

December 15, 2005

Dr. Eric Larson
President
Blackhawk Technical College
P.O. Box 5009; 6004 Prairie Rd.
Janesville, WI 53547-5009

Dear President Larson:

I am proud to congratulate Blackhawk Technical College on being accepted as a participant in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). In approving your application to participate, the AQIP Review Panel recognized your appreciation of the potential benefits that can come from recasting accreditation activities so that they better support your institution's program for continuous improvement. The Panel's decision to recommend approval of Blackhawk Technical College testifies to its recognition of your readiness to join this undertaking, your appreciation of both the challenges and potential rewards, and your willingness to collaborate with us in finding new ways to use accreditation to provide value to member organizations.

The Panel's Rationale for its decision was:

- It appears BTC has taken several steps over a period of years to study the AQIP process and quality management systems in general, and there is apparently organization-wide understanding and acceptance of participation in AQIP.
- Through their Plan-Do-Check-Act processes, Blackhawk Technical College have created a monitoring and screening process that annually reviews/ evaluates the health and well being of their programs and identifies potential programs that meet the needs of their students and communities (in place for ten years).
- Blackhawk's advanced assessment systems begins with all courses being developed in a performance-based learning system – Worldwide Instructional Design System with the assistance of their advisory boards. All programs have specific outcomes that are based on tasks performed in the workplace as defined by workplace employers in DACUM (Designing A Curriculum).
- Blackhawk has implemented a web-based tracking and reporting tool- TracDat to store and analyze much of their assessment and institutional effectiveness data.
- The institution appears to have made significant process on the assessment of student learning since its visit in 2000.
- The institution utilizes Plan-Do-Check-Act processes as foundational to its community education program.
- Participation in Strategic Horizons appears to have provided a foundation on which to systematize continuous improvement approaches.
- The college appears to expect a culture change as a result of participation in AQIP.

In addition, the Panel members asked me to share with you the following advice and counsel, which I hope you find helpful:

- BTC appears to have carried out extensive examination of quality management systems and that much has been done to gain support for moving to AQIP throughout the college. However, there does not appear to have been as much planning in several other

areas, particularly points 5-8. If the statements in the application reflect accurately the state of preparation, then it would seem advisable to give more extensive thought and planning to these points.

- As in most institutions, communication, cooperation, and teamwork are a challenge at Blackhawk. They were identified as challenges in the last self study and are good process areas for an AQIP action project.
- Blackhawk needs to continue in their contract negotiations with the Faculty Federation with very open communication about AQIP. It might be helpful to have a couple AQIP schools with faculty and staff unions to talk with about educating the bargaining group about AQIP benefits and getting buy-in.
- It is unclear what Blackhawk's timeframe for implementation of AQIP might be. The institution should develop an overall calendar for all phases of the AQIP accreditation process.
- The institution indicates that it recognizes the ongoing issue of trust and communication, noting that this will be the first area reviewed for a potential Action Project (in addition to the emphasis within the Strategic Horizon project.) It appears from the candidness of the application that these efforts should continue.
- The institution's commitment to ongoing participation in the Strategic Horizons project would seem to be complement participation in AQIP.

Participating in AQIP envisions a continuing collaboration, with a seven-year period preceding your next *Reaffirmation of Accreditation*, which we have now scheduled for the 2012-13 academic year. During the intervening years, we expect Blackhawk Technical College to be a full partner in AQIP, participating in a Strategy Forum within the next year, preparing a Systems Portfolio for Appraisal approximately three years later, and providing us Annual Updates on Action Projects each year — the first in a repeating four-year cycle of Strategy Forums, Annual Updates and Systems Portfolios and Appraisals.

Crafting a new accreditation process and a new relationship between member schools and their accrediting agency is no small challenge. We will make mistakes, and we count on you to call our attention to them, quickly and frankly. We welcome your suggestions on ways to make what we do more valuable to your institution and we welcome your advice on essential information and services to which we might help you get access. We look forward to a collaboration with you that will be stimulating, productive, and enjoyable for both you and AQIP.

Your official liaison with the Commission now becomes the collective AQIP staff — although you can call upon any other member of the Commission staff who can be helpful to you and your institution in any way. I encourage you to make the fullest possible use of the resources and information we can provide for you. If you have questions about anything, please call me (x.106) or my AQIP staff colleagues — Neil Yoke (x. 109), Mary Fleming (x. 130), or Courtney Hill (x. 125) — at any time.

Sincerely,

Stephen D. Spanghel
Director

Enclosures: Participation Release Memo, Press Release, AQIP Logo Release Form, Strategy Forum Date Selection Form and Guidelines for Choosing Dates

