

# QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

# Joliet Junior College

Joliet, Illinois  
May 2–4, 2007

## Quality Checkup team members:

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### 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*

The Team reviewed the Systems Portfolio before arriving for the Quality Checkup visit. It has not been updated since it was first submitted in 2004. In the Quality Program Summary provided to the team prior to the visit, the institution explained that categories five (Leading and Communicating) and eight (Planning Continuous Improvement) need massive revision due to changes in leadership, a major restructuring, and the initiation of new planning processes. During the visit, the Team verified and clarified the contents of the System Portfolio through discussions held with the Leadership Team, students, administrators, faculty, staff, and particularly with the key person in charge of coordinating AQIP activities at JJC. This process made it clear that although the contents of Systems Portfolio were a reasonable representation of JJC in 2004, major sections need significant updating. JJC's proposed plan for revising the Systems Portfolio includes a timeline for completion of each category, persons responsible, and the rationale for revision.

In the team's judgment, although the Systems Portfolio is in need of major updating, 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.

### Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (March 16, 2005) did not identify any accreditation issues and the team did not identify any accreditation issues during the visit. Therefore, in the Quality Checkup 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.

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

JJC is in various stages of addressing the eight strategic issues identified in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (March 16, 2005). These are summarized below.

1. *Collecting and analyzing data related to internal and external benchmarking needs for institutional objectives.* JJC's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IR&E) is in the process of developing an annual institutional effectiveness review plan that will include benchmarking and assessment data. IR&E is also in the process of formalizing a

utility to better capture and distribute shared data from both educational and non-educational areas. JJC is now administering the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to help benchmark with peer institutions and national norms, in order to make informed decisions on how to improve student learning at JJC.

2. *Improving orientation for part-time faculty.* To address this issue, JJC offered 11 adjunct faculty development seminars on Saturdays in 2005-06 and 12 in 2006-07. Topics centered on effective teaching techniques, methods to effectively incorporate technology into the classroom, and specific information about JJC. They are not required, but adjunct faculty members receive a \$150 stipend after attending three seminars. In 2005-06 these were attended by 53 different adjuncts, with 54 taking advantage of them in 2006-07.
3. *Developing leadership skills, planning for succession, and evaluating leadership.* In 2006 JJC lost most senior administrators due to retirements and choices to leave. Other administrators assumed new positions within the institution, which has adopted a new organizational structure. A Transition Monitoring Team assists with the transitions, produces monthly progress reports, and facilitates communication with the campus community. In spring 2007 a national online survey instrument was implemented as an assessment measure for senior leadership. At the time of the checkup visit no results from this instrument were available.
4. *Fostering on-going development of innovative learning-centered instructional methods as part of JJC's program assessment and improvement strategies.* JJC's Assessment Committee has been educating faculty on assessment of student learning, is updating its Assessment Handbook, and continues to offer assessment grants. The committee leadership has been attending the Illinois Assessment Fair and the HLC Annual Meeting. A new position with release time for a selected faculty member is part of the effort to foster more cooperation between departments for General Education assessment to combine assessment with program review. Seminars for adjuncts (see #2 above) that address effective teaching strategies include syllabus preparation, classroom management, student-directed learning, assessment strategies, creating and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, incorporating real world applications and using case studies in the classroom.

5. *Collecting and analyzing input from external stakeholders to respond to their needs.* JJC has numerous advisory committees serving as liaisons with external stakeholders. The Counseling Department and all academic departments also have extensive outreach to area high schools. Chairs in the occupational programs are active members of the college community who reach out to external stakeholders. However, the checkup visit team found little evidence demonstrating how external stakeholders' needs are identified. JJC plans to hire a new Dean of Occupational and Career Programs in July 2007, and it appears that one role of this position may be to help address this issue.
6. *Facing challenges of declining revenue and growing student populations, while continuing to improve technology and facilities.* Both the JJC Strategic Plan and the JJC Master Facilities Plan are currently being prepared, and JJC anticipates that its future directions will be more clearly defined by the end of 2007. A draft of the JJC Master Facilities Plan is available online. Although JJC's Action Project "Developing and Implementing a Technology Plan for Improving Teaching and Learning" was recently retired after its three-year cycle, technology planning and evaluation remains ongoing. JJC has published and posted on its website a 29-page "Technology Improvement Plan 2007-2009." JJC plans on entering into an agreement with Strata Information Group (San Diego, California) to help evaluate the IT staff, develop an appropriate training/staff development schedule, and evaluate JJC's current technology management structure.
7. *Showing a commitment to serving underrepresented populations and serving a diverse community.* JJC continues to broaden its outreach to serve a diverse population in the college district. The Office of Human Resources actively seeks minority applicants through advertising positions in publications that reach diverse job seekers. The Diversity Committee, International/Intercultural Committee, a variety of offices designed to support diverse students and employees, and many student clubs continue to reach out to the diverse population of the JJC district. Growth in the area of ESL education at all levels also supports the needs of the population.
8. *Improving communication and decision making processes.* The checkup team noted that the lack of effective communication was cited as a concern in the 1992 NCA site team report, requiring a focused visit in 1996. Recognizing this ongoing concern, JJC created the Quality Action Project "Centralizing and Improving the Campus Communication Structure" as a response to results from the Campus Conversation Day of Spring 2004. The Action Project brought together representatives from across the college to study

