

# QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

## **Madison Area Technical College**

Madison, Wisconsin  
April 23-25, 2008

### **Quality Checkup Team Members:**

**Maura Abrahamson**  
Vice Chair, Faculty Assembly  
Morton College

**Linda Wild**  
Vice President of Instruction  
Southwestern Community College

### 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) 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). Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. 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 Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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

Prior to arriving for the Quality Checkup visit to gain an understanding of the College, the Quality Checkup Team reviewed the following documents: Systems Portfolio 2005, Systems Portfolio 2008, Systems Appraisal Feedback Report 2005, Federal Compliance Materials Packet, Systems Appraisal Follow-up, and Quality Program Summary. These documents were available on the MATC website and hard copies were provided to the Quality Checkup Team. The team also reviewed the Higher Learning Commission materials related to Quality Checkup visits.

During the visit, the Checkup team verified and clarified contents of the Systems Portfolio and participated in discussions with the President, AQIP Steering Team, Executive Team, College Council, CQI Mentors and Team Leads, LSQIP Review Team, Chairs and Learner Success Deans/Associate Deans, Systems Integration Council Chairs, and students. Additional meetings were held with representatives of full and part time faculty unions, support staff members, advisory committee members, community representatives, members of Councils of Color, and other personnel. MATC Board members were present at several of these meetings. The discussions in these meetings and review of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report along with the updated Systems portfolio indicate information was generally understood and is consistent with the findings of the Quality Checkup Team.

Clarification of one "OO" comment in the Feedback Report concerning the use of the Mandatory Assessment, Advising, and Placement (MAAP) process as appropriate for the College resulted in discussion with MATC staff members. The MAAP process is used to aid in determining appropriate course placement for students entering MATC. Several assessment instruments, placement criteria, and/or proficiency evaluations are utilized for determining knowledge and skill levels.

The Checkup team found the college is undertaking assessment and placement of students in a systematic manner. As preferred assessment instruments are selected, data gathered over a period of time, and analysis completed, the MAAP process is serving the college well. It was determined by the Quality Checkup Team members that this "OO" statement about MAAP was not applicable considering the processes that were described at the institution.

While the Feedback Report cited statements concerning the collection of data to substantiate decisions and strategic direction, the Quality Checkup Team found that the College is making significant progress to support consistently gathering and collecting data on student learning and

other key strategic initiatives. The attention to development of infrastructure for data-gathering processes along with staff understanding and support is apparent by the information gathered during this visit and the involvement of faculty and staff in many cross-functional committees and projects related to AQIP projects.

In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met the 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 specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

There were no accreditation issues identified in the last Systems Appraisal.

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

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified three strategic strategies that would benefit the college in the future.

1. MATC's processes for documenting and assessing teaching and learning could benefit from the clarification of how the currently collected measures are used in the college's improvement processes. It remains unclear to what extent MATC has implemented formal processes related to documenting student learning outcomes and using the results to improve learning.

Review and Update: MATC has initiated or strengthened procedures to address systematic integration of data, data-gathering, and data-analysis into improving student learning through a well-defined process for faculty and staff to follow. Examples include the following: 1) strengthening the Learning Systems Quality Improvement Process (LSQIP) by clarifying how this 5-year review process fits with a 3-year college strategic plan and is reflected in a 1-year unit plan supported by data and budget implications; 2) Establishing a Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) that assists faculty in developing course outcomes and determining appropriate assessment measures and instruments to support course and program improvement; and 3) Documentation and definition of the MATC Planning Model that is shown in Figure 8.2 in the 2008 portfolio.

2. MATC has made a good start in implementing quality improvement processes; however, it would benefit from more coordination throughout the college in ways that are effective, efficient, and use data-based decision making.

Review and Update: MATC's updated portfolio documents an improved and evolving effort to coordinate and manage quality improvement processes. The portfolio also provides evidence that MATC is making progress in gathering, analyzing, and utilizing data to guide decision making. MATC has hired staff to support training in Six Sigma principles to ensure CQI in the organization. The support for these initiatives from the offices of the Board, President, Learner Success, Learner Development, Strategic Advancement, Infrastructure Services, and Institutional Research and Effectiveness is key to the continued progress and success for improving learning for students.

3. The lack of succession plan for key positions represents an opportunity for the college. The lack of such a plan could result in future leadership gaps that could negatively impact all areas of the college's operations.

