

## Quality Focus Essay (QFE)

### Overview/Background

Through the self-evaluation process, the College identified 71 action recommendations. These recommendations emerged from the summary of each of the standards. The College is leveraging these recommendations to, among other things, demonstrate its commitment to continuous quality improvement and institutional effectiveness. Opportunities for the College to exceed the standards and excel in effectiveness were identified during discussions among Standard Writing Team (SWT) members. The results were shared and communicated with the Accreditation Steering Committee in early drafts of each team's respective reports. These recommendations provided a rich collection of ideas and specific activities about student learning and institutional effectiveness. The outcomes of the Self-Evaluation emerged just as the College enters into its second half of its annual program review, planning, and budget augmentation cycle. The plan is commonly referred to as Program Review, Allocation, and Institutional Strategies for Excellence (PRAISE Report).

### Findings from Self-Evaluation

Generally speaking, the emerging themes from the summary of the standards fell under three broad themes and in turn, these emerging themes suitably aligned very well with three of the College's strategic goals:

- Student Success
- Systems and Process Improvement
- Institutional Climate Improvement

The emerging themes from the self-evaluation report complemented the College's focus on improving student success, improving business processes, and increasing good communication. Many of the improvements that emerged from the standard summaries were categorized as maintenance or continuation of effort. This meant that the College was already working on a plan that was designed to improve effectiveness in that particular area. Therefore, the College wanted to focus its Quality Focus Essay (QFE) Action Projects on those areas emerging from standards that provided the College with the most promising opportunities to improve its prioritized strategic focus. These Action Projects are distinct from the College's other plans in that they provide an overarching model of improvement efforts across the campus for the next 6 years.

More importantly, these Action Projects will provide College stakeholders with the roadmap that will guide the College as it pursues its strategic progress on student achievement and institutional effectiveness. The table below shows the three strategic goals around which the Projects are based. For the sake of clarity, the strategic goals are in fact Action Projects (AP).

### Strategic Goals and Associated Areas of Focus

The College's prioritized areas of focus are represented by the three strategic goals used in the last two PRAISE cycles. The corresponding goal statements are specified below with related

institutional effectiveness indicators for each area: Student Success, Systems/Process Improvement, and Institutional Climate Improvement.

Strategic Goal	Objective	Summative and Key Performance Indicators
<u>Strategic Goal I: Student Success (Action Plan)</u>	To move the College to the top tier of regional and state community colleges by: increasing overall retention, course completion, persistence, graduation, transfer rates, and job placement for the College's graduates.	<p>Year to year percentage increase in the retention rates for all students groups.</p> <p>Year to year percentage increase in the course completion rates for all student groups.</p> <p>Year to year percentage increase in the persistence rates for all student groups.</p> <p>Year to year percentage increase in the graduation rates for all student groups.</p> <p>Year to year percentage increase in the transfer rates for all student groups.</p> <p>Year to year percentage increase in the job placement rates for all student groups (post-graduation occupational outcomes).</p>
<u>Strategic Goal II: Systems/Process Improvement (Action Plan)</u>	The College will dramatically improve performance, quality, efficiency and services by: streamlining existing processes to eliminate elements that do not add value or enhance operational and institutional effectiveness.	Year to year increase in the percentage of College units reporting satisfaction with processes and operational effectiveness
<u>Strategic Goal III: Institutional Climate Improvement (AP)</u>	The College will improve institutional climate and positively impact employee morale by developing the following focal points: increased participation in decision-making, increase communication.	Increase in the percentage of the number of employees indicating that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that the workplace is supportive as measured by the two diminutions (Increased participation in the Decision making process and increased Communication).

Identification of Action Projects

Once the 71 [proposed action recommendations](#) were aggregated into a thematic list of the best ideas that captured the essence of the standard summaries, distinct patterns emerged. As stated above, these actions were organized around the College’s strategic goals. Although each action has the potential to positively impact all three strategic goals or action plans, the most promising ideas are organized as projects under the strategic goals that will produce the greatest impact. This process will enable each of the College’s strategic goals to have an overarching impact on the action plans.

Overview of QFE Projects - Actions and Impacts

The table below summarizes the Action Projects and their relationship to the standards, key actions, and intended impacts.

