Accreditation with the Academic Quality Improvement Program
Accreditation by nationally recognized agencies provides objective, public assurance that an institution has been found to meet clearly stated requirements and criteria and that there are reasonable grounds for believing that it will continue to meet them.

The accrediting agency establishes standards, or criteria, to assess the formal educational activities of the institution. Also evaluated are governance and administration, financial stability, student personnel services, institutional resources, student academic achievement, institutional effectiveness, and relationships with constituencies inside and outside the institution.

Accreditation is also needed to ensure students are eligible to apply for financial aid and that the institution is eligible to apply for certain grants.
The **North Central Association (NCA)**: is one of 6 regional accrediting bodies. NCA serves 19 states including Ohio.

**Higher Learning Commission (HLC)** is the branch of NCA that accredits institutions of higher education.

**Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)** is one of the options for accreditation through the HLC of NCA that is structured around quality improvement principles and processes.
AQIP’s goal is to infuse the principles and benefits of continuous improvement into the culture of colleges and universities in order to assure and advance the quality of higher education.

AQIP allows an organization to demonstrate acceptable institutional quality as defined by the HLC. The process of accreditation provides an opportunity for critical self-analysis leading to improvement in quality, as well as an opportunity for benchmarking, consultation and advice from peers at other institutions.
What is the value of AQIP Accreditation?

At the heart of **AQIP** is the belief that Lake Erie College can be a better place to go to school and work if each of us attempts to improve the quality of what we do every day.

Participation in AQIP involves structured goal setting, networking, and accountability activities.
Understanding AQIP

AQIP Accountability Activities include

- Strategy Forum
- Action Projects
  - Action Project Progress Reports
- Systems Portfolio
- Systems Appraisal
- Quality Check-up
- Reaffirmation
Strategy Forum

Is a workshop that provides an institution with a supportive, peer facilitated process that will stimulate and assist it in selecting, critically examining, and committing to Action Projects that will drive quality improvement.
**Action Projects**

Are projects that create a foundation for an institution’s improvement initiatives and demonstrate the vitality of its commitment to quality. AQIP institutions commit to three to four projects that will move it closer to being the institution it wants to be. At least one action project must relate directly to Helping Students Learn.

**Action Project Progress Reports**

These annual progress reports, submitted to the HLC each year, include: 1) progress made, based on timelines, goals and measures; 2) problems and challenges we encountered; and 3) outstanding successes and discoveries made.
Systems Portfolio

This document presents an overview of our institution that explains the major systems we use to accomplish our mission. AQIP institutions assemble a Systems Portfolio every four years and answer questions under nine AQIP characteristics.
**Systems Appraisal**

A team of trained reviewers who read and produce an Appraisal Feedback Report that assesses the maturity of, and identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement within each of the AQIP Systems Portfolio’s nine characteristics.
Quality Check-up
A team of trained evaluators who conduct a visit to a.) affirm the accuracy of the organization’s Systems Portfolio; b.) review Action Projects and strategies identified to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities for improvement; c.) assure continuing quality improvement commitment; and d.) confirm the institution’s compliance with accreditation expectations.
AQIP Cycle

Strategy Cycle - 4 Year
1. Systems Appraisal of SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO
2. STRATEGY FORUM Cycle

Action Cycle - Every Year
1. Maintain SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO
2. ACTION PROJECT updates

Accreditation Cycle - 7 Year
1. QUALITY CHECK-UP Visit
2. Reaffirmation of Accreditation
Action Cycle - one-year cycle

Drives continuous improvement by having every AQIP college or university tackle three or four Action Projects.

Organizations can complete Action Projects and begin new ones at any time.

Each fall, we provide Action Project Updates to AQIP on the progress of current projects, and AQIP provides written feedback on these reports.

Improvements in the processes an institution employs or the performance results it achieves are incorporated into its published Systems Portfolio.
Strategy Cycle - **four-year cycle**

Drives improvement by having every AQIP organization create or complete an up-to-date Systems Portfolio

A System Appraisal of the Systems Portfolio provides institutions with written, actionable feedback they can use to create strategies and actions that will move them quickly toward achievement of their goals.

Participation in a Strategy Forum drives organizations to use this feedback in shaping new strategies, aligning systems, and creating specific Action Projects.
Accreditation Cycle - seven-year cycle

Drives quality assurance with reviews of evidence from both the action cycles and strategy cycles.

