I. Brief Description of the Institution

In 1946, LFGSM was created to respond to an acute shortage of broadly trained middle-management personnel. The post-World War II economy was growing rapidly; while seasoned people were available, they lacked the breadth of experience necessary to qualify them for increasing responsibility.

To address the issue, three leading Illinois companies — Abbott Laboratories, Fansteel Metallurgical Corporation, and Johns-Manville Products Corporation — joined with Lake Forest College to form the Lake Forest College Industrial Management Institute (IMI). IMI provided practical, applicable management knowledge and experience to help managers meet businesses’ rapidly changing needs.

As the program grew, the Lake Forest College Industrial Management Institute (IMI) evolved into Lake Forest Graduate School of Management (LFGSM). In the 1960s, LFGSM formally separated from Lake Forest College and became the independent, non-profit graduate school of management that it is today. In 1978, LFGSM was accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). LFGSM was recognized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) as a Master of Business Administration (MBA)-granting institution in 1979.

From this beginning, LFGSM has grown to be one of the largest Masters of Business Administration programs in the Midwest. Today, the only degree LFGSM offers is the MBA, with programs specifically tailored for experienced business professionals and individuals who are new to business. LFGSM’s Leadership MBA program for experienced business professionals is one of the oldest and largest MBA programs in the Midwest and is specifically designed for accomplished professionals who want to develop strong management and leadership skills and a broader perspective of the key functions of business in order to advance their careers. Beginning in the 2013-14 Academic Year, business professionals and functional experts motivated to be leaders can now earn graduate-level certificates in Change Management, Strategy and Execution, and/or Management Analytics.

Also beginning in the 2012-2013 Academic year, LFGSM specifically designed a new Immersion MBA (iMBA) program for aspiring business leaders who typically have limited business experience and want to develop a wide range of business skills to ignite or transition their careers.

In addition, LFGSM’s Corporate Learning Solutions (CLS) group is committed to providing a high-quality, non-degree, graduate-level business management education. CLS derives a portion of its content, faculty, and course delivery from LFGSM MBA programs.

LFGSM continually works to improve the quality, relevance, and depth of the graduate-level business education programs that it provides by maintaining close connections with leading businesses. LFGSM deeply involves itself in the business community to continually reinforce its connection to the constituents it serves and to maintain a dynamic dialogue with business leaders. These strong, reciprocal relationships are extremely important to the continued viability of LFGSM MBA and CLS programs.

LFGSM was ahead of its time when it started; our unique Leadership Learning™ philosophy, curriculum design, content, and delivery were very different from other schools. Beginning in 1946, LFGSM offered a business management program taught by business leaders to working professionals that focused on practical, relevant education that could be immediately applied in the workplace. This was significantly different from traditional programs of the time, which relied on tenured faculty and business theory as the primary components of their programs.

Today, a key point in LFGSM’s differentiation and an important component in the delivery of the School’s business management education is a faculty of successful business professionals. LFGSM prefers a part-time faculty comprised of business professionals because of the value that their real-life experiences bring to LFGSM students. The School’s faculty’s ability to help students directly relate class material to actual business
situations is the backbone of its practical business management education. Faculty members bring a high level of strategic perspective honed from years of work experience, a facilitative style leveraged by cutting-edge educational technology, and a passion to develop the business and leadership competencies of their students. Their active participation in business provides an understanding of the evolving needs of organizations today.

LFGSM continually seeks out the most current business thinking to integrate into our MBA course content and delivery, and our mission requires us to ensure that our graduates know how to properly apply it. Faculty members serve as subject matter experts, instructional designers, and course facilitators to develop and deliver curricula that address not only current business management theory and the School’s competencies, but also the critical skills that students will find essential to launch and advance their careers. These competencies and skills are best summarized by LFGSM’s belief that “Broad Thinkers Make Strong Leaders” and emphasize “Know the Business, Relate to People, and Deliver Results.”

Students value LFGSM’s close ties to the business community. This is a primary reason they choose the School’s graduate leadership programs. LFGSM’s Leadership MBA and graduate-level Leadership Certificate students are typically “functional experts” — working professionals with a specific area of deep business expertise and a strong desire to advance their careers through a graduate general management education. These functional experts include research scientists, engineers, sales and marketing professionals, IT professionals, and human resource specialists looking to broaden their business knowledge and perspective.

