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# Quality Improvement Newsletter For The California State University

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## Cal Poly Pomona – Phantom Shoppers Hit the Campus

By Manuel Perez, Acting Associate Vice  
President, Student Affairs, Cal Poly Pomona

### What Is a Phantom Shopper?

Adopted from private industry, the "Phantom Shopper" concept is one of Cal Poly Pomona's approaches to customer satisfaction surveying. Our **Students Assessing Quality of Service (SAQS)** program monitors the quality of services within the Division of Student Affairs by using student "shoppers." Recruited by the SAQS committee, students "shop" the various student affairs departments and evaluate them on timeliness, accuracy, usefulness, quality, and approachability.

### Using the SAQS Results

Results from the assessment are used to:

- *Recognize divisional best practices that are examples of excellence.* Examples obtained from phantom shoppers include: The student is acknowledged and greeted by staff upon entering the office, staff wear nametags, and sufficient staff are available during peak times.
- *Determine useful questions that departments might ask of themselves as they seek continuous improvement opportunities.* These questions are based upon phantom shoppers' evaluations of what they liked in the departments they visited. Examples include: Is your signage visible? Is ongoing customer service training held? How can you reduce student waiting time, both in-person and on the phone?
- *Develop department reports from feedback received from the phantom shoppers.* Individual department reports include average grades received from the phantom shoppers as well as specific feedback.

### How SAQS Works

*The SAQS Committee* The Vice President of Student Affairs annually appoints seven to ten staff members from throughout the division to the SAQS committee. The committee coordinates annual SAQS activities, identifies programs and departments to be evaluated, and determines the criteria to be evaluated. The committee also develops the phantom shopper training program and delivers it to students. A key responsibility



is to recruit students through in-class presentations, contact with student organizations, and fliers. Incentives used in recruitment are bookstore gift certificates, candy, or other small rewards.

*The Phantom Shopper* Student shoppers represent a cross section of the student population. Students may be part- or full-time; commuter or residential; and of various class standings, ethnicities, and majors. Each student attends a comprehensive orientation and training session explaining the themes and values of the Division of Student Affairs. Trained students are given individual evaluation sheets to complete for each department they visit and a list of items to look for that reflect quality of service as defined by the SAQS committee. Students "shop" all departments in the division during the assigned assessment phase (about two weeks). Students typically contact each department three times, in person and by phone. The students then attend debriefing sessions where their experiences are documented and put into report form.

### Outcomes Reporting

A report of results is compiled and shared with all offices in the division. Assessment results include the departmental ratings received per item by category (excellent, good, fair, etc.) and the comments made by phantom shoppers, both positive and negative. For example, one department's ratings for timeliness in addressing questions and concerns were reported as 67 percent excellent and 33 percent poor. Comments for this item included *there was a short line, but it was reduced quickly; answered clearly in a reasonable amount of time; she knew all the answers to my questions.* A debriefing section in the report includes overall comments about each department with a compilation of some of the "best practices" students experienced during their visits.

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# QI Calendar

May–November 2001

Refer to the website for specific information, <[www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/](http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/)>.

## May

- 1-4 PB Views User Conference
- 9 Process Mapping Workshop III, San Francisco
- 10 Process Mapping Workshop III, San José
- 16 QI Program Presentation at Board of Trustees Meeting
- 29 Process Mapping Workshop II, Fullerton

## June

- 7-8 QI Planning Committee Meeting
- tbd QI Steering and Planning Joint Committee Meetings

## November

- 1 QI Reception
- 2 4th Annual QI Symposium and 2nd Annual Quality Expo

## Financial Aid at Cal Poly Pomona: Teamwork in Action

*By Melanie Saracco, Financial Aid Director, Cal Poly Pomona, and Dolores Basilio, Quality Improvement Program Specialist, Chancellor's Office*

How does a financial aid office process 13,000 financial aid applications (FAFSA) in a six-week timeframe? And do it accurately and with great success? By involving the entire department in an ongoing process improvement effort. Cal Poly Pomona has found the secret to increasing student and campus satisfaction with financial aid processing while building employee morale in a positive team environment. Here's how:

Between April and May 1996, the Financial Aid Office at Cal Poly Pomona processed 12,147 applications. With so many applications to process, award letters were sent out later than the campus would have liked, some not until June. Also, Cal Poly didn't have accurate enrollment numbers early on, which would have helped speed the decision process. Of concern was the possibility that, while waiting to hear from Cal Poly, some students might choose a competing campus that had mailed its award letters sooner.