JJC's communications structure. A communications audit provided feedback, and the results will be recorded and analyzed to find interventions to overcome identified communications barriers and difficulties. A post-intervention audit will help determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of the interventions with the goal of increasing satisfaction with the quality, quantity, channels, timeliness, and accuracy of information and internal communications. This Action Project Committee and JJC's Transition Monitoring Team (see #3 above) both confirmed to the checkup visit that there is cooperative interaction between these two committees, although both groups are striving to improve communication among the various campus constituencies.

JJC recognizes that it still has much to accomplish regarding most of the above strategic issues. With this understanding, 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.

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

Under its new leadership, JJC remains committed to continuing systematic quality improvement.

The new president came to JJC in July 2006. By the end of her first month, she had communicated with Dr. Stephen Spangehl, attended the Continuous Quality Improvement Network Summer Institute, and begun working with the remaining AQIP leadership on campus to prepare for the Quality Checkup Visit. By January 2007, the president and the AQIP leadership began an extensive outreach to the Board of Trustees and internal and external stakeholders to prepare the campus community for the AQIP Quality Checkup Visit and to inform everyone of the progress on various AQIP projects and activities. JJC's AQIP webpage provides a good representation of institutional commitment to AQIP.

As noted above, JJC's Assessment Committee has been educating faculty on assessment of student learning, is updating its Assessment Handbook, and continues to offer assessment grants. The committee leadership has been attending the Illinois Assessment Fair and the HLC Annual Meeting.

Although many quality improvement processes are still only in their developmental stages, the team found an institution-wide commitment to quality among faculty, staff, and administrators. Student responses and comments indicated that this commitment is making a positive impact

upon students. Therefore, 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.

USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions)

One member of the team spoke with the Joliet Junior College Financial Aid Director to verify and clarify the College's default rate. Joliet Junior College's student loan default rate has dropped from 9.5% in fiscal year 2004 to a rate of 8.2% for fiscal year 2005. While Joliet Junior College's default rate is very reasonable, the College is taking additional actions to reduce the rate. Some of the specific actions include the following:

1. An email is sent to all faculty members with a request to complete an attendance roster attached to the email indicating which students have never attended. The College responds by canceling the aid of those not in attendance thereby reducing their liability.
2. The Dean of Students is notified of any Centennial Commons student that has not attended class and contacts the student to remind him/her of his/her responsibility. There are programs in place at Centennial Commons to assist students in becoming successful college students.
3. The faculty receive a midterm grade report that indicates students who have not taken midterm tests and are consequently not pursuing their course to completion. Enrollment is checked and a Title IV refund is made as appropriate.
4. End of semester reports are run and Title IV refunds are made where necessary.
5. The Financial Aid Office requires all borrowers to complete Direct Loan Entrance Counseling, even if they have previously borrowed while enrolled at another college or university. Loan processing is not continued until the office receives the Rights and Responsibilities entrance counseling checklist.
6. The Financial Aid Office follows up with borrowers who leave school or who are taking less than six credits but did not graduate or attend exit loan counseling. Appropriate information is sent to such borrowers indicating they are in a grace period and that their loan repayment will begin soon.

7. Graduating students who have borrowed will be directed to an Exit Counseling link ([www.dl.ed.gov](http://www.dl.ed.gov)) as they complete the "Graduation Request Form."
8. The Financial Aid Office receives the Direct Loan delinquency report from the Department of Education and sends students on the report a letter reminding them of their responsibilities along with important phone numbers for additional information.

A Joliet Junior College Financial Aid Handbook is currently being developed. Once complete, the handbook will be included with every initial award letter sent to borrowers.

