

Richland College: A Community College Long-Term Commitment

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<http://www.richlandcollege.edu/news/ASQ.pdf>

Ten years ago, after instituting various quality approaches, Richland College in Dallas was looking for sustained impact and began its Baldrige journey. A president with more than 27 years in office and a commitment to quality performance was a key to this community college's 2005 Baldrige Award. Established in 1972, Richland College (RLC) is one of seven two-year community colleges in the Dallas County Community College District. RLC's unique "Thunderduck" culture is rooted in the belief that it is the whole person who best learns, teaches, serves, and leads. RLC provides educational services to a multicultural student body of 14,500 students seeking college credits and nearly 6,000 continuing education (CE) students. Located in Dallas, Texas, RLC is the first community college to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. With input from a broad range of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and community members, a leadership team, comprised of senior leaders, sets and deploys RLC's vision and values, directions, and performance expectations. The organization's 10 values, including integrity; mutual trust; considerate, meaningful communications; responsible risk taking; and joy, are communicated through a variety of means, including a daily computer pop up screen which features a "Value of the Week." The mission statement, "Teaching, Learning, Community Building," is posted on all 275 of the college's exterior doors.

RLC has four strategic planning priorities: identify and meet community educational needs; enable all students to institutional effectiveness. Each priority has associated measures for success called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The ThunderTeam meets monthly to review KPIs and evaluate progress toward meeting these priorities. If progress is not on track, the ThunderTeam requests its members to "drill down" into the organization to determine root causes and suggest actions to improve performance. To help improve its own performance, and that of others, RLC helped found and participates in several organizations, including the League for Innovation in the Community College and the Continuous Quality Improvement Network.

Lessons Learned

Kay Eggleston, vice president for institutional effectiveness shared six lessons learned from Richland's 10-year plus Baldrige journey:

1. There are no quick fixes.

While the criteria may seem daunting at first, leadership found the more they used the criteria, the more the criteria became part of the institutional language and practice.

2. Leadership propels and sustains the process.

The commitment of the senior leadership team is crucial, not only to launch the quality journey but, more importantly, to sustain quality efforts.

3. The whole person culture is important.

A culture that encourages employees to be intellectually and emotionally authentic whole persons creates a safe place for people to take responsible risks and engage their whole selves in learning and work that matters. This is an environment in which creativity and student learning success can flourish.

4. Focus on the student/customer.

The Baldrige criteria helped them better listen and learn from students and other key stakeholders and, in turn, anticipate, meet and exceed expectations. In a constantly changing external environment, the needs of students and the community served change rapidly. Baldrige provides a framework to be more agile.

5. Employees are the key to making it happen.

Senior leaders must set the direction, communicate, develop, recognize and reward employees to ensure success.

6. Learn from others.

Breakthroughs and innovations are often based on benchmarking. The college's involvement in national consortia has proven to be invaluable to its learning. There's no question implementing the Baldrige criteria is no easy task. But, according to Eggleston, the criteria "provide a powerful and effective framework for educational institutions to improve quality and achieve higher performance outcomes because of the systematic and comprehensive nature of the model."

Eggleston maintains that while the criteria are results oriented, the power of the model is the linkages between the criteria that propel an organization to develop approaches and deploy them throughout all aspects of its mission and business. "Yes, education is also a business," she says. "We are compelled to become better stewards of our finite institutional resources and effectively accountable for our student learning outcomes."

For additional information, please visit the entire source article located at:

<http://www.richlandcollege.edu/news/ASQ.pdf>

To view the Baldrige application, please visit

http://www.rlc.dcccd.edu/Baldrige_App.pdf