The most astute among our readers will notice a new look to the masthead of our newsletter. As the colors and image of the newsletter have changed, so too has the name of the center changed. Effective January 2, 2003, the Center for Quality and Planning became known as the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment. This change was made to better reflect the mission of the unit as it has evolved in recent years.

A Twenty-Year History
Our history can be traced back to 1983, when then Penn State president Bryce Jordan began a strategic planning initiative that continues to this day. The Office of Planning and Analysis was established in that year to support the University’s planning endeavors and respond to requests from budget executives for data and analyses.

Penn State embarked on its continuous quality improvement journey in the fall of 1991 under the leadership of former executive vice president and provost John Brighton. Brighton believed there were too many layers of bureaucracy in the University and that it took too long to get things done, so he and former president Joab Thomas started the University Council on Continuous Quality Improvement (UCCQI) to facilitate improvement initiatives within budget units and across the University.

The CQI Center
In April 1992, the Continuous Quality Improvement Center was established by UCCQI. The mission of the Center was to support a culture of continuous improvement through a focus on service to stakeholders, process improvement and data based decision-making. The Center worked with administrative and academic units to identify, define and clarify critical processes; assisted in the establishment of CQI teams and the selection of facilitators; monitored teams and shared process improvement results; maintained a support network for team facilitators and leaders; assisted in the development of a no-cost, just-in-time CQI training and education model; partnered with DuPont and IBM; and worked with a planning team to organize the Quality Expo. This event, held each spring for ten years, provided an opportunity to reward and recognize teams, celebrate collaboration, and teach exhibitors and visitors about improvement and innovation.

It may be jargon to put it in these terms, but the Expo gave the University the opportunity to “walk the talk.”

The Center for Quality and Planning
In September 1996, the CQI Center was merged with the Office of Planning and Analysis to become the Center for Quality and Planning. Many in the University community asked, “What is the connection between quality improvement and strategic planning?” One answer is that the service mission of the Center continued but was expanded to include assisting budget units with strategic planning, benchmarking and the development of strategic performance indicators. Another answer might be that both quality and planning can be seen as organizational learning processes. They share the principles of data-driven decision making, broad communication across the organization, assessment of the needs of multiple stakeholders, benchmarking, and strong leadership commitment.

For example, when quality informs the planning process:

➤ Mission and vision statements are based on the needs of external and internal stakeholders, i.e., students, faculty, staff, employers, parents, and alumni.

➤ Feedback is regularly solicited from these stakeholders and opinions and observations are used to improve and respond to new conditions.

➤ Data-based, strategic innovations replace casual, political and crisis-oriented administration.

➤ Quality improvement efforts focus on the university’s core processes, which are identified through strategic planning.

➤ Close oversight and supervision of daily affairs is delegated by top administrators to vice presidents, directors, and department chairs, who in turn delegate more responsibilities to their staff.

➤ Teamwork and team decision-making is fostered.

Continued on back.
The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

Our name has changed but not our commitment to continuous quality improvement. The Office continues to use CQI principles and tools to create models that help units translate goals into action plans and develop performance measures that complement their strategic mission. The Office promotes the efficient and effective use of resources to maintain and improve institutional quality.

The Office approaches its work using a model that integrates planning, assessment and improvement. (See figure at right.)

Finally, the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment can help units to use quantitative and qualitative data to assess and improve organizational performance. There is no charge for these services, which are an important part of the Office's mission. Staff have considerable experience in consulting on:

➤ The formulation of research questions
➤ Decisions about research methodologies
➤ The identification of appropriate strategic indicators
➤ Conducting focus groups (of faculty, staff, students, or others)
➤ Designing and/or administering surveys (of faculty, staff, students, or customers)

For a more complete description of the services provided by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, please visit the Web site www.psu.edu/president/pia or contact the executive director, Louise Sandmeyer at les1@psu.edu.

Step 1
Where are we now?
• Identify current state through existing data.
• Forecast future trends.
• Identify stakeholder needs & wants.

Step 2
Where should we be in the future?
Develop or renew: vision, mission and goals.

Step 3
How will we know when we get there?
Identify performance indicators that align with mission, vision, & goals to measure outcomes.

Step 4
How far do we have to go?
Identify gaps between where we are now and where we want to be.

Step 5
How do we get there?
• Target key processes for improvement.
• Develop action plans to close the gaps.
• Implement action plans.

Assisting in the analysis of existing data
Establishing benchmarks for improvements.