



Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program

The Higher Learning Commission NCA

# STRATEGY FOR ACTION WORKBOOK

## MINERAL AREA COLLEGE, MISSOURI

### A. Mineral Area College's Present

#### 1. Distinctive organizational features

Mineral Area College, formerly Flat River Junior College (est. 1922), was founded by election in 1965 as a two-year comprehensive local district community college. Since its founding, Mineral Area College has served as a regional center of intellectual, cultural, community, and economic life.

Situated in the rural Ozark Mountains, as a former lead and iron ore mining region, Mineral Area College is located approximately 60 miles south of St. Louis, Missouri in the communities of Park Hills/Desloge/Farmington with well-over 27,000 people. The largest city in the College's taxing district is Farmington (5 miles south of the main campus) with a population of approximately 14,000 people. The College also has outreach centers located in Fredericktown (25 miles south), Perryville (60 miles southeast), Potosi (20 miles west), and Winona (80 miles south). The total population of the service area, including the taxing district of the College, is approximately 250,000 people.

Established by referendum, the College's taxing district covers parts of six counties, and serves well over 85,000 citizens. The six trustee's abilities, education and business-driven opinions, and community involvement allow him/her to richly enhance and assure accountability for the communities and the taxing district served by the College.

Mineral Area College serves a diverse student population, which includes both traditional and non-traditional students. This comprehensive community college of over 2,900 students meets the needs of individuals enrolled in developmental, academic/university transfer, career and technical, customized/contract training for business and industry, and continuing education courses and programs.

The community takes pride in the beautifully timbered and landscaped 300-acre, twelve-building campus and 224 bed apartment style residence halls located in Park Hills, Missouri. With the 2002 passage of a \$6 million dollar bond issue, and a \$1.25 million energy conservation loan from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the College recently completed, remodeled and expanded the Fine Arts Building, built a new 10,000 square feet outreach center in Fredericktown, constructed a new baseball field, renovated faculty offices and classrooms, changed-out all air handlers and electrical light systems and replaced most roofs. The completion of these projects evidences the organization's commitment to quality improvement and providing state-of-the-art facilities to further advance the achievement of the College's educational goals.

#### 2. Scope of educational offerings

- Associate Degree Programs: Arts (AA), Science (AS), General Studies (AGS), Applied Science (AAS)
- Career & Technical Education Program options include Allied Health and Nursing, Tech Prep, Business and Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Technology and transfer from Apprenticeship Training programs. This division offers certifications in over 30 technical areas, along with Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science degrees.
- Transfer to other colleges: the Associate of Arts degree is a recognized statewide as the general studies transfer degree to Missouri four-year baccalaureate degree institutions. Mineral Area College has articulation agreements facilitating transfer for those students who plan to pursue

baccalaureate degrees, for the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and selected Associate of Applied Science programs.

- Dual Credit: Qualified high school juniors and seniors have the option to enroll in dual credit courses at Mineral Area College. Annually, approximately 400 high school junior and senior students from 19 high school districts located in the College's service region enroll in dual credit courses.
- Senior Scholars Program is for Missouri residents 65 years and older who may take college courses on a not-for-credit basis, at no charge.

### **3. Students**

Mineral Area College's students range from traditional-aged recent graduates from high school who most likely will transfer to a regional university, to mature individuals employed in the community who wish to hone their academic, job-training and job-upgrading skills. The college has an "open-admissions" policy, with no limit placed upon targeted student groups or populations.

- For the fall 2005 semester, the college had a total of 2,930 students; 1,599 (54.5%) were classified as full-time, 1331 (45.5%) were reported as part-time.
- The average age of Mineral Area College students is 25 years. Women make up 68% of the student body. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the freshman students finished the first year of colleges with 24 credits and a 2.00 GPA.
- Seventy percent (70%) of the College's students receive some form of financial aid. The average ACT score of first-semester freshman students is 19.3.
- The student base of the College is predominately made up of commuter students. A small percentage of students (6.5% or 192 students) reside in College Park Residence Halls, Mineral Area College's student housing complex located right on campus.
- The College enrolls 2,343 (80%) degree/certificate-seeking students and 587 (20%) non-degree seeking students, with 2,165 (92%) of those seeking an associate's degree of some kind. There are 1,139 (53%) students who have reported that they intend to transfer to a four-year institution and 1,026 students (47%) who have reported that they intend to finish a degree and enter the workforce.

