CQI Bulletin is a pretty dull name for what we hope will be a pretty interesting newsletter. We’re calling on our readers to help us find a better name, one that reflects its purpose in encouraging participation in the ongoing accreditation process and increasing awareness of the goals and methods of CQI.

We are therefore sponsoring a contest to name the bulletin, with the winning entrant receiving a signed mystery novel written by a Montana author.

To enter the contest, please submit your suggestion(s) via e-mail, phone, or campus mail to Rachel Schaffer (rschaffer@msubillings.edu, 2954, LA 437 (English Dept.).

In the case of more than one person suggesting the same winning name, the earliest entrant will win the prize (or, depending on how many identical winning names are received, there may just be enough prizes to go around).

Decision of the Steering Committee will be final. Deadline to enter the Name the Bulletin Contest is Monday, October 16, 2006.

What is CQI, anyway?

Continuous Quality Improvement is a concept that is nothing new, but it might be new to some faculty and staff at Montana State University Billings. Questions and concerns about CQI and accreditation that you would like to see addressed in this column can be e-mailed to Rachel Schaffer at rschaffer@msubillings.edu. Questions may be edited for length and style. Names will be withheld if specifically requested.

Q. What is CQI? Isn’t it just another in a long line of buzz words?

A. CQI, Continuous Quality Improvement, is a model of work management developed by statistician W. E. Deming to promote quality and efficiency in industry. It focuses on “process” rather than the individual, recognizes both internal and external “clients,” and promotes the need for objective data to analyze and improve processes. It maintains that most things can be improved and does not believe that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

At the core of CQI is serial experimentation (the scientific method) applied to everyday work to meet the needs of those we serve and improve the services we offer.

(Thanks to Dr. Tasneem Khaleel for this information.)

Q. I keep hearing about accreditation, but why is it so important?

A. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), in its Accreditation Handbook (2003), describes accreditation as “a process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public” (1). The U.S. Department of Education approves accrediting agencies; the decision to be considered for accreditation is voluntary, but the objective evaluation of an institution by its peers and its recognition as worthy of accreditation are extremely valuable in building and maintaining confidence in the quality of education being offered.

Q. What’s the connection between accreditation and CQI?

A. NWCCU will evaluate all aspects of our campus, including how well we meet the nine standards laid out in the Accreditation Handbook, how we go about solving problems, and in general, whether we do the best jobs we possibly can. The CQI philosophy provides an approach to achieving all of these goals by emphasizing ongoing improvement and documenting our efforts to succeed.

Q. When will MSU-Billings have its next accreditation visit?

A. The next accreditation visit for MSU-Billings is planned for fall 2008. The exact dates will be announced once they are scheduled by NWCCU. There is much to do in the meantime to prepare for the site visit, including gathering and analyzing data that address the various accreditation standards and writing the all-important self-study/Institutional Report that the accreditation team members will read in preparation for their visit. The timeline included in each issue of this bulletin outlines the steps in our preparation process.
The CQI Steering Committee is a team of faculty and staff that was appointed by the Provost in early September 2005.

The Committee (Co-chairs)
Dr. Michael Barber, Chief Information Officer
Prof. Michael Campbell, College of Business (Accounting)

Mr. Robert Carr, Interim Dean, College of Professional Studies
*Dr. Mary Susan Fishbaugh, Interim Dean, College of Education
Ms. Jane Howell, Director, Library Services
*Dr. Tasneem Khaleel, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Mr. Stacy Klippenstein, Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs
Dr. Kirk Lacy, Associate Dean, College of Professional Studies

Studies and Lifelong Learning
Ms. Valerie Martinez, Associate Dean, College of Technology
Dr. Sheila McGinnis, College of Allied Health Professions (Health Administration)
Ms. Barb Pedula, General Education Team Leader, College of Technology
Dr. Mathew Redinger, College of Arts and Sciences (History)
Mr. Brent Roberts, Associate Director, Library Services
Ms. Patty Rukstad, Administrative Assistant, CQI / Accreditation Office
Dr. Rachel Schaffer, College of Arts and Sciences (English)
Mr. David Sullivan, Graduate Studies
Ms. Linda Wham, Institutional Research Analyst, Information Technology
Dr. George White, Interim Provost and Academic Vice Chancellor

Many of us have received warm thank-yous, glowing praise, and other forms of positive feedback for the jobs we do and the good results we achieve for our students and other constituents.

For example, one of our English majors is now attending the University of Iowa College of Law. He wrote the department a wonderful e-mail after being accepted to thank us for the role we played in his success:

"[The University of Iowa] is a well respected school, nationally, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to attend—an opportunity that might not have been possible had I not received such great instruction and inspiration from my professors in the English Department, particularly those with whom I frequently had discussions and classes.

“I say this sincerely because, at the end of my application cycle, when I received my acceptances, five out of eight law schools noted in the acceptance letters that my strong writing skills helped give my application a much needed edge in their applicant pools. I developed and strengthened my writing skills there, at MSU-B’s English Department, and that’s a fact I’ll proudly proclaim to any group, any time.

“Please let the rest of the department know that I won’t forget my experiences there, and I won’t take for granted the role they played in opening doors for me and shaping my intellectual perspectives.

“If ever another English student expresses interest in applying to law school, you can recommend them to me so I can reinforce the idea that majors studying in that department have the resources to impress law school admissions committees and gain acceptance into many great schools; I’ll always be a faithful advocate of the English Department and its faculty.”

Such a wonderful testimonial deserves to be shared with a wider audience. We’re sure that such tributes are received all over campus, and we invite you all to send them in to the CQI Bulletin to be shared with our readers. Whether they come from students, colleagues, clients, community members, or some other constituency, if they demonstrate good service and attention to CQI, we welcome them.

Please send stories, anecdotes, testimonials, etc., to Rachel Schaffer at rschaffer@msubillings.edu (e-mail preferred) or through campus mail to the Dept. of English & Philosophy, LA 437 (for hard copies).