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A Report to the Faculty Senate
The University of Alabama

Continuous Quality Improvement: Status Update - April, 2000

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The University of Alabama launched its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative in September, 1998 with the formation of a University Quality Council and a Quality Forum conducted at the Bryant Conference Center.

The objective of the CQI initiative is to provide a methodology to enable and assist all members of the University in improving their work systems.

This report summarizes CQI actions across the campus, including the President's Office, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Advancement, Financial Affairs, Athletics, cross-functional teams, CQI training, the role of the Quality Council, and outreach activities. The report only highlights activities that involved the CQI office. There are many other cases of continuous improvement occurring across the campus preceding and during the start-up phase of CQI that are not mentioned in this report.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

While The University of Alabama has pursued its CQI initiative, several activities are developing outside of the University that relate to the CQI process.

1. The National Institute of Standards issued a version of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education in 1999. There were no educational institutions that applied and met the award criteria in its first year. Faculty may access the award criteria for performance excellence at http://www.nist.gov
2. The North Central Association of Colleges and Universities has developed a new approach to accreditation based on the Baldrige Criteria and will allow its universities to use this new criteria in 2000 as part of the Academic Quality Improvement Project. Faculty can obtain more information on AQIP at http://www.ncacihe.org
3. A National Consortium for Continuous Improvement (NCCI) in higher education was initiated by the National Association of College and University Business Organizations in 1999. The University of Alabama is a charter member, along with The University of Maryland, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Rutgers, Penn State and many others.

THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

The President's Office has participated in three CQI activities: the development of a Quality Advisory Board, the development of a set of operational performance indicators, and improvements to the processes supporting the Committee on Committees.

The Quality Advisory Board consists of the University's Executive Staff and quality managers from companies that have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Representatives from Boeing's Air-lift Division, Milliken, and Federal Express have met with the Executive Staff to discuss the development of management systems and leadership issues related to continuous improvement.

The Executive Staff have worked to develop a set of upper level performance indicators that track the University's performance over time in key areas. This allows
the executive team to assess trends and to better understand variation in key process areas.

The President's Office staff provides support to the Committee on Committees. The staff and committee chair have worked to streamline the process of organizing and disseminating information to committee chairs in the summer of 2000.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

CQI activities in Academic Affairs have developed in the Office of the Provost, the Colleges, and in the staff organizations that support the academic processes.

The Office of the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs

In addition to chairing the University Quality Council, the Provost serves as champion for two surveys being conducted in Academic Affairs. One survey was designed with input from a focus group of Department Chairs and was recently administered to Department Chairs and Associate Deans. The second survey was developed with input from a focus group of faculty and will be administered in April of 2000. Both surveys are intended to establish a baseline understanding of faculty and administrative views on services received from support organizations.

College of Arts and Sciences

The American Studies program is conducting focus groups with undergraduate and graduate students to determine the strengths and opportunities for improvement in their program.

The Brewer-Porch Center conducted CQI training for all of its managers and supervisors to learn and apply process improvement methods and to support their accreditation process.

The Mathematics department is conducting focus groups with undergraduate and graduate students to determine the strengths and opportunities for improvement in their program.

The Music Department conducted a series of meetings with members of the maintenance organization to improve maintenance support to the Moody Music Building.

The Physics Department conducted a strategic planning process with all faculty members to determine actions needed in the next years to build a stronger department.

Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration

The College organized a team to work with maintenance personnel to improve maintenance services to the college.

The Management Sciences Department conducted focus group sessions with graduate students to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in their program.

Involved CQI staff in classes with students in Health Care Management.

College of Communication and Information Sciences

Conducted discussion group to improve faculty and staff teamwork.

College of Community Health Sciences

Dean Curry and the Department Chairs developed a strategic plan for the college, with assistance from CQI staff.

Staff in the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department participated in review of work processes and have developed approaches for process improvement.

College of Continuing Studies

CCS senior staff will participate in CQI training in April, 2000.

CQI staff has supported CCS in developing the concept for the Southeastern Automotive College.

Bryant Conference Center staff participated in creative thinking workshop.

College of Education

Dean Dolly benchmarked the quality improvement initiative at Samford University.