Realizing that improvement was needed, the campus implemented a process group effort that same year. Since then, Financial Aid has made great strides. In the 2000 award year, with a 14 percent increase in applications over the 1996 FAFSA count, Financial Aid staff completed the review process and issued award letters six weeks earlier than in 1996!

What were the steps in achieving such an impressive improvement? The department worked as a team, creating a process map of the overall financial aid process. They acknowledged that current problems were department-wide and worked together to streamline the process. Finally, they kept an eye out for new ways to improve by implementing ongoing process reviews.

### **Step One: A Process Map**

Participants drew a "thousand-foot" level map to identify key steps in the process - from receiving the FAFSA through mailing the award letter to a student. In 1996 "normal" processing (applications with no



problems) involved 35 steps. By 1999 the number of steps was reduced to 28, a 20 percent improvement! No sophisticated tools were used – just a process mapping template/ruler, pencil, and sheets of paper. The map was drawn on five sheets of paper indicating "decision diamonds" and additional key steps needed to process an application with "problems" (missing documents, ineligibility for financial aid, etc.).

### **Step Two: Department-wide Buy-in**

Getting everyone on board was not an easy task. As in any process improvement effort, staff were concerned about the way changes would impact them as individuals, and about their job security—the old "WIFM" (what's in it for me?). However, management was committed to reorienting the department philosophy, moving from a policy-driven to a customer-oriented focus. Management and staff came together to openly acknowledge that there were problems in the department and with work processes. In addition to establishing training programs, they formed a process group, with a new team each year, to review a key step of the financial aid process, the awarding of funds. Eventually, employees participated in an employee assessment survey that helped management address the issues highlighted by survey results. The final result: the department has built a more positive team of financial aid employees.

### **Step Three: Fixing the Process**

Where to begin to fix the problems? In 1996 the first step—processing the FAFSA—seemed the likely candidate. (A process mapping rule of thumb: if you can fix the first two steps of the process, you will have an overall improvement impact to the remainder of the process.) In reviewing federal requirements, Cal Poly realized it had unnecessarily been performing a 100 percent review of applications

# 2001: A Quality Odyssey

## Mark Your Calendars

Mark your calendars. "2001: A Quality Odyssey," the 4th Annual Quality Improvement Symposium and Expo, will take place Friday, November 2, 2001, at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott. Chancellor Charles B. Reed has been invited to speak, along with a morning keynote speaker addressing "Achieving World Class Performance in Higher Education." Lunch will include the annual QI awards presentation, spotlighting individuals who have shown outstanding dedication to the quality initiative, as well as the presentation of the Mighty QIC (Quality Improvement Champions) awards.

The success of the inaugural 2000 Quality Expo generated considerable enthusiasm, and this year's expo promises many more exhibits highlighting campus quality improvement efforts. The afternoon will conclude with breakout sessions that address topics identified through previous QI event evaluations. A welcome reception will be held Thursday evening at the LAX Marriott, offering additional opportunity for expo participants to exhibit.

More information on the 4th Annual Quality Improvement and Expo is available at [www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/](http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/).

## 4th Annual CSU QI Symposium and 2nd Quality Expo

Date: Friday, November 2, 2001

Location: LAX Marriott

Welcome Reception: Thursday evening,  
November 1, 2001

For more information, visit:  
[www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/](http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/)

Exhibitors: E-mail [mceppi@calstate.edu](mailto:mceppi@calstate.edu)  
of your interest to have a booth at the Expo.