A Quality Check-up visit to the institution a year or two before its Reaffirmation of Accreditation review confirms the improvements it is making as well as the accuracy of the evidence it has provided to AQIP while providing helpful feedback and consultation on specific issues of its choosing.

Create New Program Review process

Create IR/Assessment/Accreditation WebPages with resource tools

Development of Academic Recruitment Strategy Plan

Assess current Exit process: graduation certification and withdrawals
Action Projects: Retired

Retention - To develop a college retention committee designed to study and propose changes that increase college-wide retention. The primary focus will be academic. However, other aspects of retention will be addressed (student life, financial aid packaging, etc).

Establish common data usage process - Provide a clear set of definitions of varied data fields used for communications. This would include policy regarding "snapshot" dates, types of data to be included, specific field definition, and access.

Assessment of student learning and program effectiveness - Phase II - This is a follow-up to our first assessment Action Project: Our goal is the development of an updated plan for assessment of student learning and program effectiveness.
Where we are...

**Action Projects: Retired cont’d**

**Create a new campus-wide system to manage AQIP processes** - To identity a plan that provides a clearer communication route across all AQIP working groups and provides a set of guidelines for communication and management of AQIP information and projects

**Updated AQIP Communication Process** - Provide a clear description of the AQIP process to the entire campus community

**Establish a systematic institutional manner of assessment** - This project will identify and examine consistent and direct measures for assessing institutional progress toward achieving institutional goals.
Where we are... 

Action Projects: Retired cont’d

**Development of a campus-wide governance system** - To develop a system of governance that will serve all constituencies within the college community.

**Review and revise our core curriculum** - to make use of a newly-developed vision of the college and an understanding of our core values to review and revise our core curriculum. To review our majors and academic programs as a whole by working on the core curriculum first.

**Develop a plan for re-visioning the college** - To look at ways of reviewing our mission statement and then develop a vision of the college, with specific, realistic steps: 1) assessing the current image of the college; 2) determining our core values; 3) developing the vision.
Current Strategy: update the Systems Portfolio (see template on shared ‘S:’ drive)
• Due November 2012
• Feedback expected Spring 2013
What is the AQIP Systems Portfolio?

AQIP has identified *nine categories* for institutions to show evidence of continuing to meet the HLC’s *Criteria for Accreditation*.

The Systems Portfolio is designed to presents an overview of our institution that explains the major processes, programs and services we use to accomplish our mission.

We assemble a Systems Portfolio every four years and AQIP expects each institution to use the *nine categories* to structure its System Portfolio while providing evidence in each to show you are also meeting the *Criteria for Accreditation*. 
Criteria for Accreditation?

The HLC’s *Criteria for Accreditation* are organized under five major headings.

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity
Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future
Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
Criterion Five: Engagement and Service
Using the nine AQIP Categories:

Each AQIP Category deals with a related group of processes, and allows an institution to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improving these processes and the interrelationships among them.

Each of the nine categories contains a section of each of the following:

- Context for the Analysis
- Processes
- Results
- Improvement
The nine AQIP Categories are...

1) Helping Students Learn

2) Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives

3) Understanding Students’ & Other Stakeholders’ Needs

4) Valuing People

5) Leading & Communicating

6) Supporting Institutional Operations

7) Measuring Effectiveness

8) Planning Continuous Improvement

9) Building Collaborative Relationships
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where evidence is likely to appear in a Systems Portfolio that an institution is meeting the Commission’s common Criteria for Accreditation?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Helping Students Learn</td>
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Helping Students Learn focuses on the design, deployment, and effectiveness of teaching-learning processes that underlie your organization’s credit and non-credit programs and courses, and on the processes required to support them.
Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives addresses the key processes (separate from your instructional programs and internal support services) through which you serve your external stakeholders — the processes that contribute to achieving your major objectives, fulfilling your mission, and distinguishing yours from other educational organizations.
Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs examines how your organization works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs.
Valuing People explores your organization’s commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators.
Leading and Communicating addresses how your leadership and communication processes, structures, and networks guide your organization in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and communicating decisions and actions to your internal and external stakeholders.
Supporting Institutional Operations addresses the organizational support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.
Measuring Effectiveness examines how your organization collects, analyzes, distributes, and uses data, information, and knowledge to manage itself and to drive performance improvement.
Planning Continuous Improvement examines your organization’s planning processes and how your strategies and action plans help you achieve your mission and vision.
Building Collaborative Relationships examines your organization’s relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the organization’s accomplishing its mission.