





# Academic Quality Improvement Project

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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April 27, 2004

Dr. Charles D. Rorie  
President  
Kirtland Community College  
10775 North St. Helen Road  
Roscommon, MI 48653

Dear President Rorie:

I am proud to echo Steve Crow's congratulations on Kirtland Community College's being accepted as a participant in our Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). In approving your application to participate, the AQIP Review Panel that reviews the materials of applicants recognized your appreciation of the potential benefits that can come from recasting accreditation activities so that they better support your institution's program for continuous improvement. The Panel's decision to recommend approval of Kirtland Community College testifies to its recognition of your readiness to join this undertaking, your appreciation of both the challenge and potential reward, and your willingness to collaborate with us in finding new ways to use accreditation to provide value to member organizations.

The Panel's Rationale for its decision was:

Kirtland Community College is well prepared to benefit from AQIP involvement and from what it has learned by using the Vital Focus self-assessment. The college has positioned itself for entry into AQIP by raising awareness and support for quality improvement and by participating in the state's quality program. Kirtland seems responsive to issues addressed in its most recent comprehensive process in terms of general education and assessment issues. Kirtland has taken the important steps of involving broad constituencies (trustees, faculty, staff, administrators) in the Vital Focus process. It appears to be well on its way to being ready for the Strategy Forum, having developed a process of information-based decision-making. Kirtland will be able to use its relationship with AQIP to help it demonstrate progress that will build additional support for the existing CQI efforts.

In addition, the Panel members asked me to share with you the following advice and counsel, which I hope you find helpful:

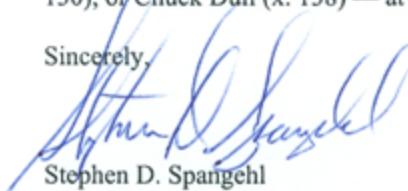
There appears to be limited experience in the use of performance measures. Moreover, it is not clear, outside of administrative leadership, how the college will involve employees for sustaining quality improvement efforts. Learning to use metrics and involving employees need to be conscious goals of the College. Similarly, it is important that both involvement and understanding of Trustees and faculty be included in this goal.

Participating in AQIP envisions a continuing collaboration, with a seven-year period preceding your next *Reaffirmation of Accreditation*, which we have now scheduled for the 2010-11 academic year. During the intervening years, we expect Kirtland Community College to be a full partner in AQIP, participating in a Strategy Forum within the next year, preparing a Systems Portfolio for Appraisal approximately three years later, and providing us Annual Updates on Action Projects each year — the first in a repeating four-year cycle of Strategy Forums, Annual Updates and Systems Portfolios and Appraisals. To get started in the AQIP cycle, you must attend a Strategy Forum within 12 months of the Board validation date indicated on your enclosed official action letter.

Crafting a new accreditation process, and a new relationship between member colleges and universities and their accrediting agency is no small challenge. We will make mistakes, and we count on you to call our attention to them, quickly and frankly. We welcome your suggestions on ways to make what we do more valuable to your institution and we welcome your advice on essential information and services to which we might help you get access. We look forward to a collaboration with you that will be stimulating, productive, and enjoyable for both you and AQIP.

Your official liaison with the Commission now becomes the collective AQIP staff — although you can call upon any other member of the Commission staff who can be helpful to you and your institution in any way. I encourage you to make the fullest possible use of the resources and information we can provide for you. If you have questions about anything, please call me (x.106) or my AQIP staff colleagues — Anita Daniel (x. 109), Mary Fleming (x. 130), or Chuck Dull (x. 138) — at any time.

Sincerely,



Stephen D. Spanghel  
Director