LFGSM’s iMBA students are newer to business — aspiring business leaders who want to develop a wide range of business skills to ignite or transition their careers.

All LFGSM students have substantial workplace responsibilities and, in many cases, significant family and social obligations. These students have found that LFGSM has specifically tailored course delivery to balance the difficult and often competing demands of graduate education, work, social responsibilities, and family responsibilities.

II. The development of LFGSM’s quality program through AQIP

While LFGSM has had a long standing commitment to quality improvement, historically this commitment was not consistently embedded in the School's operations. Recognizing this, in 2009, LFGSM embraced the AQIP process and in doing so committed to meeting The Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) Criteria for Accreditation and other expectations through continuous process improvement. As discussed below, through the initial Systems Portfolio, Systems Appraisal, and Strategy Forum, LFGSM has developed ongoing AQIP Projects that have focused upon key processes, re-oriented decision making around data, decentralized management control, and empowered faculty and staff to make the decisions that directly affect their work and improve our students’ experience.

A. Systems Portfolio: LFGSM formalized its new commitment to continuous quality improvement when it submitted its AQIP System Portfolio. LFGSM’s June 2010 Systems Portfolio examined the nine AQIP Categories, described key School processes, results, and identified areas that needed improvement. The Systems Portfolio provided LFGSM with an opportunity to thoroughly review its key systems and processes. The resulting systems Portfolio became a credible internal and external report for all members of the LFGSM community (students, alumni, staff, corporate clients, Business Advisory Council members and Board of Directors) interested in improving LFGSM’s performance and became an objective source for internal discussions how to best direct efforts for improvement. Although LFGSM’s ongoing AQIP Projects have changed many key processes since the Systems Portfolio was originally drafted, LFGSM affirms its accuracy.
B. **Systems Appraisal:** Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified what the HLC AQIP review team saw in LFGSM’s Systems Portfolio as the School’s strengths and opportunities for improvement. The chief findings of this Report that formed the basis of LFGSM current AQIP Action Projects were:

1. **Issues Affecting Compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation.** The Systems Appraisal team concluded that “LFGSM has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and each of their Core Components”.

2. **Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies.** The Systems Appraisal team identified:
   
i. **Faculty:** “LFGSM’s business model relies on adjunct faculty. It is not entirely clear that the benefits widely believed to accrue from faculty leadership in other institutions of high learning (e.g., program development that is fully reflective of advances in the discipline, a check and balance to administrative perspectives on various issues pertaining to curriculum and pedagogy, faculty hiring, etc.) are fully achieved in LFGSM’s business model.”
   
ii. **IS Systems:** “LFGSM’s information infrastructure is outdated, contributes to the “siloing” of data in various departments, and threatens the integrity of information maintained by the school.”
   
iii. **Use of Data** “LFGSM gathers data of strategic significance, but there is little evidence that established criteria are used to determine the kinds of data gathered or to evaluate the relevance and value of these data on a regular basis.)
   
iv. **Role of the Board of Directors.** The role of LFGSM’s Board of Directors in setting policy, developing strategy, and overseeing operations is not addressed in the school's systems portfolio. How responsibilities are shared between the Management Board and the Board of Directors is unclear.
   
iv. **Strategic Planning** “LFGSM’s Systems Portfolio describes a robust strategic planning process. AQIP Action Projects and other continuous improvement initiatives do not appear to be fully integrated with this larger planning process, however.”

This specific System Appraisal feedback became the basis of re-examination of the School’s AQIP Projects that culminated with the Strategy Forum.

C. **Strategy Forum:** In May 2011, the LFGSM’s President and the Academic Management Team participated in an AQIP Strategy Forum. Using the System Appraisal feedback and the Strategy Forum review processes, the LFGSM team identified one AQIP Category (Category 3: Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs) to be targeted for a highly focused AQIP Projects quality improvement campaign. Within this Category, the LFGSM team identified student retention and registration growth as critical organizational challenges and established the following targets for change:

1. Reduce student attrition rate by 30% in the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
2. Increase student course registrations by 15% in the 2011-2012 fiscal year

In developing the AQIP Projects that formed the basis of this campaign, LFGSM relied upon the Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies identified above, and the specific opportunities for improvement listed below (identified as O or OO in the Systems Appraisal) as being essential to meeting this challenge.