College Strategic Goal	Relevant Standards	QFE Action and Impact Statements
Strategic Goal I: Student Success (AP)	Standards IIA.7, IIB.4	<p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p>In order to improve overall student success for students enrolled in online courses, expand support services. Expand student support services to help students taking classes at the off-campus locations. Enhance support services that assist students to prepare and improve their online readiness skills, receive counseling/advising, and tutoring.</p> <p><b>PROXIMAL IMPACT</b> – These activities will help increase student success across the 6 dimensions mentioned above, (increasing overall retention, course completion, persistence, graduation, transfer rates, and job placement for the College’s graduates.</p> <p><b>DISTAL IMPACT</b> – Provision of student access to key services, increased utilization of those services, and increased student progress and achievement.</p>
Strategic Goal II: Systems/Process Improvement (AP)	Standards IB.8, IB.9, IIA.3, IIIC.1, III.D.2, III.D.3, IIID.8, IVA.3, IVC.7	<p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p>The College will dramatically improve performance, quality, efficiency and services by: streamlining existing processes to eliminate elements that do not add value or enhance operational and institutional effectiveness. To improve performance, quality, efficiency and services, the College will develop an ongoing systemic approach to increasing participation in the decision making process regarding process, systems improvement including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation of recent revisions to PRAISE to determine process compliance, impact of recent changes, and any new opportunities to improve the PRAISE Report as a planning tool.</li> <li>▪ Evaluation of current business processes to identify opportunities and resources needed for automation and improvement.</li> <li>▪ Review of board policies and administrative procedures to ensure that policies are updated routinely.</li> <li>▪ Review the shared governance system and structures to ensure robust participation and effectiveness in the College’s governance structure, and effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p><b>PROXIMAL IMPACT</b> – continuous quality improvement and institutional effectiveness. These process and systems improvement plans will allow the</p>

College Strategic Goal	Relevant Standards	QFE Action and Impact Statements
		<p>College to improve its operations and effectiveness as it assesses the effectiveness of its processes.</p> <p>DISTAL IMPACT – Improved operational efficiencies and less silos across operational areas, leading to better collaboration and more effective work systems that operate in a cost-efficient manner.</p>
Strategic Goal IX: Institutional Climate Improvement (AP)	Standards IB.8, IIA.5, IIIA.5, IIIA.8, III.A.10,	<p><b>ACTION</b>                      In order to improve institutional climate and positively impact employee morale, the College develops increased participation in decision-making and increased communication. The College increases employee participation in the decision-making process as well as improves communication with College communities in order to achieve a supportive workplace environment.</p> <p><b>PROXIMAL IMPACT</b> – provide a positive work environment that will translate to increased student success as employee morale is related to improved productivity.</p> <p><b>DISTAL IMPACT</b> – College employees who are satisfied with the quality of their work life and are active in the decision-making process have a strong sense of commitment, effective teamwork, and positive communication across all programs and constituencies.</p>

Specification of QFE Projects

Integration of each Action Project with the College’s existing planning and evaluation systems is accommodated in two ways:

- by leveraging established indicators, the [Institutional Effectiveness Scorecards](#), to serve as summative assessments of progress in the short-term (1 year) and the long-term (6 years); and
- by establishing new procedures for integrating Action Projects in the College’s established institutional planning system—starting with this year’s PRAISE cycle. As planning requests are compiled, considered, and prioritized, these Action Projects will be referenced to ensure alignment of major initiatives and augmentation requests for next year’s funding.

The following sections include specifications for each project using the components defined in the *Guide to Evaluating and Improving Institutions (August 2016)*. This is followed by procedures for integrating Action Projects into the prioritization phase of the PRAISE Cycle for budget year 2017-2018.

Quality Project Plan for Student Success

Desired Goals / Outcomes	Actions / Steps to be Implemented	Responsible Party and Timeline	Resources and Key Collaborators	Formative Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase overall--retention, course completion, persistence, graduation, transfer rates, and job placement for the College’s graduates</li> <li>- Projected demand is known (enrollments online and at remote sites over the next 3 to 5 years).</li> <li>- Gap analysis of remote access services is completed.</li> <li>- Total cost of ownership to close the gap in terms of upfront and maintenance expense (for equipment, technology, personnel, training, etc.) is known.</li> <li>- Tactical plan that includes progress monitoring and evaluation is developed.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Develop specifications regarding the best practices that are related to improving student success, including professional development for staff, faculty, and administrators. Engage different college stakeholders regarding their roles and responsibilities in achieving student success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assign responsibility center</li> <li>- Request calculations of projections for online and remote site enrollments for the next 3 to 5 years</li> <li>- Conduct gap analysis and feasibility study</li> <li>- Develop and propose tactical plan</li> </ul> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Implement tactical plan</p> <p><u>Phase 3:</u> Evaluate tactical plan</p>	<p><u>Responsible Party:</u> Executive Vice President</p> <p><u>Timeline:</u> Phase 1 = Fall 2017 Phase 2 = Spring 2017 through Fall 2018 Phase 3 = Spring 2019</p>	<p><u>Resources:</u> General fund, SSSP, possibly SEP</p> <p><u>Key Collaborators:</u> Academic Senate, Student Equity Student Services / SSSP Office of Instruction DE Coordinator DEAC Deans Council</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Process followed within scope, timeline and budget; viable tactical plan delivered to President for consideration and approval by Fall 2017.</p> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Plan basis TBD</p> <p><u>Phase 3:</u> Plan basis TBD</p>

