

4. What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the Commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?

By examining the challenges identified by the Commission, RCTC has developed a comprehensive response designed to create a culture of assessment and ongoing improvement.

4.a. Identify challenges directly related to the proposed change.

Rochester Community and Technical College's last comprehensive visit was conducted April 23-25, 2001 and is summarized in the Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit (Appendix). Between 1996 and 2000, RCTC also participated in three Minnesota Council on Quality site visits based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. The 2001 visit was regarded a special emphasis one, highlighting areas defined in the Baldrige process, and the team report was formatted to mirror the Baldrige-based feedback report. The visit was customized to internal planning processes and feedback reports to include the following seven areas:

- Teaching and Learning
- Partnerships
- Planning and Continuous Improvement
- Human Resources Development
- Assessment and Organizational Performance
- Student and Stakeholder Focus
- Technology

For purposes of this report, challenges that relate most to distance education need to be considered and addressed. In the final report, the following challenges were characterized as continuing ones (opportunities for improvement but being addressed by the college) and may both be affected by and impact this request:

- There is no discernible process for prioritizing budgetary and educational needs in a long-range, strategic manner (1990 visit)
- Academic Support Services are readily available to many students who need them. More and more non-traditional students are coming to RCTC, and many have academic needs that are not receiving adequate attention and assistance (1990)



- The team could find no evidence of on-going system of course or program evaluation or review (1990)

Under Part Seven, Strategic Planning: Focus on planning and continuous improvement opportunities for improvement include:

- The college has not collected consistent and verifiable data to use in decision making. Failure to provide quality data will result in a lack of credibility if inappropriate or inconsistent decisions are made
- The college has not determined how strategic planning efforts will be linked to decision making, particularly resource allocation. Failure to clarify the link between strategic planning and resource allocation may result in core processes being neglected.

Under Part Seven, Educational Process Management: Technology, Partnerships, Teaching and Learning opportunities for improvement related to online learning are:

- There is no evidence of measuring or evaluating program outcomes or learner competencies. Lack of identifiable competencies does not allow the institution to assess its educational objectives and to ensure that employer expectations are met
- A plan for assessment of student academic achievement has not been developed. Assessment data does not contribute to decision making, particularly in curriculum and faculty development.

Finally, under Part Eight: Advice and Suggestions, related items include:

- The Institutional Services and Information Technology departments should consider increasing staff to respond adequately to demands of supporting the teaching and learning process.

Since that visit, the college has implemented several initiatives to address strategic planning and create a continuous improvement culture. Progress has been made in the majority of these challenges, and because there are now institution-wide strategies not limited in scope, they will all be impacted directly by this proposed institutional change.

4.b. Describe how the organization has addressed the challenge(s).

The Continuous Improvement (CI) Initiative is aimed at creating a culture of assessment and ongoing improvement throughout RCTC. Many of the challenges noted in the report centered on the strategic,



consistent use of reliable data in decision-making, and that philosophy has been adopted at all levels of the college. Because online learning has become integrated into the overall mission and goals of the institution, these general institution directives have impact on this environment as well. The CI website (www.rctc.edu/ci) is designed to work together in achieving a fundamental cultural change:

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

In June 2003, RCTC applied to the HLC Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). The Academic Quality Improvement Program infuses the principles and benefits of continuous improvement into the culture of colleges and universities by providing an alternative process through which an already-accredited institution can maintain its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. With AQIP, an institution demonstrates it meets accreditation standards and expectations through sequences of events that align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their performance. Based on needs and report data, the institution has adopted the following three items known as “The AQIP Vital Few”.

A. AQIP Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

This project focuses on the creation of an accountability framework providing a systematic approach to measure institutional effectiveness. Activities including the identification of key college indicators will cascade throughout the college assisting departments to align their indicators with college indicators and goals. Identifying competitive and comparative data and best practices is another focal point of the project. Another major project is to link data systems and sources via a common portal enhancing access and reliability to data and information. The portal will support college leadership and staff in planning and decision-making.