### **4. Collaborative or partnership arrangements**

Mineral Area College has developed many important partnerships which serve the employers and citizens of the region. The College is recognized as a leader in Missouri for the development of collaborative programs with a creative flair. Some examples of these partnerships include:

- The first 2+2 baccalaureate program in Missouri in cooperation with Central Methodist University is located on the main campus of Mineral Area College.
- An Associate of Applied Science Degree is offered in conjunction with a local hospital diploma program in Radiological Technology.
- An Associate of Applied Science Degree is offered in cooperation with the Cape Girardeau Area Career and Technical Center certificate program in Respiratory Therapy.
- The only 2- or 4-year institution in the state to operate all three of the Title III TRIO programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education, including Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and EXCEL Student Support Services.

- Cooperative associate degree programs with the Missouri Highway Patrol, the Missouri Department of Corrections, and the Missouri Water Patrol.
- Cooperative agreements with 19 trades to grant credit toward an A.A.S. degree for trade members who earn journeyman status.
- Relationships with 30 major employers from Cape Girardeau, Perryville, and Mineral Area regions to design credit-based and customized training curriculum which serves employer needs and may be utilized by employees to gain credit toward an A.A.S. degree.
- Hosting many community events on the College campus including musical, art, and theatre cultural activities, sports events, blood drives, cancer walks, Boy Scout and Cub Scouts camping on campus, a lecture series, and a monthly luncheon for discussions and the exchange of important ideas.
- Four outreach centers located within the College's service region, including: Perryville, Arcadia Valley, Potosi, and Winona operated with the cooperation of local school districts.

## **5. Faculty and staff**

- Mineral Area College employs 167 full-time employees; 62 (37%) are classified and technical staff, 16 (10%) are general services (maintenance), 10 (6%) are professional staff, 6 (4%) are administrators.
- Seventy-three (44%) of 167 full-time employees are full-time faculty. Another 70-80 part-time adjunct instructors are hired each semester. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the full-time faculty members hold graduate degrees in their teaching field.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of all Mineral Area College employees are women (48% are men). 63% of Mineral Area College full-time employees are women (27% are men).
- Employee groups are not represented by unions or any collective bargaining agreements.

## **6. Three operational environment requirements**

- 1) As a local legal political sub-division in Missouri, Mineral Area College's taxing district is governed by a six-member Board of Trustees, each member of which is elected for a six-year term by eligible voters of the taxing district. The College derives 33% of its finances from property taxes.
- 2) Approximately 34% of the College's financial support comes from State appropriations and through the coordination of the Missouri Department of Higher Education, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The Missouri General Assembly takes a pro-active role in higher education coordination that ranges from fiscal support to accountability measures.
- 3) Four programs at Mineral Area College (Nursing, Teacher Education, Paramedic, and Law Enforcement) are accredited by either national or state accreditation bodies or agencies.

## **7. Three important competitors**

In reality, the main competitor of the college is not an institution of higher education, but "employment opportunities". The college loses potential students and credit hours of enrollment because a very large majority of students have to remain employed while attending college or decide to work full-time instead of attending college.

### **1) Jefferson College, Hillsboro, Missouri**

Jefferson College is Mineral Area College's closest community college competitor located 30 miles north of the main campus in the next county. For some students living in the northern area

of Mineral Area College's service region, Jefferson College is a viable option due to its proximity and lower tuition and fee compared to Mineral Area College. The in-district tuition and fees at Jefferson is \$6 less an hour than Mineral Area College's rate (In-district: \$72 for MAC, \$66 for Jefferson College). Out-of district tuition and fees are less competitive (\$103 at Jefferson versus \$96 at Mineral Area College). However, the proximity of Jefferson College to St. Louis and some major corporations located in the vicinity could make the Jefferson College more desirable to students looking for internships and post-graduation employment.

**2) Three Rivers Community College, Poplar Bluff, Missouri**

Three Rivers Community College is located approximately 90 miles south of Mineral Area College and competes for students residing in the southern reaches of Mineral Area College's service region. Mineral Area College and Three Rivers Community College offer very similar programs and are about the same size institutions; however, the proximity to Cape Girardeau, Missouri and Southeast Missouri University may encourage students to enroll at Three Rivers Community College. The difference in tuition and fees also makes Three Rivers competitive. In-district tuition and fees per credit hour at Three Rivers is \$68.50 (\$3.50 less than Mineral Area College's \$72), out-of-district tuition and fees are \$105.50 per credit hour (\$9.50 more than Mineral Area College's \$96).

**3) Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, Missouri**

Southeast Missouri State University, (a regional four-year state institution and formerly a teachers normal college) is located 90 miles southeast of Mineral Area College. Many students from the Mineral Area College region select Southeast because they want to experience life at a four-year state university with residence halls, right out of high school. The University admissions policy is designated as a "moderately selective", and therefore is attractive to students who are more highly ranked in their high school graduating class and/or who have achieved a high composite ACT score (in the 21 to 27 range). Southeast also offer selective Associate of Applied Science degrees that compete with Mineral Area College. Tuition and fees are more than \$180 per semester (almost 1.5 times more than Mineral Area College).