Quality Project Plan for Systems / Process Improvement

Desired Goals / Outcomes	Actions / Steps to be Implemented	Responsible Party and Timeline	Resources and Key Collaborators	Formative Assessments
<p>Dramatically improve performance, quality, efficiency and services by: streamlining existing processes to eliminate elements that do not add value or enhance operational and institutional effectiveness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- College employees are aware of the planned actions aimed at improving College processes and systems across campus.</li> <li>- More college employees participate in the various discussions about quality process--attending meetings, responding to emails, surveys, or other requests for input.</li> <li>- Documents are widely distributed across campus.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Develop systemic approach to increase an institutional consensus regarding systems process improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Superintendent/President will notify College workforce of the plan for improving the College's processes and systems in order to achieve institutional effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p>Superintendent/President will (1) notify College employees about the strategy for review and maintenance of BPs and APs. Start the process of assessing the Effectiveness of the PRAISE Report and its effectiveness in helping the College execute its planning needs. Identify other priority areas of the College that need to improve their systems and processes in the next five years. Identify additional areas that need to assess their effectiveness, including Committees and other entities responsible for helping the College achieve effectiveness.</p> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Develop tactical plans for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business process evaluations</li> <li>- Shared governance evaluation</li> </ul> <p><u>Phase 3:</u> Implement above tactical plans and share results campus-wide</p>	<p><u>Responsible Party:</u> Superintendent/ President Office</p> <p><u>Timeline:</u> Phase 1 = Fall 2017</p> <p>Phase 2 = Spring 2018 through Fall 2018</p> <p>Phase 3 = Academic Year 2017-2018</p>	<p><u>Resources:</u> General fund</p> <p><u>Key Collaborators:</u> All College Units President's Cabinet Classified Staff Academic Senate Deans Council Management Team College Council Ellucian</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Increased campus-wide communications about systems and process improvement</p> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Viable tactical plans delivered to President for consideration and approval by Spring 2018</p> <p><u>Phase 3:</u> Plans deployed within scope, timeline and budget. Plan basis for other assessments TBD (e.g., improved cycle times and customer satisfaction for targeted business processes; improvements to shared governance structures or system identified).</p>

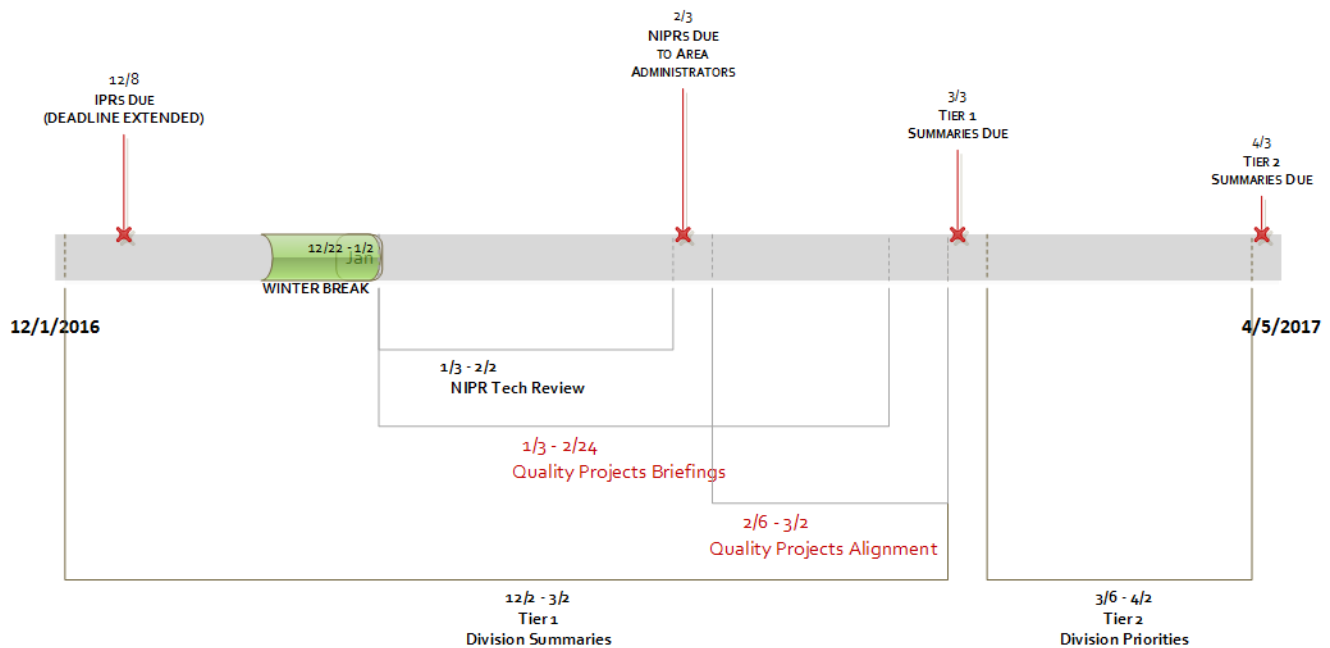
Quality Project Plan for Institutional Climate Improvement