1. Faculty engagement in the development of the school’s academic programs.
2. Admission practices that may exclude some students unnecessarily.
3. It might benefit the school to look at potential new program areas to boost enrollment.
4. A more systematic process and additional methods to gather stakeholder feedback would benefit the school.

As a direct result of the Strategy Forum, LFGSM materially revised its AQIP Projects and sought to embed them in its Educational Programs and Solutions (EPS) operations and decision making as summarized in the chart below.

**EPS Decision-making Chart**

D. **AQIP Projects:** The AQIP projects that form the basis of LFGSM’s current Quality Improvement Campaign are:

1. **Student Retention:** to identify and implement MBA program changes that increase its accessibility to these new and continuing students and thereby increases new student admissions, improves student retention, accelerates course registrations, and maximizes graduation rates
2. **Faculty Engagement:** to provide practitioner faculty, experts in the field of management they teach, the academic underpinnings to be more effective and successful in the classroom and with corporate clients. Through a new level of training, development, and additional academic support, we hope to gain further faculty engagement that will directly impact student/client learning – both face-to-face and virtually.
3. **Information Systems:** to materially update information capabilities through the introduction of a new student information system, updated learning management system, new communication technology, new digital content, introduction of Web 2.0 tools, and new support personnel. This project then focuses upon using these new capabilities to support LFGSM’s other quality improvement projects (Faculty Engagement, Online Delivery of degree and non degree programs, and Student Retention and Registration Initiatives).
4. **Learning Outcomes Assessment** (Online Delivery of Degree and Non-Degree Programs): to develop, implement, and refine consistent processes for the collection, documentation, and utilization of assessment data relating to LFGSM’s degree and non degree program student learning outcomes, particularly as this increasingly incorporate online delivery. Given LFGSM’s expansion into online delivery, LFGSM will devote significant resources to understanding the state of existing outcomes assessment processes, determining how the effectiveness of those processes can be measured, and
using this knowledge to develop processes that result in measurably higher levels of student learning outcomes. This project is integrated with LFGSM’s other current AQIP Projects involving faculty engagement, student retention, and information technology.

III. LFGSM’s current Quality Program Campaign

LFGSM’s current strategic plan requires the School to “enhance the competitiveness of the LFGSM MBA program by increasing inquiries, applications, admissions, registrations, and graduations from its students by upgrading the program to more effectively attract new and retain current students”. LFGSM’s MBA students are mature, experienced (average age 40 year) business professionals currently working full-time in a professional capacity which LFGSM categorizes as “functional expert” (i.e., research scientist, IT manager, Human Resources manager, sales manager).

These “functional expert” are typically seeking a MBA degree to increase their professional effectiveness and improve their professional advancement opportunities. LFGSM believes that professional demands upon our functional expert students and prospective students have materially changed in the past 10 years with the result that LFGSM’s MBA program has become increasingly inaccessible. This has impacted student recruitment and retention. The table below illustrates this retention impact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Students Starting In</th>
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<th>Year 2 Attrition</th>
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<td>2006-10</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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A. Quality Program Campaign Organization: key participants in the current Quality Program Campaign include the following:

1. Academic Management Team. Members are: Executive Vice President, Educational Programs and Solutions; Dean, Corporate Learning Solutions; Dean, Degree Programs and Faculty Relations; Director, Shared Services; Registrar; Manager, Corporate Learning Solutions; Manager, Student Services.

2. LFGSM Senior Management Team. Members are: President, Chief Executive Officer; Chief Financial Officer; Vice President, Human Resources/Development; Vice President, Research, Development & Innovation; Vice President, Marketing, Alumni Affairs; Vice President, Information Systems.

