

New Mexico State University – Carlsbad: Quality Highlights

Quality Highlights

One of the most innovative and far-reaching decisions NMSU-C has made in its effort to make quality improvement sustainable and campus-wide was to restructure the school's committee system to reflect the AQIP categories. The proposal for this initiative originated in the "Valuing People" Committee while that committee was overseeing one of the school's original action projects, "valuing people." Having reviewed the results of a satisfaction survey, the committee thought to improve employee morale by creating a mechanism whereby every member of the campus community could contribute directly and significantly to quality improvement. Six committees now comprise the school's governance system, five of which are responsible for at least one of the AQIP categories. The sixth is made up of the chairs of each of the five AQIP committees (<http://artemis.nmsu.edu/AQIP/update/cat5final.htm>). All employee groups are represented on all five AQIP committees. For example, The Institutional Leadership and Communicating Committee is responsible for AQIP categories four and five; its membership includes the CEO, four faculty members, four exempt staff members, four non-exempt staff members, one student member and one "open" selection."

The original intent of the "valuing people" committee was that each AQIP committee would submit at least one action project proposal every year to the Strategic Planning Committee, which would then select which projects to submit formally to AQIP. Projects not selected but approved for implementation would go forward, using the AQIP model. This original goal has been achieved. Currently, each committee is shepherding at least one action project through the AQIP process. Each committee is responsible for updating its formal action projects for the Aug. – Sept. reporting period.

This system has been in place for three semesters. In that time, some modifications to the original plan have evolved:

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- Committee participation is now reflected in employee evaluations – The decision to evaluate employees' committee participation had more to do with reward than coercion. Participation rates are high, but committee responsibilities under this new structure are relatively heavy and time-consuming; as is generally the case, some people contribute more ideas, more time, and more effort than others. Committees evaluate each member's level of participation and pass that information to relevant administrators to be included in overall employee performance evaluations.
- Committees are now responsible for yearly portfolio updates on progress in their categories; the Strategic Planning Committee compiles the results for the formal portfolio update required by AQIP.
- Committees are responsible for developing short- and long-term goals to be included in the strategic plan. Beginning in Fall 2007, each committee will submit long- and short-term strategic initiatives to the Strategic Planning Committee, which will evaluate them for inclusion in the school's strategic plan. Action projects may also be considered for inclusion in the strategic plan.

Perhaps the only significant drawback to this structure is a degree of unwieldiness. Committees meet once a month; discussions are usually animated, and decisions tend not to be reached in as timely a manner as most committee chairs would wish. At this point, however, The Strategic Planning Committee (the committee ultimately responsible for guiding the AQIP accreditation process) thinks that meaningful participation is more valuable than strict adherence to deadlines. Still, committees may be asked to consider creating sub-committees as a way of expediting the work that needs to get done. In particular the workload of the Academic Affairs and Assessment Committee has been unpredictably heavy, an issue that will be addressed this coming semester.

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