Desired Goals / Outcomes	Actions / Steps to be Implemented	Responsible Party and Timeline	Resources and Key Collaborators	Formative Assessments
<p>- Improve institutional climate and positively impact employee morale by increasing participation in decision-making and increasing communication. Identify more strategies for increasing employee participation in the decision-making process. Identify additional strategies that will increase the quality of communication across the campus.</p> <p>- Identify additional professional development needs of all employees and conduct a survey of employees on what performance indicators would help the College achieve a supportive workplace environment</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> with the participation of College stakeholders, identify more strategies for increasing employee participation in the decision-making process. Identify additional strategies that will increase the quality of communication across the campus. Identify additional professional development needs of all employees and conduct a survey of employees on what performance indicators would help the College achieve a supportive workplace environment</p> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Implement the strategies for increasing employee participation in the decision-making process. Implement strategies for improving communication across the College. Implement professional development for College employees.</p> <p>With assistance from College stakeholders, IER develop tactical plan for next Campus Climate Survey (employee edition).</p> <p><u>Phase 3:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue implementation of professional development program.</li> <li>- Administer Campus Climate Survey.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Responsible Party:</u> Superintendent/ President Office</p> <p><u>Timeline:</u> Phase 1 = Fall 2017</p> <p>Phase 2 = Spring 2018 through Summer 2018</p> <p>Phase 3 = Academic Year 2018-2019</p>	<p><u>Resources:</u> General fund; possibly SSSP and/or SEP</p> <p><u>Key Collaborators:</u> Academic Senate Classified staff Employee Professional Development Committee Management Team College Council</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Increased campus-wide communications about the College plan for improving campus climate.</p> <p><u>Phase 2:</u> Viable tactical plans delivered to President for consideration and approval by Fall 2017.</p> <p><u>Phase 3:</u> Plans deployed within scope, timeline and budget.</p>

## Integration of Quality Projects in Existing Institutional Systems

### Integration of Action Projects in Institutional Planning

As detailed in this self-evaluation report, the College has a well-established, systematic annual program review, planning, and budget development process. Locally known as PRAISE, it has evolved considerably over the past decade. As described, the Action Projects do not constitute a whole new planning structure; rather, they provide a “quality framework” which organizes and focuses the College’s strategic goals. Therefore, Action Projects will inform the prioritization process—*i.e.*, Tier 1 and Tier 2 Division Summary phases shown on the existing PRAISE [timeline](#) (see figure below for more detail).



### Quality Projects Briefings

To increase institutional awareness and comprehension, several methods of communicating these Quality Projects and their implications will be relied upon to inform the College workforce:

- An invitation will be sent to all to attend formal briefings that will be held multiple times to accommodate a variety of schedules.
- The President will incorporate information about the Quality Projects in his “welcome back” email to the College at the opening of the Spring 2017 semester.
- An Action Project session will be included in the Fall of 2017 staff development event.
- The accreditation website will include information about Action Projects.



To apply the Action Projects to the planning prioritization process, all the College units will develop a method for specifying and documenting how Tier 1 and Tier 2 priorities contribute to Action Projects. That documentation will become part of the usual PRAISE documentation and will be communicated using established practices throughout the prioritization process (*e.g.*, emails to or meetings with department chairs, faculty, and staff; published on the College's website).

#### Integration of Action Projects into the Institutional Performance Assessment

Action Projects as specified here, are linked to the College's Institutional Effectiveness (IE) performance assessment system in terms of summative (long-term, indirect, mission-driven) indicators represented by its [IE Scorecard](#). The more important formative indicators of progress are also specified in the project plans above; however, in order to strengthen linkages to existing planning practices, additional formative indicators will be defined as part of the documentation developed by the College.