

Southeast Tech
HLC Accreditation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose:

To provide information regarding Southeast Technical Institute's current accreditation cycle with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC).

The report will review Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) processes. This will include action projects, strategy forums, systems portfolios, key strategic areas and the comprehensive quality review. The AQIP process for accreditation is a very dynamic and collaborative process with the Higher Learning Commission. It has helped Southeast Tech to develop significant improvements in how the institute operates.

Administrative Recommendation to School Board:

Acknowledge the Accreditation Report.

Southeast Technical Institute Accreditation

1/7/2015

The purpose of this summary is to provide information regarding Southeast Technical Institute's current accreditation cycle with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC).

Explanation:

Contact: Tracy Noldner 605-367-7489

Southeast Technical Institute uses the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) process to assure that the institute meets the accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission. The eight-year AQIP cycle requires the institute to meet specific criteria in order to maintain its accreditation:

Action Projects: Southeast Tech is required to maintain three active Action Projects documented with HLC at all times. Action projects are improvement projects that the institute believes are important for the institute to accomplish and that could have a significant impact on the institution. Southeast Tech currently has three active and 11 retired action projects.

Current action projects are: "Increasing Access for Underserved Populations", "Implement Southeast Tech Cares", and "Professional Development".

Southeast Tech must submit at least three of its current action projects for review by a HLC peer reviewer each year. Peer reviewers provide feedback on each action project, offering suggestions for improvement as well as praise for achievements.

Strategy Forums: Twice within every eight-year accreditation cycle, Southeast Tech must participate in a strategy forum. Within the first two years of a new cycle, the institute is normally required to participate in a Strategy forum somewhere in the Chicago area. A team of 7 to 9 individuals from Southeast Tech would attend and bring what they have learned back to campus. Southeast Tech has been granted an opportunity to pilot host a strategy forum on campus, which allows for a far greater participation of stakeholders in the process. Peer consultants from HLC will facilitate the forum and work with the institute to determine the topic areas for the forum, which is conducted over 2 ½ days. Attendance at the on-site forum should include a broad range of stakeholders, including Southeast Tech employees, advisory committee members, Council and/or School Board members, business leaders, state representatives, students, etc.

For the second Strategy Forum, Southeast Tech sends a team of individuals to a forum location set by HLC. Team members should include a variety of stakeholders. This forum provides the team members the opportunity to work with other institutions on continuous quality improvement.

Strategy Forums are designed to re-emphasize and align continuous quality improvement, develop specific action projects for implementation, and instruct institute personnel on how to effectively use quality improvement tools.

Systems Portfolio: Southeast is required to maintain and publish a Systems Portfolio. The Systems Portfolio describes Southeast's processes, the results of those processes, and the current improvements Southeast has gained from using its processes.

The Portfolio covers six key strategic areas:

Helping Students Learn: This category describes how Southeast designs and conducts its programs and courses and how the institute assesses student learning.

Meeting Student and Other Stakeholder Needs: This category covers how Southeast Tech provides non-academic services to its students and how it monitors retention and student complaints for improvement purposes. The category also covers how Southeast Tech meets the needs of its other stakeholders, including the employers of its graduates.

Valuing Employees: This category discusses how Southeast Tech shows it values its employees, including employee satisfaction, safety, and rewards and recognition.

Planning and Leading: This category describes how Southeast Tech creates its strategic plan and long and short term goals, as well as how it provides leadership within the organization.

Knowledge Management and Resource Stewardship: This category covers how Southeast Tech assures that it will have the financial, facility, technology, and other key resources necessary to meet the continuing needs of the institute.

Quality Overview: This category addresses how Southeast Tech has set up its AQIP processes and how these processes operate in order to assure the institute continues successfully on its quality journey.

Twice in every eight-year cycle, Southeast Tech is required to publish a new Systems Portfolio with updated information. Southeast Tech published its first Systems Portfolio in November 2010. Its next Portfolio is due in November 2016.

To view Southeast's 2010 portfolio, go to:

https://stinet.southeasttech.edu/ICS/Continuous_Quality/Systems_Portfolio.jnz

Comprehensive Quality Review: Although there is the opportunity for two quality reviews within the eight-year cycle, the first review (2017-2018) is unlikely. The Higher Learning Commission can require a review at this time, or the institute can request a review; however, Southeast Tech does not expect this to occur.

The 2021-2022 Comprehensive Quality Review marks the completion of the eight-year accreditation cycle. At this time Southeast Tech's Systems Portfolio, Federal Compliance, and other documents are reviewed by HLC. A peer review team will visit the institute as part of this process and will make a recommendation to HLC regarding further accreditation. At the end of the Review, HLC determines the Reaffirmation of Accreditation, which begins a new cycle for the accreditation process.

Summary:

The AQIP process for accreditation is a very dynamic and collaborative process with the Higher Learning Commission. It has helped Southeast Tech to develop significant improvements in how the institute operates.