Review and Update: MATC has implemented a leadership orientation and development process to strengthen institutional readiness for changes in leadership. In addition, a leadership academy is available to anyone who is interested in leadership development. Faculty and staff are encouraged to avail themselves of this opportunity to learn more about leadership opportunities and the CQI efforts of the College. The leadership orientation, leadership academy, and the CQI committees offer the best opportunity for MATC to have individuals prepared for changes in leadership in the future.

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 expectations.

#### Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

Prior to the visit, the Quality Checkup Team received the Quality Program Summary. This document is an overview of how the College organizes its AQIP effort; a chronology of events since 2002; and an assessment of accomplishments, challenges, and planning for the future. The Quality Checkup Team met with representatives from various groups involved in CQI initiatives at the College. Examples of the staff, committees, or projects represented include: Board members;

President's office; Learner Development; Learner Success; Strategic Advancement; Counseling; Human Resources; College Preparedness; Public Services; Arts and Sciences Center; Business and Applied Arts Center; Health and Safety Center; Agriscience and Technologies; Enrollment Services; Tech services/Client Services; Foundation; Marketing Promotions; Library; Student Development Center; Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning; Auxiliary Services; Flexible Learning; Facilities; Construction; Manufacturing & Apprenticeship Training; Institutional Effectiveness and Research; Grants and Special Projects; Business Procurement; Infrastructure Services; Budget Office; Systems Integration Councils; regional center directors; and other community, educational institutions, and industry representatives from the region. During these meetings, the Quality Checkup Team members learned that many improvements have been made which indicate that CQI principles permeate institutional culture. The Quality Checkup Team members found that College leadership is invested in and shows commitment to overseeing the CQI process.

The Quality Checkup Team found that MATC's administration has realistically dealt with time and resource challenges that traditionally confront large organizations attempting to implement CQI. The team also found the administration was realistic and enthusiastic about dealing with the opportunities and challenges that present themselves during implementation of the CQI initiative. The Checkup team believes MATC's leadership team is willing and able to continue to move the institution forward utilizing AQIP and CQI principles. Through meeting with the President and Administrative staff, it is apparent the President is high-energy and fully committed to leading for the purpose of integrating CQI principles throughout the College.

MATC's leadership teams were particularly enthusiastic about Learning Systems Quality Improvement Process (LSQIP) and its influence on the organization. LSQIP is the five-year assessment process used by the college to monitor the currency and effectiveness of its curriculum and to assist each unit in planning for improvement. The Quality Checkup Team was introduced to the process by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) representatives and other LSQIP Review and Assessment Mentors. This program improvement process is patterned after the AQIP process and "consists of a self-study portfolio with criteria based on principles of high performing organizations and a peer review of programs and services that result in an assessment of the program's or service's areas of strength and opportunities for improvement." (Quality Summary) This process is generally understood by all representatives of the College, who learn about it during the orientation program.

Representatives from various areas of the College showed commitment to improvement by acknowledging opportunities for growth or change. For example, in meeting with leadership representatives, the Quality Checkup Team learned that less than half of students make the transition from developmental to credit classes. This opportunity is being addressed with an AQIP Action Project that focuses on increasing the numbers of students who make the transition. The Learner Success area, with its Learning-to-Learn program, is addressing this issue by offering alternatives that allow students to focus on career development while taking developmental courses.

In meeting with community members and Councils of Color representatives, the Checkup team learned that these individuals, representing a broad spectrum of organizations, are well aware of MATC's commitment to CQI. It was also evident that these individuals are proud of their alliance with the institution and are interested in helping to foster student success.

Board members are also interested and supportive of the CQI program at the College. The Checkup team had a number of opportunities to meet with Board members, both formally and informally, during the course of the visit. Board members are clearly invested in the College and show visionary support for its future.

In the team's judgment, MATC 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)

The Quality Checkup Team reviewed the documents relating to the USDE default rate. The documents indicated that the default rate was 3.3% in 2005 and 2.5% in 2006. This represents a decline of .8%

Table 1: MATC's Cohort Default Rate						
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4.1%	3.8%	4.6%	3.6%	3.0%	3.3%	2.5%

To continue reducing the default rate, MATC has implemented a Student Loan Default Management Plan that includes:

- procedures designed to improve the borrower's understanding and respect for the loan repayment obligation;
- measures designed to reduce defaults related to borrower's difficulty finding employment;
- and, means for reducing default rates by promoting student success.