3. Board of Directors, Educational Programs and Solutions Committee.

4. Business Advisory Council

5. Faculty Leadership. Members are drawn from: Change Management Certificate Bench; Management Analytics Certificate Bench; Strategy and Execution Certificate Bench

B. Quality Program Campaign Reports: the Academic Management Team reviews the following data through the lenses of the four ongoing AQIP projects (Student Retention, Faculty Engagement, Information Systems, and Learning Outcomes Assessment) and determines what actions should be taken in response to identified trends. LFGSM’s Quality Program is organized so that the following actions occur:

1. Weekly Activities. Registration Report (examines registrations for current and upcoming academic terms); Registration Dashboard (examines student attrition and reason); Mentoring Placement; KEYS
C. Key Quality Program Campaign Efforts To Date

Examination of the school’s student attrition identified the following:

When Do Enrolled Students Lapse?
Student Attrition by Course 2004-2010

Why do Students Leave?
Reasons Given By Lapsing Students
2004-2010
This and other data strongly indicated that in order to respond to the needs of our typical student profile, LFGSM recognized its need to closely align it and increase the availability of its courses, provide recognition of progress throughout the MBA program, increase student support and provide flexibility and improved options for participation.

In 2011 LFGSM launched the four AQIP Projects (discussed above) aimed at increasing student retention and recruitment. To date, these Action Projects have focused upon developing a deep understanding of LFGSM student attrition, adapting the MBA program’s delivery and related processes and policies, and implementing new approaches to increase the program’s accessibility and thereby reduce student attrition. These new approaches, in turn, have required a new level of faculty engagement, new information technology capabilities, and a deeper focus on student learning outcomes.

Consequently, LFGSM, though these Academic Quality Improvement Projects, implemented the following actions:

1. **Course Curriculum Was Aligned, Harmonized, and Moved Online**: All course syllabi were updated and “harmonized” (that is, Student Learning Outcomes for each class session were synchronized across all sections and faculty) so that each section of the same course would be progressing though the same course content in the same sequence. This allows students to attend a different section of the same class when they must miss class due to their work related responsibilities or other life event. Moreover, face to face courses were “blended” that is, placed in a new Learning Management System course shell designed to meet Quality Matters guidelines, as well as 100% online versions of all courses were introduced. Quality Matters (QM) is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses.

2. **Course Progression Was Re-Sequenced**. All core courses were sequenced into three competency based certificates. These Certificates provide students with attainable intermediate milestones and earned competencies during their multi-year MBA program. These are:
   
   - **Change Management Certificate**: This certificate focuses on the tools and skills needed to guide and facilitate constructive strategic change. The MBA courses that comprise this certificate include: Executive Success Skills, Effective Leadership, Global Business & Cultural Diversity, and Leading Organizational Change.
   - **Management Analytics Certificate**: This certificate focuses on a structured approach to gathering, understanding, and interpreting data in various functional business areas such as accounting and finance. Students acquire key economic concepts that are critical to managerial decision-making within today’s business environment. It is comprised of Business Analytics and Research, Accounting for Decision Making, Economics for Managers, and Financial Management MBA courses.
   - **Strategy and Execution Certificate**: In this certificate students develop and implement strategy that provides a sustainable competitive advantage enabling them to optimize operational business processes. The four MBA courses that make up this certificate are: Strategic Thinking, Innovation & Risk, Marketing, and Operations Management.

3. **Attendance Policy Was Revised** : LFGSM attendance policy was revised to allow students to attend other course class sessions (e.g., if students could not make the Monday Accounting Class session due to work or personal needs, they could attend the Thursday session either personally or virtually). Since course syllabi had been aligned, each section progressed at the same weekly pace.
4. **New Student Support Programs Were Developed and Implemented as KEYS™ (Key Elements of Your Success):** These focus upon meaningfully assisting older, full time employed students who have been away from higher education for extended periods successfully complete the program as well as providing practical guidance how their new competencies can be leveraged to advance their careers.

   **Keys to Your Academic Success:**
   - **Preparatory self paced on line modules:** to be completed as prior to MBA Certificates. The first two Keys are prerequisite to any certificate taken in the program. They are “Digital Literacy” and “Communication and Teams.” The goal of the first two modules is to strengthen the students’ academic base and familiarize them with the technology that will be a part of their graduate learning experience. The third module is “Finance Fundamentals” designed to prepare students entering any of the Finance related courses. The final module is “Critical Thinking” the prerequisite to courses that focus on creative and strategic thinking.
   - **Mentoring:** An alumni mentoring program was established. Current students (Mentees) were matched to Alumni (Mentors) with similar business backgrounds and interests. A one year relationship was constructed using preset milestones to monitor the acquisition of competencies and the success of the program.
   - **Tutoring:** A tutoring company was engaged to offer support for business writing and math based courses. Students could request these services or be referred. There is no additional cost.

