

Quality Faculty Plans:
The New Approach to Professional Development
at Iowa's Community Colleges

Revision of Section 260C.36 of the Iowa Code in 2002 replaced permanent professional licensure with Quality Faculty Plans (QFP)* to ensure the competence of Iowa's community college instructors. Until then, Iowa's Board of Educational Examiners had set minimum standards for fulltime faculty at the state's community colleges. The introduction of licensure in July 2003 meant the end of licensure as demonstration of faculty competency.

The new law prescribed that each of Iowa's 15 community colleges was to prepare a QFP, gain approval of the plan by its boards of trustees, and submit a QFP by July 1, 2003, to the Iowa Department of Education (DE) for review and approval. Henceforth, QFPs were to guide the hiring and professional development of fulltime community college faculty, both in liberal arts and in career and technical education fields. Beginning July 1, 2006, accreditation teams were to include the QFP among the criteria used to assess community college practices and procedures for purposes of accreditation by the State of Iowa.

The Purpose of the Quality Faculty Plan

Revision of the Iowa Code reflected concerns about licensure's requirements as measures of quality instruction. The idea of the QFPs was to focus on teachers as lifelong learners, scholars, and experts in their fields. The QFPs were to provide flexibility for each faculty member to choose how he or she wished to approach professional development. In consultation with their deans, directors, or chief academic officers, faculty were encouraged to chart their own course in acquiring additional instructional skills or disciplinary knowledge.

Fundamental to the concept of the QFPs is a shift in responsibility for ensuring faculty competence from the state's Board of Educational Examiners to the community colleges themselves. Through processes of individual goal-setting, mentoring for newcomers, and peer review, QFPs encouraged faculty to align their own professional ambitions with the institutional objectives of their colleges. Yet QFPs were not intended to be part of an instructor's performance evaluation. The plans were to focus instead on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge likely to impact positively on an instructor's classroom performance.

* The term "Quality Faculty Plan" is used to denote the new professional development program for Iowa community college instructors. The term also refers to an instructor's own individualized plan for achieving his or her professional development goals.

Iowa Code Section 260C.36

Details on the sequence of events and the scheduling of the shift from state supervision of professional development to the new college-based approach are included in the legislation enacting the QFPs. The legislative act reads as follows:

1. *By October 1, 2002, the college administration shall establish a committee consisting of instructors and administrators, equally representative of the arts and sciences faculty and the vocational-technical faculty, which has no more than a simple majority of members of the same gender. The faculty members shall be appointed by the certified employee organization if one exists and if not, by the college administration. The administrators shall be appointed by the college administration. The committee shall develop a plan for hiring and developing quality faculty that includes all of the following:*
 - a. *An implementation schedule for the plan.*
 - b. *Orientation for new faculty.*
 - c. *Continuing professional development for faculty.*
 - d. *Procedures for accurate recordkeeping and documentation for plan monitoring.*
 - e. *Consortium arrangements when appropriate, cost-effective, and mutually beneficial.*
 - f. *Specific activities that ensure faculty attain and demonstrate instructional competencies and knowledge in their subject or technical areas.*
 - g. *Procedures for collection and maintenance of records demonstrating that each faculty member has attained or documented progress toward attaining minimal competencies.*
 - h. *Compliance with the faculty accreditation standards of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and with faculty standards required under specific programs offered by the community college that are accredited by other accrediting agencies.*
2. *The committee shall submit the plan to the board of directors, which shall consider the plan and, once approved, submit the plan to the Department of Education and implement the plan not later than July 1, 2003.*
3. *Between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2006, the Department of Education shall conduct on-site visits to ensure each community college's compliance and progress in implementing its plan. At a minimum, the Department shall visit five colleges each year until the Department has conducted on-site visits at each community college. By July 1, 2006, the Department shall submit a report summarizing the Department's findings to each community college and to the state accreditation team appointed pursuant to section 260C.47.*

4. *The administration of the college shall encourage the continued development of faculty potential by doing all of the following:*
 - a. *Regularly stimulating department chairpersons or heads to meet their responsibilities for the continued development of faculty potential.*
 - b. *Reducing the instructional loads of first-year instructors whose course preparation and in-service training demand a reduction.*
 - c. *Stimulating curricular evaluation.*
 - d. *Encouraging the development of an atmosphere in which the faculty brings a wide range of ideas and experiences to the students, each other, and the community.*