The relevant data and information packaged in a Federal Compliance Material Packet was sent to the Quality Checkup Team in advance of the visit and provided clear and concise responses to the compliance requirements.

In the team's judgment, MATC presented satisfactory evidence of a seven-year history of student loan default rates that is within the acceptable guidelines set by the USDE and therefore 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.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

MATC's AQIP Steering Team and the Marketing Department took steps to ensure third-party compliance. The following four venues were used for soliciting third party comment via public notice publication: (1) the College's district newspapers; (2) MATC's student newspaper; (3) generalized press release; and, (4) the College's website.

The Checkup team received a memorandum on April 16, 2008 indicating the Commission had received no third party comments.

In the team's judgment, MATC presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The methods utilized by MATC are acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.

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

The institution's approach to Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition is well documented and approval systems are in place. MATC is one of sixteen colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The WTCS Board sets statewide policy, program standards and curricula, and distributes aid in alignment with the Department of Education and accrediting policies. The WTCS Educational Services Manual serves as the official document for

the standards and procedures used by technical colleges to develop and maintain courses, programs and other program curricula.

For the Associate Degree in Applied Sciences (AAS)-Occupational Programs (Code 10), MATC requires a minimum of 60 semester credits; 36-49 credits for Technical Studies; and, 21-30 credits for General Studies. For the collegiate transfer programs, Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) Degrees (Code 20), MATC requires a minimum of 63-70 credits.. Technical Diploma Programs (Codes 30, 31, and 32) require a minimum of two technical credits and a maximum of 70 technical credits. Apprenticeship Programs (Code 50) of three or more years of on-the-job training have a minimum of 400 hours of paid related instruction. The related instruction is offered at a minimum of four hours a week or equivalent. Certificates may be awarded at the option of the local district for participation and/or attendance at any WTC program level and/or adult continuing education course(s), groups of courses or attainment of specific competencies. Advanced Technical Certificates are certificates specifically designed and approved by the System Office.

MATC charges tuition in accordance with WTCS guidelines. The College's degree charges per credit are listed in Table 2. Students are also subject to fees including: an application, special course, student records, and a technology fee. Credits and program lengths comply with state standards. Wisconsin statutes require the State Board establish fees and tuition. MATC is mandated by the State of Wisconsin to charge program and material fees in accordance with WTCS guidelines.

Program Fee & Tuition Type	Collegiate Transfer	Postsecondary & Vocational Adult
Resident Program Fees and Tuition	\$124.70	\$92.05
Additional Out of State Tuition	\$228.70	\$478.50
Total Out of State Program Fees and Tuition	\$353.40	\$570.55

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.2, Advertising and Recruitment Materials

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) uses print, television, radio, and billboards to advertise its associated institutions.

MATC advertises through the Course and Program catalog, which includes reference to College and student-related policies and procedures and accreditation status (described on page 15 of the 2006-2007 catalog). The College catalog and a wide range of other information can be accessed on the MATC website.

MATC's Marketing and Communications Department uses a variety of methods to recruit and advertise, including (but not limited to):

- a general brochure;
- cluster brochures;
- program videos;
- and, the "Facts at a Glance" pamphlet.

The team determined that MATC 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 III.A.1, *Professional Accreditation*, and III.A.3, *Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation*

MATC has only one institution-wide accreditation relationship, with the Higher Learning Commission. There are seven individual programs that are accredited through professional organizations including:

- Dental Hygienist-American Dental Association, Commission on Dental Accreditation;
- Dietetic Technician-American Dietetic Association, Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education;
- Nursing, Associate Degree-National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission

- Occupational Therapy Assistant-American Occupational Therapy Association, Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education;
- Optometric Technician-American Optometric Association;
- Radiology (Radiologic Technician)-Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology; and
- Veterinary Technician-American Veterinary Medical Association, Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities.

MATC's programs are in good standing with all of these program accreditation agencies.

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

The Quality Checkup Team received documents related to the student complaint process and procedures prior to and during the visit. In addition to forms templates, flow charts of the complaint and academic misconduct processes, and a description of the processes and procedures, the Checkup team received a case log of 8 formal complaints. These formal complaints included hearing dates of 1-97, 3-04, 1-07/2-07, 3-07, 7-07, 10-07, 2-08, and 2-08. Team members also received letters addressed to the students, which outlined the complaint and action or proposed action taken by the College to resolve the issue.