B. AQIP Assessment of Student Learning

The goal of this project is to create a learning organization grounded on a comprehensive assessment process fostering a culture that values innovation and continuous improvement. Additionally, this project will result in the establishment of a systematic approach to measure student learning. Measuring the outcomes of teaching and learning-centered processes is key in the determination of institutional accountability and institutional effectiveness. Student learning results are core indicators demonstrating institutional accountability and provide faculty with information to continuously improve teaching and learning.



C. AQIP Human Resources Planning

This project will focus on creating a comprehensive human resources plan that aligns with the college's strategic directions, addressing concerns raised by The Higher Learning Commission and Minnesota Council for Quality (MCQ). The Higher Learning Commission has also cited the aging of the RCTC staff and its diversity as issues to address. Components of the human resources plan may include, but are not limited to, faculty and staff recruitment, employee orientation, employee retention, faculty and staff diversity, and professional and personal development.

Integrated Planning Process

RCTC also implemented an Integrated Planning Process (IPP) designed to address key strategies, goals and ongoing budgeting. The IPP ties together MnSCU directives to RCTC institutional goals, with key performance indicators (KPI) used to gauge success. The Strategic Plan Matrix at right illustrates how the goals respond to system defined ones, and there is the presence of technology and distance education throughout many. It is present in the development of the four main goals for RCTC, particularly #2:

RCTC Strategic Plan Matrix

RCTC Values	Learner-Centered	Excellence	Innovation	Teamwork	Respect	Fun	
Signature Statements	MnSCU Directions	RCTC Goals	Core Institutional Strategies				Key Performance Indicators
Vision Rochester Community and Technical College will be a universal gateway to world class learning opportunities. Mission Statement Rochester Community and Technical College provides accessible, affordable quality learning opportunities to serve a diverse and growing community.	Fully Integrate The System	Goal 1: Create a Culture of Accountability Through Assessment and Continuous Improvement.	1.1 Design a process encouraging decision-makers at all levels to make use of existing assessment tools, utilize data to formulate decisions, and communicate how decisions are made. 1.2 Integrate the practice of continuous quality improvement and ensure a "plan, do, check and act" cycle is incorporated into all College processes.	1.3 Align fiscal, human and capital resources to achieve goals and strategies.			Resource Generation Stakeholder Satisfaction Practiced Values
	Expand High-Quality Learning Programs And Services	Goal 2: Enhance Learning Through Improved Instruction, Support Services, Technology, and Facilities.	2.1 Explore alternatives to standard credit based instruction. 2.2 Expand collaborations with K-12, other higher education providers, business and industry and other key stakeholder groups. 2.3 Evaluate staffing levels and ensure employees are deployed and focused on the institutional priorities of the College.	2.4 Align technology and facility improvements to academic plans. 2.5 Focus institutional attention on learner outcomes and experiences that support RCTC's mission.			Student Success Resource Accountability
	Increase Access And Opportunity	Goal 3: Advance Learning Excellence and Improve Organizational Focus	3.1 Develop a systematic process to scan the environment, analyze results, and focus on the future. 3.2 Allocate resources to reward and recognize learning-centered innovations, respect and teamwork. 3.3 Create a framework of college-wide integrated and aligned measures.	3.4 Expand and implement a comprehensive human resources plan that enhances selection, orientation, evaluation, and development processes and procedures. 3.5 Develop a comprehensive approach to enrollment management.			Individual & Institutional Development Process Alignment & Improvement
	Strengthen Community Development And Economic Vitality	Goal 4: Engage Diverse Stakeholders and Strengthen Enduring Relationships	4.1 Review and realign the work of advisory groups to support inclusive thinking. 4.2 Identify partnerships and opportunities to leverage new resources that better serve students and stakeholders.	4.3 Deploy a plan to cultivate loyalty and use the influence of current students, alumni, and friends of RCTC.			Cultivate & Engage Stakeholders
Strategic Challenges	Demonstrate Accountability	Funding and Resource Allocation	Focus - What's Our Niche	Community Understanding of RCTC			

Goal 1: Create a Culture of Accountability Through Assessment and Continuous Improvement.

Goal 2: Enhance Learning Through Improved Instruction, Support Services, Technology, and Facilities.

