Five Lessons Learned
A conversation at Kirtland Community College

Lesson 1
A culture has evolved at Kirtland in which AQIP projects are viewed as added work or something extra to be done for accreditation. One attempt to merge the culture of AQIP into existing organizational structures achieved very limited success. The team attending the strategy forum believes it is necessary to create a culture in which employees see AQIP as the mechanism for input into decision making and as the process to create change. Continuous improvement practices must be threaded into existing structures.

Lesson 2
Giving new and existing employees the tools to work in a continuous improvement culture is required for success with AQIP. Training is not a one-time occurrence but must be on-going. Kirtland believes that professional development for continuous improvement will increase the engagement of faculty and staff in AQIP projects.

Lesson 3
Employees at Kirtland tend to move through action projects too quickly in order to complete them and "check it off the list." With this culture, a few projects may have been closed without reaching their best conclusion. The college needs to clearly communicate the proper way to conduct an AQIP project from start to finish, and be more reflective of continuous improvement with the goal of institutionalizing the process.

Lesson 4
Kirtland needs to celebrate successes in action projects not only at the end of a project, but also after the completion of significant milestones. The need exists to recognize the many informal action projects underway in as well as the formalized AQIP projects. In addition to adequately recognizing the successes of individual projects, good communications can keep employees informed and continually looking to identify new AQIP projects.

Lesson 5
Kirtland has been successful in creating a culture rich in data but less successful in its capacity to reach agreement on the meaning of data. The college believes that creating more agreement on the meaning of data will improve conversation and strengthen the continuous improvement process.