At MATC, all non-academic issues, complaints and interpersonal conflicts are handled by Conflict Management Services (CMS), which is located in Counseling Services, and is described on the MATC website and in the College catalog.

The College has a process for addressing student complaints in six different areas including: general conflict; code of conduct violations; classroom disruptions; harassment/ discrimination; academic misconduct; and final grade disputes. In each of these areas, the College has a process in place for addressing the specific complaint. Each process has a formal and informal component so that issues can be resolved at the lowest possible level.

The Office of the Dean of Learner Development is the main repository of student complaint reports. Informal complaint records are kept for one calendar year; while, formal complaint records are kept a minimum of five years.

Each record includes: a description of the complaint; date of the incident; category of the complaint; actions taken to resolve the complaint; the disposition of the complaint, including referral to an outside agency; and, any external actions initiated by a student or outside agency related to a given complaint.

The federal compliance information sent to team members prior to the visit noted that students are informed about their rights, responsibilities and the procedures needed to initiate any complaint. According to the material, this information is disseminated during orientation, in a student planner provided to students at the beginning of the academic year, and on the MATC Website. However, the Checkup team found that contact information for Conflict Management Services (CMS) is not referenced in the Planner & Student Handbook. In meeting with students, the Checkup team also learned there were student concerns about not knowing where to initiate the complaint process. The team discussed this omission and student comment with the executive team at MATC and believe this matter will be addressed promptly.

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.

#### Other USDE compliance-related issues

No other compliance-related issues were identified during the Quality Checkup visit.

#### Other AQIP issues

General comments and counsel from the Quality Checkup Team:

- 1) MATC is a large organization with a strong history in the community. Making changes and introducing AQIP/CQI and re-organization are undoubtedly stressful to some in the organization. The Quality Checkup Team commends the College leadership on fostering a supportive environment for change.
- 2) Staff and faculty members commented on the 'listening sessions' that were held in prior

years to gather input for strategic planning. The comments encouraged smaller meetings with multiple groups to aid gathering input from all stakeholders.

- 3) The energy and commitment to CQI principles is evidenced by the progress documented in the updated AQIP portfolio.
- 4) MATC is encouraged to review how the College communicates with students about accessing information regarding Student Grievance policies and procedures.
- 5) MATC is encouraged to consider its role in advancing high school partnerships, dual enrollment, and transcribed credit opportunities.
- 6) MATC is encouraged to review the staffing levels and the needs of the veterans' services office(s).

**Table 1: Participation by Madison Area Technical College  
at the Quality Checkup Visit Sessions April 23-25, 2008**

Day	Session	Topic	Participants*
Day 1 – April 23	1	Welcome/Kick-off and Quality Check-up Overview: AQIP Steering Team President, Executive Team, College Council/Quality Check-Up Overview	23
	2	Quality Improvement Processes: CQI Mentors and Team Leaders, LSQIP Review Team members/Quality Improvement Processes	23
	3	Support Services Successes	18
	4	Full-time Faculty	6
	5	Part-time Faculty	5
Day 2 – April 24	6	Foundation Scholarship Breakfast	College Activity
	7	College Leadership: Executive Team and Board Representatives/College Leadership	7
	8	Strategic Change Processes: College Council/ Strategic Change Processes	17
	9	Student Learning Improvement & Meeting Stakeholder Needs: Systems Integration Council Chairs, Learner Success Deans, Associate Deans/ Improvements: Student Learning and Stakeholders needs	22
	10	Students	6
	11	Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel (PSRP)	7
	12	Federal Compliance & Systems Appraisal Follow-up: AQIP Steering Committee team and HR/CETL (Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning)/ Federal Compliance and Systems Appraisal Follow-Up	19
	13	Assessment Processes: LSQIP Review members and Assessment Team representatives/ Assessment Processes	8
	14	Diversity Commitment: Councils of Color representatives and ICC members/Diversity commitment	13
Day 3 – April 25	15	Community Connections: Community leaders	17
	16	Open Forum	15
	17	Quality Check-up Team Sharing of Knowledge	20
	18	Exit Meeting	15

\* Participants include both those directly involved and those who came to observe. Counts do not include the Quality Checkup Team members.