Goal 3: Advance Learning Excellence and Improve Organizational Focus.

Goal 4: Engage Diverse Stakeholders and Strengthen Enduring Relationships.

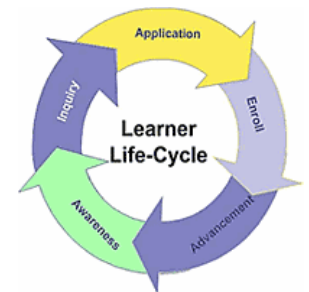


Stakeholder Survey Results

In order to understand how satisfied stakeholders are, the college must find ways of gathering their input and perspectives. Once this data is processed, it needs to be readily available and used in decision-making. In the past, this may have been non-scientific and based more on the absence of complaints or dissatisfaction. A “Listening and Learning” website with results is now available at <http://www.rctc.edu/ci/listening-n-learning.html>, and currently contains the following institutional reports:

- 2005 Survey of Stakeholders (PDF)
- 2005 Campus Quality Survey (PDF)
- 2005 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (PDF)
- 2005 Student Satisfaction Inventory (PDF)
- 2005 UCR Knowledge and Awareness Study (PDF)
- 2004 RCTC Survey of Stakeholders (PDF)

In addition, RCTC has now implemented a Learner Life Cycle (right) that continually seeks this participation at different points in their experience (Awareness, Inquiry, Application, Enroll, Advancement). This life-cycle is intended to show that learners do not terminate their educational involvement, and are continually engaged in the cycle.



Balanced Scorecard

Rochester Community and Technical College continues to work towards implementation of a Balanced Scorecard approach to performance management. The college has identified four major categories of indicators, including student learning outcomes; for each of the twelve indicators, operational definitions are being established and related measures are being identified. Targets for each indicator are being set that will be benchmarked with like institutions and leading organizations. MNSCU’s Internal Auditor and staff in the Office of the Chancellor have held extensive discussions and drafted a plan for developing and monitoring a system of performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the system. The live scorecard or dashboard is a current indication of key indicators, and visually represents the state of the college.



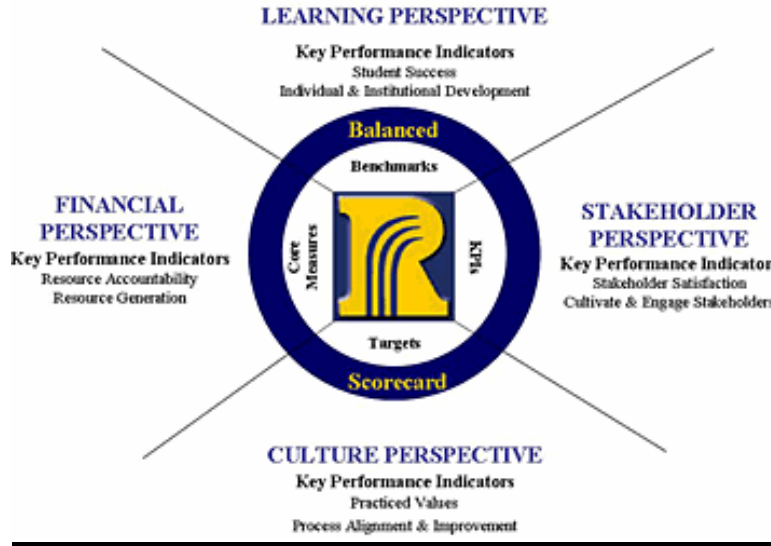


Figure 11: RRTC balanced scorecard

Baldrige National Quality Award

The Baldrige Program for Performance Excellence provides a systematic perspective for understanding performance management. Such principles are derived from validated, leading-edge management practices around the world and offer an organization a framework within which it can measure itself, as well as assess progress toward improvements over time. Accepted nationally and internationally as the model for performance excellence, the Baldrige Criteria represent a common language for communication among organizations for sharing best practices. The Criteria are also the basis for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award process. As the graphic below illustrates, RRTC has approached all of the above items as linked to an overall philosophy. None of them stand alone; rather they are an approach to creating a cultural change based on sound foundational standards.