## Nominations Wanted for CSU Quality Improvement Awards!!

By Susan Hansen, Senior Director  
Student Affairs, Humboldt

For the second year, the CSU Quality Improvement Programs will host an awards luncheon as part of the annual QI Symposium in November. Once again, we invite your nominations in the following areas: Distinguished Service, Outstanding Quality Improvement Facilitator, and Outstanding Function Chair. In addition, this year a new "Outstanding Team Award" is being introduced, to honor either a systemwide function group or a campus-based "team" (e.g., a department, process mapping team, or balanced scorecard team). This award recognizes group or team quality improvement efforts that have resulted in significant process or program improvements.

Please nominate your colleagues and function groups or teams for these awards by September 14, 2001. The specific award criteria, forms, and nomination process can be found on the QI website at [www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/](http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi/). A systemwide committee will make final recommendations regarding the nominations.





# Using the Balanced Scorecard in Higher Education



By James H. Ryan, Vice President for Outreach and Cooperative Extension, Pennsylvania State University

Printed by permission of James Ryan. This is an excerpt from a speech delivered by James Ryan at a workshop held by the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement (NCCI) in Higher Education on April 11, 2001, at Pennsylvania State University.

When I think about higher education and issues of strategic management and accountability, I am reminded of a Chinese proverb that goes something like this: “Be not afraid of growing slowly, be only afraid of standing still.”

The use of the Balanced Scorecard in higher education can serve as a tool for avoiding “standing still” and as a catalyst for moving our agenda forward and linking today’s actions with tomorrow’s goals. In today’s environment very few of us are moving slowly, and we are certainly not standing still. Yet, I think you would agree that our institutions have not always moved at lightning speed; and while we continue to make progress, we must continue to find strategies for rapidly deploying our resources in new and innovative ways to address society’s educational needs.

For many of us, however, we often feel like the new opportunities arrive faster than we can seize them. In this environment going slowly is not an option. The new challenge is to make informed decisions in record time. Furthermore, we are facing greater scrutiny among alumni, benefactors, parents, government officials, and the general public related to the use of tuition and tax dollars.

While some level of autonomy will always be necessary in our institutions, heightened levels of accountability are inevitable.

In the book *American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century*, Berdahl and O’Connell (1999) suggest, “Colleges and universities are moving into a period when they will be expected to provide not only data on the attainment of defined outcomes...but also evidence that results have been attained at reasonable cost. Institutions of higher education will have to specify their aims, stand ready to justify activities, demonstrate their contributions to objectives, and defend the cost of the enterprise” (p. 86).

For example, the accreditation criteria for regional accreditation associations is changing as we speak. Gone are the days when accreditation will focus heavily on just our strategic planning processes. Now we are seeing a greater emphasis on outcomes and impact measurement. The Baldrige Award approach, for example, is now being integrated into the accreditation process.

In this environment, the Balanced Scorecard becomes a wonderful tool to demonstrate value and defend action. From a planning standpoint we can link programmatic and business objectives with university mission and unit vision. We can specify desired outcomes, and we can track results.

As you know, the Balanced Scorecard is a set of measures that provides a fast, comprehensive picture of how an organization is creating and sustaining value—in the eyes of its customers, stakeholders, and employees.

Kaplan, the “father” of the Balanced Scorecard approach, suggests that a Balanced Scorecard links and integrates four key strategic questions:

- How do our clients or customers see us?
- At what must we excel (e.g., what are our core competencies and processes)?

- How are we performing overall?
- How can we continue to improve the performance environment of our employees and recognize that they are our most important asset?