**8. Three important opportunities and three critical vulnerabilities**

***Opportunities:***

- 1) Mineral Area College has established strong collaborative relationships with businesses and school districts within the communities which create opportunities to expand programs.
- 2) Faculty and staff understand and respond to student needs. In the AQIP Examiner feedback, College personnel rated themselves favorably in listening to constituents and identifying and responding to change. Employees perceive a strong working relationship between the departments of the college, the administration, and the community constituents.
- 3) Mineral Area College provides students the affordability and accessibility to higher education. The College has a lower tuition structure compared to other four-year college and universities and therefore is an attractive and necessary option for residents of the service region.

***Vulnerabilities:***

- 1) The level of state appropriation has dipped and remained stagnate over the past five years, which has hindered program expansion, and the completion of deferred maintenance projects.
- 2) Outdated business and enrollment management information software has impeded institutional flexibility, efficiency and accurate decision-making.
- 3) Mineral Area College is located in a rural region with stable to declining enrollments with area K-12 school districts. The preparation of high school graduates for success in college is problematic. Also, the number of recent high school graduates who go to college is considerably lower than the state average. Each of these issues creates challenges for future College enrollment and instructional services.

## **B. Mineral Area College's Future**

### **1. Three chronic frustrations**

- State aid funding reductions and steady-state enrollments have reduced the College's ability to hire additional full-time faculty in high-demand areas, provide consistent salary increases, and curb rising costs of medical insurance.
- The current business and enrollment management information software package is no longer suitable, and has out-lived its useful life. The frustration level is especially high with employees in the financial aid department and the business office.
- There is a general lack of student preparedness for success in college-level courses. Roughly 40 -50 percent of Mineral Area College students are either under-prepared right out of high school or returning students have "rusty" math and writing skills. This proposes a challenge to faculty especially in reading intensive general education classes.

### **2. Three elements of your shared vision**

- The College envisions being able to offer the entire AA degree online. In order to achieve this goal, the College will continue to develop additional online courses.
- The College envisions being able to continue obtaining new and updated computer programs, equipment, teaching technology, and other technical resources in order to provide state-of-the-art tools and resources for students as well as for staff and instructors.
- The College envisions exploring fresh avenues that will lead to improvements to recruiting, retention, and in course/program offerings.

### **3. Three most critical Principles of High Performance Organizations**

- **Leadership**—Administrators, directors/coordinators and faculty supervisors must be viewed as true leaders who will act as advocates for staff and students and must be perceived to have the skills necessary to lead the College through the quality improvement process, and unstable fiscal budget years.
- **Strategy**—The College must develop a long-range understandable business strategy that is communicated clearly to all internal and external stakeholders, and has a method to measure its performance.
- **Teamwork**—Employee teams must be aligned with the strategic initiatives of the College, and leaders must emerge from within the teams to effectively communicate opportunities and challenges.

**4. Three to four tentative Action Project ideas; titles (up to 10 words) and descriptions**

<b>Action Project Worksheet</b> Mineral Area College, Missouri	<i>Challenging</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Easy</i>
	<i>Complex</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Simple</i>
	<i>High Payoff</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Action Project idea # 1:</b> Improve student learning outside general education through teaching/learning assessment strategies.			
<b>AQIP Criterion to which this primarily relates:</b> Helping Students Learn			
<b>Briefly describe what you would like this project to accomplish.</b> This project augments the College's successful assessment program in general education. This project will enable faculty to tackle additional strategies that improve student learning in both the transfer pre-requisite courses and skill-set-training in program and courses of career and technical programs. Student achievement of learning will be measured by use of locally-developed, national, and occupational competency tests at the course level and then at the exiting program level. There needs to be an integrated approach of gathering data and ensuring that departmental as well as institutional goals are met. This project will help the college utilize data in a more meaningful way, and assuring that faculty and staff thoroughly closes the "quality teaching feedback loop", including proper use of classroom teaching strategies and methods, learning styles techniques, and measurement functions. This project will help assure that Mineral Area College graduates are either prepared to successfully complete a baccalaureate degree or to have the necessary skills for gaining and holding a job in the workforce.			
<b>Where did the idea or stimulus for this project originate?</b> This action project is the next logical step in the development of a culture of assessment at the College, after internalizing a mature process for measuring general education competencies.			
<b>Which specific needs of your students or other external stakeholders would be better met if you accomplished this project? How?</b> Assessing student learning achievement in transfer pre-requisite courses and employment training skill-sets is an essential strategy for the teaching and learning process. Assessment and measuring student learning at will assure faculty that students have mastered appropriate knowledge, skills, and competencies and to serve as a determinant for improving instruction. This project will ensure that Mineral Area College students continue to compete in their junior and senior years with native students when transferring to a four-year college or university, and/or to acquire the necessary skills and abilities to enter the workforce.			
<b>How would doing this project allow you to better meet your employees' needs? Which, specifically?</b> Both full- and part-time faculty can use a renewed focus on program and course assessment to develop or refresh their abilities to measure the success of student learning, and through a quality feedback loop, to make improvements in teaching.			
<b>How would accomplishing this project change or affect your institution's culture?</b> This project will advance the faculty and staff's overall culture of continuous quality improvement in the measurement of student learning in transfer pre-requisite courses and skill sets in career and technical preparatory programs.			
<b>What leadership and employee enthusiasm and support is there for doing this project now?</b> Leadership and faculty enthusiasm and support have been strong.			

