

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.