An effective scorecard will identify a set of strategic questions and measures that address the issue of adding value – and doing so at a rate that is better than the competition. This is the essence of strategy. Too often, managers look only at the bottom line enrollments, graduation rates, and funds raised from external sources. However, a Balanced Scorecard emphasizes that programmatic and business measures must be part of an information system for employees at all levels of the organization. If implemented successfully, the scorecard provides data for discussion that forms the basis for strategy, tactics, and operational decisions. The front line employees understand how they contribute to the organization’s goals, and management better understands what constitutes adding value—the key to long-term success.

Let me share with you our experience in Outreach here at Penn State—how we have used this tool and why. Our Outreach units collaborate with all 24 campus locations and every academic college in the development and delivery of programs. We are a service organization comprised of Continuing Education, Distance Education, Public Broadcasting and Cooperative Extension. I will refer primarily to Continuing Education, Distance Education and Public Broadcasting in my remarks. Cooperative Extension is unique because it is guided by a four-year Plan of Work that is designed

and implemented statewide in response to citizens' needs and must comply with federal mandates for measuring impact.

Our Continuing Education, Distance Education and Public Broadcasting are largely self-supporting and have an annual operating budget of \$40 million. We have a unique revenue-sharing model with academic units where after all expenses are met, we share a net income 85-15 with sponsoring colleges. Last year through our revenue sharing model we provided \$1.6 million to our academic partners. In this environment, because we are an alternative source of income, efficiency and effectiveness are imperative. From an evaluation standpoint we have used the scorecard in our Outreach units to chart our growth related to enrollments, income, faculty involvement, new program development, partner satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. We have implemented process improvements. We have identified major breakthroughs, special recognitions and unique contributions to the university. And we have tried to integrate individual contributions and performance measures with unit targets, measurements, and results.

When linked to the daily work of our people, our units, and our university, the Balanced Scorecard serves as an extraordinary management tool. The scorecard has life and longevity. As one of our staff members noted, "This is not one of those reports that we develop and then put on a shelf in an office somewhere; we've embraced it and we live it every day."

I don't want to imply that we have worked all the bugs out of our system, nor has it been easy to implement. In fact, it is not as developed as we would like, but we have had considerable success.

- We have increased our net revenue returns to the colleges by 400 percent in four years—through new income and by being more efficient.

- We improved faculty satisfaction with our support and services by continuing to measure the value of what we offer and by eliminating what was not of value.
- We made process improvements to enhance our program development cycle time, our marketing strategies, and our financial reporting systems.
- We provided professional development opportunities to improve human performance where needed.
- And we have celebrated our special contributions to the university and recognize individual and unit awards and accomplishments.

These are just a few of the outcomes from our effort.

As our Balanced Scorecard approach has evolved and matured over time, we have moved toward integrating unit score card performance metrics with individual performance metrics. This provides clarity to employees about what is expected and they are able to hone their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become very good at their work and focused on critical success factors. As a result of this integration, we have seen enhanced performance throughout the organization. Our employees now see their personal efforts contributing to overall unit success. As the process has evolved, our employees achieve a state of "Aha! So this is what it all means!"

In summary, the benefits of Balanced Scorecards have great potential in helping us meet our challenges rapidly, effectively, and efficiently. However, the reality of implementing and staying with the Balanced Scorecard approach requires real change within our institutions and among our units. Even in the best of times, the creative talents and the individual agendas of our faculty and staff make it difficult to maintain discipline and focus on results. And during periods of change, it is even

more challenging to maintain this focus. As Mark Twain once said, "I am all for progress, it's the change I can't stand." I think you would agree that change is best embraced when we have a burning platform or a specific performance that is measurable. Therefore, the Balanced Scorecard provides a rationale for change and performance enhancement.

I am reminded of a story: A group of people are flying in an airplane. The pilot's voice comes over the intercom and announces, "I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is we have lost our engine and our direction finder. The good news is that we still have a tail wind, and wherever we are going we are getting there at a rate of 600 miles per hour."

Well, higher education is indeed traveling at record speed these days. I do believe we do have a direction finder. The Balanced Scorecard can help us navigate the challenges we face in rebuilding an environment of trust and confidence within our institutions and among our stakeholders. We have a good story to tell and this approach will help us effectively tell our story.