Figure 12: RRTC approach to change



Other Quality Initiatives and Resources

RCTC also participates in and partners with several other quality-centered organizations and programs.

These include:

- Rochester Area Quality Council - The RAQC mission is to promote awareness of the opportunities in quality and productivity by advocating the widespread use of continuous quality improvement processes, providing training in new quality tools and techniques, and exchanging ideas, experiences, and expertise.
- eLumen - eLumen will RCTC to more fully attend to student achievement and academic standards. The eLumen program creates, continually improves, and makes available recommended structures and practices that faculty and staff can use to specify, document, and communicate both actual and potential student learning outcomes. eLumen will create a model of accountability that is appropriate to RCTC, both in the liberal arts and in technical and professional programs, and that can eventually be used in other types of organizational settings. As part of achieving these purposes, eLumen provides opportunities for strengthening the position of publicly funded academic institutions in state legislatures, and as such, represents a national initiative to transform higher education.
- MN Council for Quality - The Minnesota Council for Quality is a non-profit corporation that advances improvement and performance excellence within organizations, individuals, and communities. The Council helps leaders identify strengths and improvement opportunities and builds networks that bring information, resources, knowledge, and best practices to organizations desiring to improve.
- American Society for Quality - The American Society for Quality (ASQ) is the world's leading authority on quality. With more than 100,000 individual and organizational members, this professional association advances learning, quality improvement, and knowledge exchange to improve business results, and to create better workplaces and communities worldwide.
- Continuous Quality Improvement Network - The purpose of the Continuous Quality Improvement Network shall be to assist member CEOs with active organizational transformation via out-of-box learning and sharing best practices. This Network shall also develop strategies to enhance active institutional learning for faculty, staff and trustees.



Another challenge that has been addressed is under the general topic of student assessment. The Assessment of Student Learning committee and website (<http://www.roch.edu/dept/asl/>) operates with the following purpose:

“The purpose of the assessment of student learning committee is to assist faculty and students in determining student acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values through multiple measures of course outcomes with the goals of involving students in the learning process and providing feedback for improving student success.”

This committee is not exclusively for online courses, and addresses all delivery formats. For example, in response to the challenge of accommodating program and department reviews, an ASL documentation process was developed as follows:

Academic Program/Department Review
Section 7: Program/Department Assessment of Student Learning

- 7.1. Describe what students should be able to represent, demonstrate or produce as a result of their learning in the program/department.**
- 7.2. Are there professional organizations’ standards or outcome statements that are incorporated?**
- 7.3. What numerical standard (s) has your program/department set relating to student learning?**
- 7.4. Describe assessment opportunities provided for students to achieve the intended outcomes.**
- 7.5. Describe the relationship between assessment in courses and assessment at the program/department level.**
- 7.6. Provide a copy of the rubric used by the program/department to gather assessment data.**
- 7.7. Using the assessment data collected (eLumen reports) describe what changes (if any) need to be made to the curriculum.**
- 7.8. Describe how changes help will students reach the intended learning outcomes of the program/department.**

Resources such as Sample Matrixes, eLumen, Powerpoint presentations, Minnesota Transfer Curriculum guidelines, and glossaries are available for use. The same kinds of tools and resources are intended for use regardless of delivery method, creating a universal approach to student assessment at RCTC.

RCTC has also made significant investments in personnel and organizational changes aimed at some of the same challenges. The college has a full-time Institutional Researcher in the area of College Effectiveness and Relations. The previously mentioned restructuring of the Department of Educational



Technology and addition of the administrative Director position illustrate the strategic positioning of online learning. The Online Student Advisor in the Student Services area addresses some of the critical academic service needs of online learners. The Information Technology Master Plans refer to online learning technology throughout, and investments in infrastructure and supporting personnel continue. The Vice President of Teaching and Learning will serve on MnSCU's Minnesota Online Council. RCTC has taken the challenges identified in 2001 as opportunities, and made significant improvements in a relatively short time. The college is well positioned to successfully implement this institutional change, and continue to implement cultural changes.

