

# Quality

## Endeavors

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## Innovation and Improvement Initiatives

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

Periodically the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment scans the environment for unique and interesting new developments at other universities within the sphere of quality improvement. The last time we devoted a newsletter to this topic was in May/June 2001, when we profiled initiatives at Alabama, California-Berkeley, Rutgers, and Wisconsin-Madison.

Earlier newsletters described improvement initiatives at Purdue, Samford, Ohio State, Missouri-Rolla, and Bloomsburg (June/July 2000); and California-Irvine, Rutgers, North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Maryland, Purdue, Syracuse, Ohio State, California-Berkeley, and Wisconsin-Madison (October 1998). It becomes apparent that several institutions are long-time players in the quality game.

Once again we would like to provide you with an update of CQI initiatives at other universities. The two universities selected for this newsletter are newcomers to our list. Both were participants in the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement (NCCI) in Higher Education's national conference in Nashville in July 2003. For the past four years this conference has provided a forum for universities to share improvement and innovation initiatives.

Following are highlights of NCCI presentations made by:

- Margaret Harrington—University of Southern California
- Ed Cunliff, Melinda Henderson, Chris Markwood and Pam Washington—University of Central Oklahoma

### University of Southern California

Margaret Harrington, Director of Organization Improvement Services, asked her NCCI audience, "How do administrative functions and programs support a university's service mission?" In other words, how do administrative offices best serve the university mission and meet stakeholder expectations?

Dr. Harrington believes the answer to this question lies in how *collaboration* is fostered across administrative units. "Academic collaboration is still a choice," said Dr. Harrington, "but administrative collaboration is a necessity."

Dr. Harrington believes collaboration is key to providing effective administrative and service support. Users of services are not interested in organizational turf; administrative collabora-

tion helps shape what, from the stakeholder's perspective, is a seamless array of programs and services.

Within the work environment systems must be created to *bring together* human capabilities, policies, procedures, technology and other factors and transform them into support processes and service programs. The focus is on improving systems and processes to help better achieve the service mission of the university.

To foster collaboration across units, it is important to:

- Know who all the stakeholders are for a given service.
- Understand how users experience the function or service.
- Build improvements serving their best interests.
- Provide clear information about services, procedures, policies, and decisions.
- Establish a system to validate responsiveness and impact.
- Share results with stakeholders and peers.

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All administrative and service units have some functions for which they have full ownership. All units also have functions that require collaboration with other units. Dr. Harrington has developed a template or framework for building a collaborative environment that facilitates what she terms, “collaboration venues,” i.e., setting priorities, providing service, assessing and rewarding performance, and establishing policies and procedures.

Each unit fills out a template, also known as a partnership agreement, to determine who has responsibility for what, where there are shared responsibilities and goals, and what the individual and shared performance measures should be (see Figure 1).

In the final analysis, the goal is to maintain entrepreneurial spirit and local accountability, while fostering the collaboration necessary to provide effective administrative and service support.

### **University of Central Oklahoma**

Ed Cunliff, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, presented information about UCO’s efforts to revamp its academic program review process.

This was undertaken as part of the Higher Learning Commission’s Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) to improve assessment and institute a single format for program review for the entire university.

The AQIP assessment process concentrates on the academic enterprise, especially teaching and learning. It is collaborative and consultative, revolves around a five-year cycle with yearly updates, and is a program of self-analysis rather than program justification.

UCO’s new program review, called “Self-Study for Continuous Improvement” (SSCI), incorporates AQIP criteria into the process and is congruent with the university’s move towards continuous improvement.

“In the past,” said Dr. Cunliff, “the department head, with very little faculty involvement, wrote a program review that focused only on a particular curricular program and did not encourage self-reflection or critical analysis.”

“The SSCI process engages all faculty and staff members as well as other stakeholders,” said Dr. Cunliff. “It integrates multiple processes in one coordinated process.”

Moving from a writing assignment for one or two faculty to a collaborative self-study requires focusing on all aspects of a department’s roles and responsibilities.

Whereas in the past a typical program review asked a department to list data, policies, plans, initiatives, etc., SSCI asks a department to analyze its data and discuss the processes for developing policies, plans and initiatives. Focus groups are held to solicit faculty input.

The dean’s office fully backs the SSCI’s efforts to gain faculty buy-in and uses the resulting departmental strategic plans for allocating resources; departmental long-range goals are integrated into the college’s strategic plan (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1. Building a Collaborative Environment: Partners' Worksheet.** M. Harrington, "Strategic Priorities for Performance Excellence in Administration and Service," USC, 2003.

Unit					Unit			
	Solo Goals	Shared Goals	Partners	Partnership Description	Partners	Shared Goals	Solo Goals	
Unit Mission								Unit Mission
Strategic Initiatives								Strategic Initiatives
Critical Pathways								Critical Pathways
Core Capacities								Core Capacities
<b>Competencies</b>								<b>Competencies</b>
Recruitment								Recruitment
Development								Development
Retention								Retention
<b>Support Processes</b>								<b>Support Processes</b>
Transaction								Transaction
Facilitation								Facilitation
Enrichment								Enrichment
<b>Infrastructure</b>								<b>Infrastructure</b>
Org structure								Org structure
Facilities								Facilities
Info Technology								Info Technology
<b>Org Climate</b>								<b>Org Climate</b>
Service								Service
Stewardship								Stewardship
Leadership								Leadership
Community								Community

**Figure 2. How is the Self-Study for Continuous Improvement (SSCI) different from a Program Review?** E. Cunliff, "From Defense to Offense: Empowering Departmental Continuous Improvement," UCO, 2003.

Program Review	SSCI
PR asked departments to list data	SSCI asks departments to analyze data
PR asked departments to list the policies, plans, initiatives, etc.	SSCI asks departments to discuss their processes for developing policies, plans, initiatives, etc.
PR did not require input and/or communication from other administrative units	SSCI requires input and a commitment of support from the Dean and Provost
PR focused only on a particular curricular program	SSCI focuses on all aspects of a department's roles and responsibilities—a thorough self-study
PR's tone did not encourage self-reflection or negative critical analysis	SSCI requires self-reflection and asks for the department to identify opportunities for improvement
PR often only involved one or two faculty members within a department	SSCI engages all faculty and staff members as well as other stakeholders
PR, the assessment report, the department strategic plan, etc. were all separate and uncoordinated reports	SSCI integrates multiple reports into one coordinated process