*The complete copy of the speech is available from the "Newsletter" link available on the QI website, <[www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi](http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/qi)>, May 2001 issue.*

### **National Consortium for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education (NCCI)**

Second National Annual Conference  
July 28–30, 2001  
"Leveraging Knowledge and Quality Through Collaboration"  
New York City

Keynote Speaker: David Ward  
"Strategic Management: Implementation in an Academic Culture"

For more information visit <[www.ncci-cu.org](http://www.ncci-cu.org)>.

# Introducing . . . Judy Riopelle, Behind the Scenes of QI

In the past, this column has introduced you to the various QI committees. Beginning this month, we will focus on individuals active in QI. In this issue, we introduce Judy Riopelle, our QI website creator.

Judy Riopelle has been with the CSU since 1984 when she began with the Fiscal Management department in the Chancellor's Office (CO). Since 1995, Judy has been part of the Business Planning department reporting to Lenore Rozner. Her work in the CO has involved mainframe activities with financial and budget systems, creating and generating financial reports, data entry, job scheduling, and other data oriented tasks. But perhaps her most visible contribution while at the CO has been her work with the QI website.

In 1996, QI Programs staff recognized a need to communicate through the Internet with CSU campuses on various QI activities. Additionally, there was a need to develop an online registration system for QI workshops and the annual QI symposium. Judy was asked to develop the website and was instrumental in creating the online registration processes. (The QI Programs online registration was the basis for the CO online registration now used by many areas and centrally supported by the information technology group.) Judy developed an online process allowing registrants for a QI workshop to verify their registration, check the status of their registration payment, and print their receipt for payment. We also congratulate Judy for recently developing the online check-out system for reference materials in the QI Library.

On a more personal level, Judy enjoys spending time with her 4-year-old granddaughter and remodeling her home. The QI Programs staff, committees, and participants are truly grateful for the work that Judy Riopelle has done. She has been a key factor in the QI communication loop. Thank you, Judy!



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## A Parking Permit Issuance Study

In 1999 as a result of a meeting of Student Account Receivables representatives at the annual Financial Officers Association meeting, items of concern regarding processes and policies were identified among the participants. One item discussed was the process for issuing parking permits to students at CSU campuses. The tasks of collecting payments, posting decal information to student accounts, distributing permits, and handling lost and returned permits constitute a significant workload for the responsible departments. In collaboration with the CSU Parking Offices (the process owners of the parking decal tasks), a study of parking permit sales and distribution is being initiated to map how participating campuses sell and issue parking permits, collect data, and analyze the information. This study will develop a model practice for CSU campuses to consider as a way to improve customer service and efficiency and increase productivity.

A kick-off meeting for campus representatives participating in the study was held in April. These campuses are: Chico, Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Long Beach, Northridge, San Bernardino, San José, San Marcos, and San Luis Obispo. John Darakjy, Assistant Director for Financial

Services, Northridge, is project leader for the study. Executive sponsorship is necessary for approval of the direction the study will take and in the resulting recommendations for campuses to consider. Mohammed Qayoumi, Vice President of Administration and Finance at Northridge, and Bill Barrett, Acting Vice President of Administration at Fullerton, have volunteered for this key sponsorship role. The Quality Improvement Programs at the Chancellor's Office is facilitating the study.

The scope of the project includes:

- A process review of the parking permits systems of participating campuses using the CSU Process Mapping Model (PMM),
- Collection of internal performance data associated with this process, including time and cost measurements.
- External benchmarking of organizations outside of the CSU to identify model practices.
- Collection of customer satisfaction data using the CSU QI Spring Customer Satisfaction Survey.
- Potential identification of a model practice.

The study will be completed in fall 2001. Upon conclusion of the study, a report will be distributed to all CSU campuses.