CQI staff and Education faculty have worked with representatives several Alabama businesses and the College of Business and Commerce to develop a proposal for an Alabama Superintendent's Academy.

Education conducted a series of meetings for staff members , faculty members, and staff and faculty to discuss and improve administrative work processes.

College of Engineering

Conducted focus groups with graduate students in the Computer Sciences program to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement in the program.

Organized a staff team to meet with maintenance personnel to improve maintenance services to the College of Engineering.

Involved CQI staff in classes with UA Tide students.

Focus groups were conducted with undergraduate and graduate students in the Metallurgical Engineering program to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

College of Human Environmental Sciences

Dean Bonner organized a team of Department Chairs to develop a strategic plan for the college with facilitation support from CQI staff.

University Libraries

Dean Osburn conducted a benchmarking visit to Samford University's library to review CQI applications at their facilities.

The Library's Leadership Council devoted a retreat to improving decision-making processes and to examine other CQI principles.

The Library has formed a new cross-functional team on Scholarly Publications.

Capstone College of Nursing

Dean Barger conducted a benchmarking visit to Samford University to review their CQI initiative.

The Lowery Learning Resource Center applied CQI tools to enhance work processes and planning for special projects.

Office of the Graduate School

Graduate school staff have reviewed quality auditing concepts to determine how these can be applied to the academic program review cycle.

Graduate school staff initiated the use of focus groups to gather student perspectives as part of the formal academic program review process.

Office of Sponsored Programs

All of the Sponsored Programs staff participated in CQI training and explored the use of flow diagrams and other process improvement tools.

Admissions

The Enrollment management team has worked on refining their mission statement and the performance indicators used by the office staff.

Student Financial Aid

Staff in Student Financial Aid have participated in CQI training, have been working on developing flow diagrams to improve work processes, have expanded their use of formal action plans to improve projects, and are developing customer surveys.

The University of Alabama Press

Staff at The University of Alabama Press conducted a strategic planning process.

Staff also engaged in a cycle-time-reduction study to shorten the production time for new books.

English Language Institute

Institute staff participated in CQI training which included team review of teaching methods and process improvement.

STUDENT AFFAIRS

The Vice-President for Student Affairs has involved all of Student Affairs managers in the CQI workshop to acquaint them with the tools and concepts. Student affairs has championed the development of a student survey to provide a baseline understanding of student satisfaction with the services they receive. Student Affairs has also championed the development of a survey for parents of undergraduate students to develop a baseline understanding of parent's perceptions of campus services.

The Career Center

Career Center staff have all participated in CQI training.

Dean of Students

Dean of Students staff have involved CQI staff in the Emerging Student Leaders Program to provide training for students on Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Dean of Students staff have championed a cross-functional team to streamline the student withdrawal process. CQI office has supported with marking data from other universities.

Ferguson Center

Ferguson Center staff conducted an assessment of the performance of student employees and designed a new orientation process to improve student performance.

Residential Life

Residential Life staff have conducted a self-assessment process, examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to focus on areas for improvement.

Russell Student Health Center

The Student Health Center has conducted staff development sessions on improving team processes. Center staff have applied CQI principles and tools to several internal work processes and provided CQI case studies for their accreditation.

University Recreation

University Recreation staff have participated in CQI training and have applied CQI tools to several projects, including facility expansion and the launch of a new summer camp program.

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Senior staff in the Advancement organization have all participated in CQI training and conducted a creative thinking workshop.

The interim Vice-President for Advancement championed the development of a survey to develop a baseline understanding of alumni's views regarding services they receive from the University. The Director of Alumni Relations is chairing the team that is developing the survey.

All of University Relations staff have participated in CQI training and the managers have participated in a creative thinking workshop.

Advancement Services staff took part in a self-assessment process that identified several processes they have worked to enhance.

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

The Vice-President for Financial Affairs is championing a survey of staff to develop a baseline understanding of staff views regarding services they receive from university offices and regarding benefits and the state of the campus community.

The senior managers in Financial Affairs have all participated in CQI training and have developed a structured process to enhance employee involvement in their annual planning process.

Accounting and Reporting

All staff in the Accounting and Reporting organization have participated in the CQI training. They have identified several opportunities for process improvement.

Auxiliary Services

Auxiliary services staff have participated in CQI training. A teambuilding effort has been launched in the traffic organization. University Printing has continued its leadership in studying and improving work processes.