   **Keys to Your Professional Success:**
   - **Networking Events:** LFGSM instituted networking events for students primarily through sponsoring tables at the Executive Club at Chicago (ECC) allowing students, faculty, and stakeholders to network at regular events sponsoring significant business community leaders.
   - **Measurement Tools for Self Assessment:** Using Knowledge Advisors Metrics That Matters, students chart their progress and continuously document the impact of the LFGSM experience upon their careers.
   - **Transition Support & Career Services:** In response to the needs of our students and the difficult economy, a partial scholarship program was introduced for students who find themselves in transition while working on their MBA. The ASSIST (Assistance for Students in Sudden Transition) Scholarship reduces tuition and provides individual options for students who continue in their program. A full-time Director of Career Services was hired to work both with students in transition and with those who need support in progressing in their current employment setting.

5. **Course Length was Reduced Though Moving Content Online:** To provide students with greater flexibility and the opportunity to move through the program at their own pace, ten-week courses were shortened to eight weeks by moving course content online. This has allowed two additional academic terms to be added.

6. **New Student Centered Technology was Introduced:** LFGSM’s outdated student information system and learning management system technology was a significant source of frustration for students and has been materially updated.
   - **Student Information System:** Jenzabar, a state of the art student information system, was successfully implemented which has provided students with enhanced access and control over to course schedules, reviewing grades, and changing degree plans.
   - **Library:** LFGSM replaced its online library with ProQuest providing students with graduate level materials that are accessible to them any at the click of a mouse.
Student Portal - MyLFGSM: The student portal was developed to better meet the needs of our students by centralizing their personal information, facilitating course shell access, and providing quick access to their account information.

Surveys: Pen and paper surveys were replaced with online surveys to speed feedback to faculty, administration, and students.

Knowledge Advisors: Knowledge Advisors Metrics that Matter was implemented to track student satisfaction and progress as well as to provide students with important personal benchmark information.

Learning Management System: Blackboard is being upgraded to 9.1 to better support blended face to face and 100% online courses, as well as to provide student access through mobile devices.

7. **Elective Courses and Specialties were Added or Enhanced**: New Elective courses were developed and implemented in both face to face/blended and 100% online modalities to provide students with optional elective specialization credentials. Students may choose from any of the electives or may focus on a series of electives that result in a specialty.
   - Finance
   - Global Business and Cultural Diversity
   - Healthcare Management
   - Marketing
   - Organizational Behavior

In addition, new single course electives focused upon highly relevant emerging areas have been introduced. Examples would include:
   - Social Media
   - Quality Program Summary
   - Digital Marketing

8. **New Student Support Services**: LFGSM implemented a new Student Services function to better support our student’s learning goals throughout their academic pursuits. A full time Manager of Student Services position was created to increase retention by monitoring and intervening for students at risk.

D. **Key Quality Program Campaign Results To Date**: As summarized in the exhibits below, the Quality Program Campaign retention project has had a material, positive impact in reducing student retention and increasing registrations in the 2011-12 academic year. LFGSM estimates that student retention has changed from a 21% Year 2 Attrition Rate when the Retention Program was implemented to a current 11% Year 2 level, a 48% improvement. Moreover, due to the comprehensive range of Retention Program elements, LFGSM believes that further retention improvement is possible.

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<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>2012-13¹</td>
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¹ Summer, Fall, Winter 1 and Winter 2 Terms
IV. Conclusion

Through the AQIP processes, LFGSM has made significant strides in creating a culture of continuous improvement. In the 2011-12 academic year, Student Retention was reduced by over 40%, which in conjunction with the other Campaign initiatives increased registrations by 306 over the prior baseline, thus meeting the Campaign’s original goal. The long term sustainability of these results, however, remains to be demonstrated. To attain this, the four AQIP projects will evolve to focus upon these objectives and LFGSM’s Systems Portfolio updated.