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## Financial Aid at Cal Poly Pomona: Teamwork in Action

when only 30 percent of applications needed to be reviewed. In the first year they immediately implemented this change to reduce processing time for FAFSAs. The second year, a new "edit check" program identified files with the eleven most common errors so that these files could be reviewed manually. This process reduced the review by over 60 percent.

Another "quick fix": In the verification process the number of documents (e.g., tax forms, rental contracts, etc.) needed to complete a student's financial aid file was reduced. Cal Poly reviewed each type of document it requested of students, asking: Is this a federal requirement? Does the document add value to the verification process? Is there an easier or better way to get the information? As a result of this review, the number of documents requested was reduced by over 50 percent!

### **Step Four: Continuous Improvement**

As a result of the first year's effort, Cal Poly realized that the financial aid award process needed to be more thoroughly reviewed on an annual basis. A new process improvement team now is created each year to monitor the process and facilitate changes. Twice a year the office goes on a retreat where they recognize accomplishments and set new goals. The process improvement team prioritizes goals, re-mapping the award process and reviewing

and refining each step to maximize customer service. Annual site visits to other campuses help staff learn how colleagues perform their financial aid functions. To date, the department has visited CSU Dominguez Hills, San Diego State University, CSU San Bernardino, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, CSULA, Mt. San Antonio College, Riverside Community College, and Pasadena City College. Sometimes Cal Poly Pomona staff learn better ways to do things; other times they recognize that they already have a "best practice."

For the 2001-02 financial aid processing year, the process improvement team will begin mapping each aid program in the office. Currently, counselors who oversee a program write the procedures and train staff on policies and procedures for their area of responsibility. If these process mapping efforts are as successful as the one made for the awarding process, staff will be able to devote more time to direct student contact and spend less time pushing paper.

By building a culture that accepts the need to change through continuous improvement efforts, Cal Poly Pomona's Financial Aid Office has solved the processing problems it experienced in 1996. Customer satisfaction has increased. Staff satisfaction has increased. Quality Improvement is a win-win situation!

(continued from page 1)

## Cal Poly Pomona – Phantom Shoppers Hit the Campus

Phantom shoppers also rate various campus programs. Results reflect the shoppers' personal demographic information in addition to their evaluation of the program. For example, the "Admitted Students Program" shows that five female students and two males evaluated the program; the majority of shoppers were in the 21- to 24-year age category; and most were either junior or seniors.

The SAQS program has been a successful team effort of committee members from various departments with the Student Affairs division, with supplier/customer involvement via student phantom shoppers. In its third year, SAQS publishes its assessment results division-wide. Departments can then use the information to improve the delivery and quality of their services

For more information about Student Affairs SAQS activity, contact Manuel Perez at mperez3@csupomona.edu.

**Congratulations to  
San José State University!**  
**Winners of the  
2000 California Awards  
for Performance Excellence (CAPE)  
The California Prospector Award**



Received at the annual CAPE Conference  
April 6, La Jolla, California

For more information about CAPE and the awards visit  
[www.calexcellence.org/cce/awards/index.htm](http://www.calexcellence.org/cce/awards/index.htm).

### **To Contact Us:**

Submissions, suggestions, or questions about the QI Newsletter may be directed to Business Planning, attention Dolores Basilio, via e-mail, telephone, or letter. Submissions may be sent at any time. For more information about the QI Programs in the CSU, contact Dolores Basilio or Matt Ceppi.

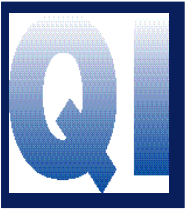
#### **Dolores Basilio**

dbasilio@calstate.edu  
Phone: (562) 951-4552

#### **Matthew Ceppi**

mceppi@calstate.edu  
Phone: (562) 951-4551

California State University  
Office of the Chancellor  
401 Golden Shore  
Long Beach, CA 90802



**Quality Improvement Programs**  
CSU Office of the Chancellor  
Business Planning, 5th Floor  
401 Golden Shore #635  
Long Beach, CA 90802-4210