

# QUALITY CHECKUP REPORT

## **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**

Edwardsville, IL  
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### **Quality Checkup team members:**

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### Background on Quality Checkups conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) conducts Quality Checkup site visits to each institution during the fifth or sixth year in every seven-year cycle of AQIP participation. These visits are conducted by trained, experienced AQIP Reviewers to determine whether the institution continues to meet The Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, and whether it is using quality management principles and building a culture of continuous improvement as participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) requires. The goals of an AQIP Quality Checkup are to:

1. Affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification (System Portfolio Clarification and Verification);
2. Review with organizational leaders actions taken to capitalize on the strategic issues and opportunities for improvement identified by the last Systems Appraisal (Systems Appraisal Follow Up);
3. Alert the organization to areas that need its attention prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation, and reassure it concerning areas that have been covered adequately (Accreditation Issues Follow Up);
4. Verify federal compliance issues such as default rates, complaints, USDE interactions and program reviews, etc. (Federal Compliance Review); and
5. Assure continuing organizational quality improvement commitment through presentations, meetings, or sessions that clarify AQIP and Commission accreditation work (Organizational Quality Commitment).

The AQIP peer reviewer(s) or staff trained for this role prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*. The report provided to AQIP by the institution is also shared with the evaluator(s). Up-to-date, complete information about Quality Checkup preparation, procedures, and related information in the *Quality Checkup Visit Guide* available for download from the AQIP website at [www.AQIP.org](http://www.AQIP.org).

Copies of the Quality Checkup report are provided to the institution's CEO and AQIP liaison. Additionally, a copy is retained by the Commission for the institution's permanent file, and will be part of the materials reviewed by the AQIP Review Panel during the institution's reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Clarification and verification of contents of the institution's *Systems Portfolio*

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- The 2006 update of the Systems Portfolio is a comprehensive, detailed document representing Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's progress and activities in various areas of the institution. It reflects a deeper understanding of SIUE's strategic issues, processes, and systems. It may be viewed as a map of the University's processes, results, and improvement efforts.
- Whenever the team requested clarification or verification of specific contents within SIUE's *Systems Portfolio*, the University explained the issues clearly and completely, leaving the team satisfied that the *Systems Portfolio* accurately portrays SIUE, including its systems, processes, results, and improvement efforts.
- The 2004 Systems Appraisal identified 48 opportunities for improvement. SIUE has taken each under consideration and has either initiated specific action to address the opportunities for improvement or has concluded that some simply reflected SIUE's incomplete or unclear reporting in the original *Systems Portfolio*.

Review of specific accreditation issues identified by the institution's last Systems Appraisal

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- No accreditation issues were identified.
- SIUE's revised (2006) *Systems Portfolio* contains an index clearly identifying where the *Systems Portfolio* provides evidence that SIUE meets each of the Commission's five criteria for accreditation.

Review of the institution's approach to capitalizing on recommendations identified by its last Systems Appraisal in the *Strategic Issues Analysis*.

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- The *Strategic Issues Analysis* in the 2004 *Systems Appraisal* provided recommendations regarding assessment processes and measures, communication, benchmarks, and comparative results related to collaborative relationships. Examples of how SIUE has responded to these recommendations include the following:
  - Under SIUE's new Director of Assessment, the University is making good progress with systematic assessment processes to measure teaching effectiveness and student learning and to provide data that can lead to improvements in student learning. SIUE is moving toward a scholarly, research-based approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its assessment processes.
  - With strong leadership at all levels, SIUE is improving its communication among administrators, faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders.
  - SIUE expects all administrative and service units to establish appropriate benchmarks with peer institutions.
  - SIUE's new Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Regional Economic Development is helping build and strengthen collaborative relationships.

Review of organizational commitment to continuing systematic quality improvement

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- SIUE believed the AQIP accreditation model to be a good fit when it applied to join AQIP; now, at the time of this Quality Checkup Visit, both the University and the AQIP reviewers believe that it made the appropriate decision.
- SIUE has developed an ongoing systematic strategic planning process that involves input from all levels of the institution. This has resulted in well-articulated long-term (10-year) goals that were approved in 2001, as well as short-term goals that are reviewed on an ongoing basis. SIUE has linked its strategic planning goals to those of the Southern Illinois University system and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.
- SIUE's participatory (team-based) way of doing its internal business (e.g., the noteworthy close relationship between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs) facilitates meeting several AQIP criteria. Examples include the following:
  - There is a synchrony among governing bodies (e.g. the University Planning and Budgeting Council has membership from faculty, staff, and student senates).

