

**Action Project 1  
Feedback of 2003 Annual Update  
October 16, 2003**

**A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.**

From the last report, the Action Project Team has facilitated the development, approval, dissemination, and initial implementation of a dynamic institutional strategic and operational planning process. Approved by the Central Arizona College (CAC) Governing Board in December 2002, the Strategic Plan encompasses six main focus areas with stated sub-goals. All reflect the revised and approved mission and vision statement for CAC as a Learning College, and have been distributed widely to the stakeholders of the organization via hard copy as well as the college website ([www.centralaz.edu](http://www.centralaz.edu)). Though the Strategic Goals are set for a span of five years (2003-2008), it is recognized by the Action Project Team and CAC that systematic evaluation annually will enhance the overall effectiveness of the plan, as well as provide for the necessary flexibility for changing times. To assure that the plan is tied to the operational plans and the budget process, a system for assessing the implementation and outcomes of the plan has been designed utilizing a new tool referred to as the Planning and Performance Systems Updates.

1.1 The implemented a Planning and Performance Systems Update assures all aspects of the Strategic Plan are incorporated into the Operational Plans and Budget Process. Five specific questions are responded to on a quarterly basis by all departments of the college (via the Vice-Presidents), benchmarking the progress to date in implementing the tenets of the approved Strategic Plan. The five questions are as follows:

- 1) Describe what sections of the strategic plan your area will undertake and what areas of your operation will take the lead?
- 2) How will you monitor progress and what measures will you use to determine effectiveness?
- 3) What specific leadership or assistance do you need from the President of the College to support your success?
- 4) What personal and professional development will you commit to for the year, and what development will your staff need to carry out your strategic agenda?
- 5) What specific assistance do you need from other units of the College to support your success?

The Planning and Performance Systems Update is the most significant step in meeting the goal of Action Project #1, as it provides an integrated and systematic approach for implementation. In addition, the Update is also one of the tools that will provide the basis of continuous evaluation and re-evaluation of the established Strategic Plan.

1.2 The approved Strategic Plan, as well as the revised mission and vision statements for Central Arizona College has been distributed widely to the identified stakeholders. Internal stakeholders received hard copies of the plan during the Spring "All College Day," as well as the Spring and Fall In-services. Students, employees, parents, the

community, and other stakeholders can access the plan on the CAC Website ([www.centralaz.edu](http://www.centralaz.edu)). In addition, numerous presentations have been made by the President and other representatives of the College to groups in Pinal County, including many of those who participated in the Institutional Planning Public Forums (representative groups of identified segments of external stakeholders).

1.3 The Learning College Inventory, replacing OCI, was revised and distributed to all full-time staff to assess the College's progress towards becoming a Learning College. New baseline measures were established and data from the Inventory are currently being summarized and evaluated. The purpose of the Learning College Inventory was to comprehensively assess the perceived progress and understanding of what it means to be a Learning College by those responsible for implementing the tenets of it (all CAC staff and faculty), as well as to assess the impact of the Learning College focus on student learning. Though the Learning College philosophy is stated continuously throughout the departments, processes and plans of the College, the revised Inventory may still need editing as Central Arizona College seeks to capture the "aha" moment from all individuals at all levels of service.

1.4 All stretch targets, both quantitative and qualitative have been reviewed.

**Review (10-16-03):**

*Central Arizona College should be commended for developing, gaining approval, disseminating, and beginning implementation of its strategic plan. Implementing systematic annual evaluation of the plan not only enhances its effectiveness but also positions the College for continuous improvement. The College should consider, if it has not already done so, publishing an annual progress report on strategic planning. The six areas and goals suggest an integrated systems plan. While an Action Project Team composed of a representative cross section of the College is identified, this report does not indicate that responsibility for outcomes has been specifically assigned, and this should be important to the assessment process. A strength is that the College understands the importance of assessing the implementation and outcomes of its strategic plan.*

#### **B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.**

The Action Project Team, comprised of a representative cross section of the entire college, has continued to be very active in the Strategic Planning process. In addition, those involved in establishing Operational Plans as well as the annual Budget have taken a very active role in the Strategic Planning process (see Planning and Performance Systems Update). To further involve all employees of CAC, sessions during the All College Day and Fall and Spring In-services incorporated information sharing and feedback opportunities. Finally, there has been continuous communication regarding this dynamic process and progress during Governing Board meetings, district-wide departmental meetings, Cabinet meetings, and Deans' meetings. Committee meetings and work sessions are announced and open to all interested parties. Information is also available on the Central Arizona College website ([www.Centralaz.edu](http://www.Centralaz.edu)).