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.A.8, Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

An advertisement in the local papers as well as a notice posted to the institution's website informed the public how to offer comments to the Commission. The Quality Checkup Team received a memorandum on May 1, 2007, indicating that the Commission had received no third party comments.

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

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

Based on all evidence examined by the team, credits and program length at JJC are in line with standard policies expected of any institution of higher learning. Tuition at Joliet Junior College is calculated based on course credit hours. Students are subject to fees in addition to tuition. These include a \$6 technology fee, \$3 student service fee, and a \$5 capital assessment fee. Each course also has a separate course fee, which is not included in the listed tuition and fees. The Joliet Junior College Board of Trustees sets tuition.

Joliet Junior College Tuition Rates for Fall, 2007:

JJC District Residents	\$62.00 per credit hour
Illinois Out-Of-District	\$219.77 per credit hour

Out-Of-State	\$248.83 per credit hour
Out-Of-Country	\$299.14 per credit hour

In the Quality Checkup 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*

Joliet Junior College made samples of the organization's advertising and recruitment materials available to the Quality Checkup team, which reviewed a number of publications that the College uses to promote its programs and recruit students. The team determined that Joliet Junior College 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*

Joliet Junior College's only regional institution-wide accreditation relationship is with the Higher Learning Commission. At the state level, JJC is accredited by the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois State Board of Education, and the State Approving Agency for Veteran's Education. JJC also holds program-level accreditation from the American Culinary Federation, Association of Business Schools and Programs, National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission, National Association of Schools of Music, and the American Veterinary Medical Association (approved as a program for educating veterinary technicians). The institution is also an approved Nursing Home Administrator Continuing Education Sponsor and Real Estate Appraiser Education Provider.

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*

Joliet Junior College has a documented student complaint procedure. The procedure is published in several places, including the student catalog and the college web site. The complaints are addressed and maintained by each department chair.

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

There were no other USDE compliance-related issues.

#### Other AQIP issues

JJC has undergone significant changes in leadership; is in the process of restructuring administrative roles; and is revisiting its Strategic Plan, Master Facilities Plan, and Technology plan. With so much change, many proposed AQIP processes have not progressed as quickly as originally planned. Therefore, JJC has developed a plan for revising its Systems Portfolio. In the team's judgment, JJC's plan to continue with AQIP will benefit the institution, provided it remains committed to continuing systematic quality improvement.

In the team's judgment, the most notable AQIP-related issues that can help JJC move forward in its quality journey are listed below. These were identified in the Strategic Issues Analysis section of the March 16, 2005, Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and are addressed above in the Strategic Issues section.

- *Collecting and analyzing data related to internal and external benchmarking needs for institutional objectives (#1 above).* JJC has made progress collecting data, but is still in the early stages of analyzing the data in order to make informed decisions on how to improve student learning at JJC.
- *Developing leadership skills, planning for succession, and evaluating leadership (#3 above).* With JJC's many new leadership positions, attention to these strategic points can help strengthen the institution at this pivotal juncture in its quality journey.
- *Facing challenges of declining revenue and growing student populations, while continuing to improve technology and facilities (#6 above).* Although JJC's planning efforts appear to be progressing well, it is too early in the process to assess the

effectiveness of these plans and their implementation strategies.

- *Improving communication and decision making processes (#8 above).* As noted early in this report, JJC is taking various action steps to improve communication. Further development of leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes can help JJC set direction for the future and continue improving its learning environment.

**Participation by JJC Stakeholders at the Quality Checkup Visit Sessions May 2-4, 2007**

Day	Session	Topic	Participants
1	1	Student ambassadors – walking tour of campus for team	2
	2	Senior leadership – agenda and criteria for accreditation	11
	3	Administrative commitment to quality; action plans; planning	18
	4	Verification of Commission’s Federal Compliance Program	4
	5	Reception – Board involvement with AQIP and planning	14
2	6	AQIP & QAP leaders – Quality Actions Projects	6
	7	Faculty conversation #1– AQIP; assessment; communicating	1
	8	Lunch with students – impressions related to quality at JJC	13
	9	Faculty conversation #2– AQIP; assessment; communicating	13
	10	Conversation with staff – quality improvement at JJC	5
	11	Systems Portfolio feedback and plan for major revisions	12
3	12	Support staff – quality improvement in support areas	5
	13	Leadership transition and next steps in the quality journey	20
	14	Closing response and advice from the Quality Checkup Team	11

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