Custodial Services

Custodial supervisors have participated in CQI training and have focused on issues such as reducing employee absenteeism.

Human Resources

HR management has participated in CQI training and have been leaders in several cross-functional teams to improve processes, such as the hiring process and the reclassification process. Staff Training has

provided logistical support for all CQI workshops and has facilitated several CQI projects.

Maintenance

Maintenance Supervisors initiated the concept of joint college and maintenance teams that are being piloted with C&BA, Engineering, and the Music Department. Supervisors are implementing improvements to the weekend call-in process.

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Athletics is working with Staff Training & Development and the CQI staff to develop a workshop for Athletics supervisors on leadership and CQI. Current plans are to offer the workshop in May, 2000.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The University's Quality Council has chartered several cross-functional teams to address a variety of campus concerns.

1. A team was formed to follow up on implementing recommendations from the standing committee on Technology that related to multimedia classrooms. The team has completed their work and has issued best practices on multimedia classroom maintenance to the colleges.
2. A team was formed to address problems associated with photography functions and campus darkrooms. This team is continuing to work on dark room issues.
3. A team was formed to facilitate collaboration among campus video resources. The team has reviewed existing video resources and has explored implications of coming changes in video technology.
4. A team was formed to explore ways to advance ideas for reducing paper usage on campus. Work is now underway to implement a concept for a print management system for printers in labs and other high-use areas.
5. Cross-functional teams were formed to study and improve the staff hiring process and the reclassification process for staff compensation. These teams are following up on implementing their ideas.

TRAINING

Launching a CQI effort requires a considerable investment in training. The University has developed a one-day CQI workshop that is taught for groups of employees who attend with their co-workers. The workshop involves participants in flow charting and applying other quality tools to their own work processes. As of 3-30-00, 397 staff members from across the campus have participated in the CQI training.

To support the CQI effort, Staff Training and the Office for Continuous Quality Improvement have worked together to develop and offer a series of half-day workshops on leadership skills. This includes workshops on:

Leading Participative Meetings
Leading the Strategic Planning Process
Consensus-Based Decision Making
Planning Skills
Building and Sustaining Teamwork
Coaching and Counseling Skills
Conducting an Organizational Self-Assessment
Leading Continuous Improvement
Creative Thinking

These workshops have been attended by dozens of staff, faculty, and administrators from various colleges and offices from across the campus and have received very positive evaluations from participants.

ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION GRANT

The University of Alabama received a $30,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in support of our efforts to

develop a set of senior level performance
indicators and to support the design and deployment of surveys of important stakeholder groups, such as students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni. The CQI
staff appreciates the reviews conducted by faculty members of the survey questions and the survey methods.

QUALITY FORUMS: 1998, 1999, 2000

The University's first Quality Forum in 1998 was designed to introduce the Campus to CQI in the university setting. Speakers included the Chairman of
The Zoology Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Provost and CQI Director from the Pennsylvania State University.

The Quality Forum in 1999 was designed to highlight groups on campus that have used the CQI process, such as the College of Community Health Sciences,
the Physics Department, the University of Alabama Press, University Printing, and University Recreation. The Forum also introduced participants to the
benefits of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria for establishing a management system for an organization.

The Quality Forum in October of 2000 will focus on the power of teams, and will feature over twenty campus teams that have been engaged in improving
their work processes.

Quality Council

The University Quality Council has shifted its focus in 1999 to provide strategic guidance on broad issues related to CQI, such as developing a model for how CQI supports the mission of The University of Alabama. The Quality Council devoted its March 2000 meeting to a discussion regarding how to expand faculty involvement in CQI (there are four members of the Council appointed from the Faculty Senate).

OUTREACH

CQI office staff has also participated in the university's mission of outreach to the community. Outreach activities have included:

Presentations to quality societies in Gadsden, Birmingham, and Montgomery.
Facilitation of strategic planning for the Demopolis City School system.
Facilitation of strategic planning for Troy State University - Montgomery.
Speaking to classes at the University of Alabama - Birmingham on quality.
Assisting the campus chapter of Habitat For Humanity in planning fund raising activities (raised $12,000)
and in organizing an alternate spring break work camp in 2000.