- Frequency of communication between administrators and University constituents is reflected in a developing evidence-based decision-making process.
- AQIP provides the framework and leverage to turn a stated University short-term goal into an AQIP Action Project. There is synergy between AQIP and SIUE's planning culture. For example:
  - Prospective student demand for SIUE education resulted in the new Online Transfer Student Action Project.
  - The New Freshman Seminar Action Project includes a broad base of faculty.
  - AQIP feedback helped prompt continuation of the Meta-assessment Action Project.
  - Actions based on strategic planning have resulted in SIUE's expanded access for its regional students, greater student satisfaction with their SIUE education, and improved student success.
- SIUE's focus on student learning prompts the institution to ensure that its processes and systems are aligned with desired learning outcomes. Examples of results include SIUE's strong advising initiatives and its ability to view results from student perspectives.
- The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified segmentation of student constituents for better response to student needs as an opportunity for improvement. Institutional marketing research has addressed this opportunity for improvement by segmenting student stakeholders to identify baselines for assessing perceptions of quality. For example, SIUE identified a gap between its positive campus environment and its need to raise awareness about the quality of SIUE education.
- SIUE continues improving its efforts to meet its mission in the community. For example, processes and articulation agreements for dual admission between SIUE and community colleges are being developed to help meet SIUE's regional mission.
- SIUE's initiative for Baccalaureate Reform through Integrated Design of General Education (BRIDGE) is a key example of a collaborative initiative focused on continuous improvement in student learning, while also illustrating broad-based faculty involvement in curricular reform.
- SIUE's Senior Assignment helps assess how well the institution is accomplishing its learning objectives by having students demonstrate the scope of their learning in their chosen fields, as well as in general education.

USDE issues related to default rate (renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions)

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- SIUE's default rate in 2004 was 2.9, which was in line with the national trend in public four-year institutions. SIUE received renewal of eligibility and certification for the distribution of federal financial aid to students.
- Degree audits will be operational in January 2007 when the Student Information System module of the Banner system is operational.
- SIUE has internal, external, and state financial audits.

Other Title IV compliance issues

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

Compliance with Commission policy 1.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- All courses are credited in semester credits.
- Degree certification requirements for all programs are consistent with Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) requirements.
- There are program specific tuition rates in Dentistry and Pharmacy programs. This is consistent with tuition rates in these disciplines.
- The 2006-07 tuition rate is published on the University's web site.
- SIUE's undergraduate and graduate catalogs list fees, refund policy, refund dates and amounts. Length of classes and course requirements are also listed.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, *Advertising and Recruitment Materials*

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- Most advertising and recruitment materials that reference SIUE's affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission include the Commission's Web site and phone number. However, some do not. The institution should check its advertising and recruitment materials to make certain they comply with this referencing rule. This requirement is stated in the ***Higher Learning Commission Handbook of Accreditation*** on page 8.2-3 and further explained on page 8.3-4. This rule does not apply to documents intended primarily for internal use.
- SIUE advertised for third party comments in the three main local and regional newspapers. No comments were received by the Commission or by the institution.

Compliance with Commission policy III.A.1, *Professional Accreditation*, and III.A.3, *Requirements of Organizations Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation*

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- SIUE has institutional accreditation only with the Higher Learning Commission.
- The University has specialized accreditation for 55 of its professional programs.

Compliance with Commission policy IV.B.4, *Organizational Records of Student Complaints*

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

- SIUE has a well-defined student grievance procedure, which includes documenting student complaints and steps taken. Most complaints are resolved informally, but when that is not successful, students are made aware of SIUE's formal processes for resolution that include adjudication.

#### Other USDE compliance-related issues

***In the team's judgment, the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it met this goal of the Quality Checkup. The institution's approach to the issue, documentation, and performance were acceptable and comply with Commission and AQIP's expectations.***

#### Other AQIP issues

The following are significant issues that SIUE is currently dealing with, and that the team feels are important as part of the institution's efforts for continuous improvement:

- Improving the graduation rates: SIUE is aware that graduation rates are a key indicator of success in helping students learn and achieve their academic and career-related goals. Many of the institution's strategies and action plans are either directly or indirectly related to improving graduation rates.
- Articulating SIUE's image and brand: It is important for SIUE to clearly articulate how it wants to be known in view of its growth in enrollment, its increasing competitiveness, and improving its reputation regionally and nationally—thereby articulating the desired impacts of the growth it is enjoying on many fronts.
- Managing continuing growth to accommodate both continuity and change: As SIUE takes care not to break with its traditions, it aspires to meet the challenges of growth in order to ensure that growth does not outrun the University's infrastructure and its capacity for scalability of its infrastructure.
- Expanding service to the region: Better service to constituents is being achieved through additional creative strategies such as the current articulation agreements for dual admissions with regional community colleges. SIUE is also developing further its online opportunities in areas of student need and faculty initiative.
- Improving of assessment: SIUE is beginning to engage in a more scholarly approach to measuring student learning (programmatic assessments) with the goals of developing stronger measures of student learning and achieving a better graduation rate.
- Developing a strong communications plan: SIUE plans to develop a communications plan that includes IT, computing, and Student Affairs areas to facilitate better communications throughout the University.