<b>Action Project Worksheet</b> Mineral Area College, Missouri	<i>Challenging</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Easy</i>
	<i>Complex</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Simple</i>
	<i>High Payoff</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Action Project idea #2:</b> Improve Effective Decision-Making Through the Purchase of a New Administrative Software System.			
<b>AQIP Criterion to which this primarily relates:</b> Supporting Institutional Operations			
<b>Briefly describe what you would like this project to accomplish.</b> The College has outdated business and enrollment management information software, which currently impedes institutional flexibility, efficiency and accurate decision-making. The College will evaluate out-sourced vendors and select and finance a software package that improves the management of information, timely and accurate decisions, enhances the Colleges ability to present routine and extemporaneous institutional research and reports. A new information system utilizing a relational data-base, will provide a more efficient use of resources, more efficient feedback, and allow for an improved ability to measure institutional effectiveness.			
<b>Where did the idea or stimulus for this project originate?</b> The stimulus for this project is the fact that the College has outgrown the existing limited software package due to enrollment and business growth of our main campus and outreach centers, as well as improvements in commercial college enrollment and business software. Simple and accurate screens, paperless recording-keeping and archiving are not currently available. Additional reports are required every day and a new system would more accurately and timely meet these needs by providing employees a system to generate their reports as needed without written request and a waiting period. The volume of business and enrollment transactions have increased due to enrollment, state, and federal regulations, which in turn has increased the amount of paper handled by Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Financial Aid, and the Registrar.			
<b>Which specific needs of your students or other external stakeholders would be better met if you accomplished this project? How?</b> New business and enrollment software programs would improve processing of records and reports for all stakeholders including vendor payments, and student registration tracking. By acquiring an enhanced computer software system, information would be readily available at all times, student on-line registration would be enhanced, and accounting practices would be in compliance. A paperless requisition and record-keeping systems could also be included. Additionally, the process of converting to a new system will provide an avenue to review old processes and discover more efficient means of production within and among departments.			
<b>How would doing this project allow you to better meet your employees' needs? Which, specifically?</b> Excessive time spent on processing records and reports from multiple screens would be eliminated. By providing an efficient system where archived records could be retrieved on computer instead of searching old files, time spent by employees on this activity would decrease and allow them to focus on more important tasks. This in turn would improve customer service to students and employees.			
<b>How would accomplishing this project change or affect your institution's culture?</b> A new system would greatly reduce the frustration of employees and improve their overall efficiency, and would help the College develop and attain additional action projects.			
<b>What leadership and employee enthusiasm and support is there for doing this project now?</b> A workgroup has been charged by the College president to begin exploring available options.			

