project – Information Warehousing	2
	9	Meeting with President	1
	10	Meeting with Satellite campuses	4
	11	Meeting with Employee Group Representatives	6
	12	Action Project - Assessment	10
	13	Action Project – Planning	4
	14	Action Project – Developmental Education	11
3	15	Review Report with Administrators	4
	16	Final Report Presentation	35

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