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2-2024

## A "QUIC" Way to Quality Improvement

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Mince, Rosalie and Kloss, Michelle, "A "QUIC" Way to Quality Improvement" (2024). *Instructional Leadership Abstracts*. 22.

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## A "QUIC" Way to Quality Improvement



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### Quality Improvement Cycle (QUIC)

Assessment at Carroll Community College, located in central Maryland, has historically been deeply embedded in the institutional culture, permeating horizontally across academic, administrative, and operational departments, and stacking vertically, through institution-wide assessment, General Education assessment, unit and program assessment, and course-level assessment, to inform a complete picture of effectiveness.

In academic year 2021-2022, to better align its assessment activity with the national best practices of the Excellence in Assessment designation criteria, which at that time was managed by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) and is now coordinated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), members of Carroll's Student Learning Improvement Committee (referred to as SLIC) scrutinized the College's overall assessment practices. SLIC explored ways to capture the various assessment already happening in all of Carroll's departments with the goal of creating a more complete picture of institutional effectiveness through a process that would engender discussions around continuous improvement and inform strategic planning.

SLIC's conversations resulted in the development of an in-house tool originally called Assessment Snapshots. These brief reports were piloted in Spring 2022 through Carroll's Planning Advisory Council (PAC). PAC is an advisory body to the College President charged with guiding institutional assessment. Its principal functions are to develop and monitor the College's Strategic Plan, establish and track Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Measures, serve as the College's budget committee, and review college-wide functional plans and institutional research.

All assessment activity at the College is guided by Carroll's five-step model, the Reflective Improvement Cycle (known as the RIC). The steps in the Reflective Improvement Cycle are:

- Define/Redefine
- Design
- Implement
- Analyze
- Modify/Maintain

The RIC was developed through a collaborative process led by SLIC and supplies a common language for assessment for Carroll constituents. SLIC provides leadership, support, and feedback for assessment activities within Academic and Student Affairs. Committee members offer instruction and guidance to faculty members and administrators concerning all phases of the RIC to encourage excellence in teaching and instruction, with the goal of increased student success and continuous improvement.

Like Carroll, most institutions employ some type of strategy to improve their effectiveness. Continuous improvement includes routinely identifying strengths, areas for improvement, potential best practices, and steps towards reaching institutional goals. In Fall 2022, the Planning Advisory Council renamed the Assessment Snapshots QUICs (Quality Improvement Cycle), intentionally mirroring the College's Reflective Improvement Cycle (RIC) and Student Learning Improvement Committee

## A "QUIC" Way to Quality Improvement

(SLIC) acronyms.

Through the annual QUIC process at Carroll, divisions, departments, and major college committees are asked to identify a discrete area of focus to examine. The QUIC has proven to be an efficient, effective, and easy method by which department and committee leaders from all areas of the College participate in institutional assessment.

The QUIC template asks for the following information:

- division/department/committee
- point of contact
- focus of assessment
- data source(s)
- summary of significant findings
- strengths identified through the assessment
- challenges identified
- actions to be taken as a result
- budgetary & planning implications
- reflection upon related past assessment efforts
- trend data (if applicable)
- who should review the QUIC and associated data
- how the assessment aligns with the College's strategic priorities and accreditation standards

The template serves as the guide for the final report, which is to be no longer than two pages when completed. Modeled after brief course level assessment reports developed by SLIC in 2018, QUICs, as their name suggests, were designed to be accessible and straightforward. Carroll's Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Associate Provost for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness provide support and assistance for QUICs. If the data needed is not already

available the Office of Institutional Effectiveness creates data dashboards and reports to supply what is requested.

QUICs also intentionally align individual assessment activities with broader College priorities and Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards; this allows for continuous tracking of the ways that new and ongoing day-to-day activities and projects support the College mission and accreditation requirements. When Carroll prepares its next reaccreditation report, QUICs will provide a direct means to document and describe specific Carroll initiatives that support MSCHE standards.

A cross-section of academic and operational departments completed sixty-five QUICs in FY2022 and 2023. These reports focused on myriad topics including an academic division's enrollment in General Education versus elective courses, the efficacy of Disability Support Services' new intake form, financial aid processes for student veterans, revenue and enrollment in continuing education programs, and the security of the College's technology network. Administrators, faculty, and staff report that the QUIC process helps them decide the topic or question they want to explore, gather the data that they need, and report their results to a wide audience, all within a very reasonable amount of time.

Results drawn from individual QUICs guide practical, data-informed decision making related to essential activities and decisions such as scheduling, operational processes, and allocation of resources. Viewed collectively, they provide a broad snapshot of the ways that distinct projects and activities

across the College sustain Carroll's overall Mission and Strategic Priorities. QUICs also provide visibility from one area of the College to the next, revealing assessment activity that was previously siloed within a specific department or reporting area.

Carroll is now in its third cycle of using QUICs to capture assessment across the College to enhance effectiveness. At the end of each academic year, the QUIC reports are shared with the 30+ members of the Planning Advisory Council, the academic division chairs, student affairs directors, and administrators from across the institution. The annual review of QUICs fosters conversations among the members of these groups focused on assessment, analysis of data, and improvement. The QUIC process has contributed to an increase in the overall level of data literacy at the College and has become so valuable and easy to follow that numerous people have elected to complete more than one QUIC per year.

QUICs serve as concise and valuable summaries of important work being done across the College. Better still, reflections from one QUIC often lead to follow-up inquiries the next year, and often, innovative ideas from one area are replicated and customized for other areas. The QUIC process would be easily replicable by instructional administrators at other institutions of higher education, requiring minimal resources beyond the time of a champion at the institution to launch the effort and catalog completed reports.

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