<b>Action Project Worksheet</b> Mineral Area College, Missouri	<i>Challenging</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Easy</i>
	<i>Complex</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Simple</i>
	<i>High Payoff</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Action Project idea # 3:</b> Improve Institutional Effectiveness Through a Long-Range Strategic Planning Process.			
<b>AQIP Criterion to which this primarily relates:</b> Planning Continuous Improvement			
<b>Briefly describe what you would like this project to accomplish.</b> This project will allow Mineral Area College to re-examine and communicate the internal and external stakeholder goals for the college, prioritize these goals, and implement action steps that improve institutional effectiveness.			
<b>Where did the idea or stimulus for this project originate?</b> Mineral Area College recognizes a need to update the College's current long-range strategic plan. The college leadership feels too much time has passed since it was last updated. The AQIP steering committee recognizes the need and recommends the project. In addition, this action project will build upon the recently successful revision of the College's Mission Statement, Philosophy of Purpose, Value Statements, Goals Statements, and Organizational Priorities. Faculty and staff attended an all-day workshop in January, 2005 where participants were randomly divided into focus groups. Each group was asked to reach consensus on six to eight Vision and Value Statements that best describe the culture and strengths of Mineral Area College. Based on these results, the College's Mission Statement, Philosophy of Purpose, Value Statements, Goals, and Organizational Priorities were revised and the resultant draft was edited by faculty and staff committees throughout the winter and early spring. The final draft was adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 14, 2005.			
<b>Which specific needs of your students or other external stakeholders would be better met if you accomplished this project? How?</b> This project will allow the college to verify that the College's instructional, student support services, and school and community relations programs are meeting the needs of students and other external stakeholders. Mineral Area College students will be better equipped with the skills needed by their future employers and are adequately prepared to transfer to a four-year college or university.			
<b>How would doing this project allow you to better meet your employees' needs? Which, specifically?</b> A strategic plan will provide Mineral Area College employees and the community a process by which to communicate and have input into the long-range goals of the institution. The completion of this action project will enable effective communication of the College's priorities and an avenue to link the planning process with the yearly budget, and institutional effectiveness indicators that measures outcomes.			
<b>How would accomplishing this project change or affect your institution's culture?</b> The project will allow the college to identify specific strengths and challenges based upon the recent revision of the College's Mission Statement, Philosophy of Purpose, Value Statements, Goals, and Organizational Priorities. The College can then redirect efforts to meet the needs of students, employees, and other stakeholders while improving open lines of communication within the institution.			

**What leadership and employee enthusiasm and support is there for doing this project now?**

Faculty, classified staff and administrative leadership is enthusiastic about this project. This action project was in the top five when voted on by all employees of the college which indicates that support and enthusiasm are present. This action project will build upon the successful revision of the College's Mission, Vision, and Values Statements.

<b>Action Project Worksheet</b> Mineral Area College, Missouri	<i>Challenging</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Easy</i>
	<i>Complex</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Simple</i>
	<i>High Payoff</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Action Project idea # 4:</b> Improve Student Success in College Courses After Developmental/Remedial Education.			
<b>AQIP Criterion to which this primarily relates:</b> Helping Students Learn			
<b>Briefly describe what you would like this project to accomplish.</b> The goal of this project will be to bring together faculty and staff to re-examine and improve the college's efforts in an effective developmental education teaching/learning environment. Strategies will be evaluated and developed to improve assessment techniques that measure how students best learn, how the College can best teach adult literacy skills in mathematics, English, and reading, and how students can be best prepared in college level coursework after remediation. The primary goal will be to enhance student retention and success rates in succeeding college-level course work for which developmental classes are a prerequisite.			
<b>Where did the idea or stimulus for this project originate?</b> Placement scores indicate that 40-50%, or more, of Mineral Area College traditional and non-traditional students test into at least one developmental course in reading, writing, and mathematics. If students are to succeed in college-level courses, their adult literacy and study skills must be improved. There have also been statewide efforts by the Missouri Community College Association to bring about consistency with placement scores for college-level and developmental-level courses, and communicate with local school districts the expectations of students who are entering college-level courses in reading, writing and math. The foundation from this commitment can be used as a basis for this action project.			
<b>Which specific needs of your students or other external stakeholders would be better met if you accomplished this project? How?</b> Students at all campus sites, taking adult literacy and developmental courses in reading, writing, and mathematics will be assured that their performance will be analyzed so that they may feel more comfortable that their efforts will pay-off in college-level courses. Qualitative results from this action project should provide the college faculty with evidence to seek continuous improvement in adult literacy curriculum, teaching techniques and methods, and learning style modalities. The results will also provide the necessary information to make appropriate changes in any area which affects student placement and success in developmental courses.			
<b>How would doing this project allow you to better meet your employees' needs? Which, specifically?</b> Faculty will spend higher quality time using better understood and reliable methods and techniques for improving literacy skills among adult students. Faculty will see higher completer success rates in the first college level course(s) after remediation.			
<b>How would accomplishing this project change or affect your institution's culture?</b> This project may not significantly reduce the number of students needing literacy skill improvement, but will give students needing remediation respect, dignity, and the confidence necessary to fulfill dreams with successful performance in college-level courses after literacy skill intervention.			

**What leadership and employee enthusiasm and support is there for doing this project?**

The College's Administration, the chair of the English Department, and the Learning Center staff has verbalized its support for this project. This action project was ranked in the top third of priorities when voted on by all college employees. This action project is aligned with the College's Mission, Vision, and Value Statements.