

Institutional Overview

Bismarck State College (BSC) is a public, two-year institution in south central North Dakota. The College is located on the northwestern edge of the capital city of Bismarck, on a hilltop near the east bank of the Missouri River; the city of Mandan lies directly across the river on the west bank. The 107 acre campus consists of 17 buildings or facilities used by the BSC Community.

Additional locations include: 1) Allied Health programs in downtown Bismarck, 2) Electrical Lineworker facility in Mandan, 3) Mechanical Maintenance program in Mandan, 4) Paramedic program at St. Alexius Medical Center, Bismarck, 5) Nursing at Harvey and Hazen, ND, and 6) Auto Technology at the Missouri River Correctional Center, Bismarck.

The most recent strategic planning process resulted in updated goals and objectives for the College.

VISION	
A national model for innovative education and workforce training.	
MISSION	
Bismarck State College, an innovative community college, offers high quality education, workforce training and enrichment programs reaching local and global communities.	
GOALS	VALUES
Branding BSC for Beyond Enhancing the Student Experience Strengthening Collaborative Relationships Ensuring High Quality Education Using Technology Effectively	Excellence Innovation Learning Integrity People

Figure O.1 Vision, mission, goals, and values

Most students attend BSC to complete a technical program or take courses that will prepare them to transfer to other institutions. Some non-traditional students take classes that help them upgrade job skills. The fall 2012 official enrollment is 4109 students, with 2416 full-time and 1693 part-time students. The majority of our students are between the ages of 18 – 24.

The College employs 127 full-time faculty, 207 staff, and 206 adjunct faculty.

BSC offers programs and courses leading to one of three types of associate degrees (Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science), a program certificate, or a program diploma. One Bachelor of Applied Science degree is awarded in Energy Management.

Eighteen of BSC's 42 technical programs are offered entirely online. Many courses and programs are offered online as well as in traditional mode. Key academic programs include liberal arts/transfer, the energy related programs, and certificate and associate degree nursing. BSC has strong cooperative relationships with several baccalaureate institutions to provide access to bachelor's degrees.

The Continuing Education, Training, and Innovation division (CETI) extends the resources of Bismarck State College to meet the needs for life-long learning, workforce training, and conference planning.

Bismarck State College's Quality Journey

Eight years ago, when Bismarck State College was considering AQIP as a means of maintaining regional accreditation, we were particularly impressed with two aspects – the future-oriented nature of AQIP and the focus on continuous improvement. The College had been somewhat involved with Total Quality Management (TQM) in the past but the TQM movement was seen as too business-oriented. AQIP offered a pragmatic application of quality improvement principles and methods, all adapted to the higher education environment. It seemed like a perfect fit for BSC.

Employees have seen the benefit of AQIP, and quality improvement in general, through the accomplishments of both formal AQIP Action Projects and other action projects that the College has undertaken. The action projects have been selected with the input and advice of employees. This practice involves everyone and helps to gain buy-in for projects and the AQIP processes.

AQIP provides the authority and environment that allows us to make substantial and needed changes. Many of our AQIP Action Projects have focused on major needs, such as improving advising for students. Building an innovation culture was an Action Project that took time, but resulted in a new way of thinking. To date, Bismarck State has completed six Action Projects and is working on four more dealing with diverse topics affecting student learning, retention, and enhancing student experiences. Our current projects, such as improving student success through a first year experience program and implementing a one-card system on campus, are ambitious endeavors. Regardless of the nature or complexity of the Action Projects, all of them have been instrumental in making significant improvement for the College. Related action projects that were not formalized as AQIP Action Projects, have included empowerment training and the adoption of a “flat operational structure” that encourages employees to be creative and problem solve rather than being micromanaged.

It became clear to us after preparing our original Systems Portfolio and receiving the Systems Appraisal feedback that there was a need for BSC to emphasize institutional effectiveness. To that end, an office of institutional effectiveness was developed under the leadership of an associate vice president. As this office matures, there will be a consistent effort to measure and analyze the ways in which BSC is fulfilling its mission and meeting its goals. Concomitant with this effort is the need to strengthen the College's ability to gather, analyze, and use data for high quality decision making. The award of a \$1.9 million Title III grant in 2011 is bolstering our institutional research capacity. The College has joined the National Community College Benchmarking Project to gain access to a rich source of comparative data that can be used to spark improvement activities.

There are certainly challenges that we need to address. On a busy campus, it can be difficult for employees to devote the time and effort needed to progress on AQIP Action Projects and other initiatives. There are only so many human and financial resources that can be expended which means we must pick our projects and improvement efforts wisely, choosing those that will result in improvement in areas of greatest need.

In the seven years that BSC has participated in AQIP we have come a long way in developing a culture in which continuous quality improvement is foremost in our minds. Prior to migrating to AQIP, employees were essentially uninvolved in accreditation efforts. AQIP is now a part of everyone's vocabulary and employees are more aware that everyone has a role to play in quality improvement. Increasingly, faculty, staff, and administrators realize that our various initiatives, such as improvement, innovation, flat campus, and empowerment are linked. Employees recognize the value of AQIP for they have seen improvements first hand. Of equal importance, they have been involved in the improvement efforts and feel a sense of ownership.