**Review (10-16-03):**

*That groups in Pinal County participated in Institutional Planning Public Forums indicates an inclusive approach to planning followed by dissemination of the plan*

*internally by hard copy and externally via the web and presentations. Broad dissemination should result in a common understanding of the College's mission, vision, and goals. One measure listed was 100% dissemination internally of the strategic plan, and this looks to have been accomplished. The College has assured incorporation of its strategic plan by asking all departments to answer questions on a quarterly basis. Involving all employees in answering these questions encourages better decisions and strengthens individual and group ownership of the College's planning processes.*

### **C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.**

The key for the College is to systemically integrate the Strategic Plan and assure awareness and involvement of all in the process. As mentioned earlier, the Planning and Performance Systems updates have been used as a tool to cascade sub goals of the plan throughout the organization. Next steps in the process include:

- 3.1 Annual development of major unit operational plans which specifically carry out goals and sub goals of the Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 Under the direction of the College's new President, we have done an assessment of organizational structure and plan to undertake a process which aligns organizational structure to better carry out the Strategic Plan.
- 3.3 Quarterly systems update evaluations will be conducted to analyze performance attainment vs. measurable goals.
- 3.4 Continued validation will occur between planning and resource allocation throughout all segments of the organization. Focus is shifting to planning driving budget, rather than budget driving planning.

#### **Review (10-16-03):**

*Development of major unit plans aligned with the strategic plan and organizational structure is critical to achieving the College's goals. Quite a lot of freedom seems to be given to units for deciding what sections of the strategic plan they will undertake. The same is true for monitoring and measuring. Aligning organizational structure and allocating resources to achieve specific goals is important. With the strategic plan distributed, determining that the plan is used and that those closest to it agree with its stated directions and goals should begin to result in desired outcomes. Attention should be directed to measuring the change processes occurring to move the College to recognition as a "learning college." One indicator of successful strategic planning and implementation is its effect upon budget development. Analysis and assessment should provide clear benchmarks for defining progress in implementing the components of the strategic plan.*

### **D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.**

Two effective practices are worthy of mention. First the Planning and Performance Systems Updates have created a vehicle to weave planning and evaluation throughout the fabric of the organization. All in the organization will now be able to clearly identify their role in learning. Also the process provides a means to connect major areas on common activities, breaking down past "silo" management styles. In addition, the College has developed strategies via forums, community events, in-service and all college days that involves the College and community in our planning process. This broad based approach has resulted in strong support around attainment of our goals.

**Review (10-16-03):**

*The College should consider sharing its Planning and Performance Systems Updates as "effective practice." The College states that these updates provide an integrated and systematic approach for implementation and enables continuous evaluation and re-evaluation of the established Strategic Plan. It's not clear, however, exactly how this integration occurs or how it is measured and assessed. That the response is quarterly provides continuity and suggests progress will be reported. The College should be recognized for developing a broad-based approach to implementing its strategic plan.*

**E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?**

1.1 We continue the process of building “bridges” between Action Projects #1, #2, and #3, however the Systems Portfolio continues to facilitate and enhance this endeavor. 1.2 With regard to the Learning College, the culture of the organization, though changing, must still accommodate for the “slow adopters” of change. Tools like the Learning College Inventory help assess progress made, however, the arrival of the “aha” moment can/and is different for various individuals. In addition, though CAC continuously defines and visions the Learning College, and surrounds all processes towards that end, it does not necessarily assure that all individuals will define it in the same way. 1.3 Progress has been made towards the incorporation of Operational Plans and Budgets that reference the Strategic Plans, however the Budget process continues to present an “opportunity for continued change.”

**Review (10-16-03):**

*Developing a culture is a demanding task, and the College should make every effort to encourage every employee to take responsibility for developing that culture. Becoming a "learning college" requires engagement from everyone as full participants in the improvement processes. Operational plans and budgets that reference the strategic plan help to shape a clear and compelling direction for the College.*

**F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?**

This Action Project is on target; no assistance is requested at this time.

**Review (10-16-03):**