SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

February 21, 2011

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Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission NCA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight Highland Community College's achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

- HCC presented numerous examples of its process to collect, measure, and assess data about its effectiveness in helping students learn. However, the College should consider presenting evidence of how data is used to support continuous improvement across all academic processes in a systematic and comprehensive manner. In addition, HCC could have provided a more comprehensive view of its processes and systems had it chosen to respond to more category questions. Not responding to key questions in Category One gives an incomplete view of how the College helps students learn.

- The Retired Senior Volunteer Program is clearly of great importance to HCC, and the data provided show that it is effective and has created strong ties within the local community. HCC may consider replicating some of the RSVP processes and practices with other distinctive objectives to create a more systematic and comprehensive approach. The College also does not present evidence of how this program enhances the academic and personal development experience of it students or how it meets the needs of its faculty and staff.

- The College has just begun to utilize surveys to enhance its understanding of stakeholder needs and is clearly committed to implementing quality change through the use of data collected. While HCC uses multiple methods to build relationships with and survey students and alumni, it may benefit from the creation of additional specific processes regarding building and measuring relationships with other stakeholder groups. These ongoing efforts should provide further meaningful input as the College develops data-driven, continuous improvement processes for enhancing its understanding of various stakeholders' needs.

- The College demonstrates the use of a variety of programs and compensation plans to attract and retain the personnel necessary to achieve its mission and goals. HCC has continued to build on strengths identified in the 2006 Portfolio and has implemented many improvements over the last four years. The college uses multiple evaluation tools to gauge employee satisfaction and is committed to addressing issues revealed in the

results of those evaluations. HCC may consider taking these efforts further by explicitly linking work processes, personnel evaluation systems, training, ethics, etc., to the short- and long-term goals of the institution. As in other areas, its efforts will be enhanced by the development of documented, data-driven processes for continuous improvement.

- Highland Community College documents a number of leading and communicating processes that are common to higher education institutions. The implementation of a 360 degree survey by the HCC President shows strong dedication to transparency and openness. HCC has taken multiple steps to address opportunities for improvement identified in the 2006 Portfolio and continues to operate with a clear commitment to the principles of continuous improvement by acknowledging that further work can be done in these areas. Nevertheless, the development of documented, data-driven processes is needed to provide evidence of the College's efforts to continuously improve leading and communicating and to establish accountability for these processes. HCC also needs to benchmark itself better against other institutions and to define better its own organizational culture in order to understand how that culture and infrastructure can assist in making improvements.

- Highland Community College documents several processes for supporting institutional operations that are common to higher education institutions. Based on the specific measures and results, it is apparent that the College is just beginning to understand the requirements of this category. However, the pattern that is emerging from this appraisal points to a need to better benchmark itself to other institutions and to better define its own organizational culture to understand the roles that culture and infrastructure play in making improvements.

  The development of documented, data-driven processes is needed to provide evidence of the College's efforts to continuously improve support services.

- The creation of an Office and Director of Institutional Research demonstrates HCC's commitment to the collection of meaningful data used to drive decision-making. This office will provide rich sources of institutional and system data for review and analysis. HCC also generates some data internally to understand its students' needs. HCC acknowledges the need for a centralized data warehouse that would better distribute information to all levels of the institution. This would create an excellent opportunity to

institutionalize continuous improvement efforts occurring at the departmental and program levels and to share successes with the larger organization.

However, there is not enough evidence indicating which is a stronger driver for measuring effectiveness: External accreditation requirements or improving internal strategic priorities and goals. HCC has only just begun to implement systematic or comprehensive processes to utilize those data for measuring institutional effectiveness.

- Since submitting its last Portfolio in 2006, the College has improved documentation of its continuous improvement processes, including increased use of data. However, evidence is not presented regarding how the data are directly used to measure improvement or how data-driven information is used to continuously improve performance.

- Accomplishment of HCC's mission as a locally funded community college is dependent upon external stakeholders. However, the College does not provide appropriate evidence of support for creating data-driven continuous improvement processes to assess or improve its relationships with key external collaborative stakeholders. HCC could benefit from the development of a more systematic, data-driven process for determining the effectiveness of all the relationships the College builds. An important piece of this migration will be measuring external relationships.

Accreditation issues and Strategic challenges for Highland Community College are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

ELEMENTS OF HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FEEDBACK REPORT

The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* provides AQIP's official response to your *Systems Portfolio* by a team of readers trained in evaluation. After appraisers independently reviewed your document, the team reached consensus on essential elements of your institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by Category, and significant issues for your institution. These are presented in three sections of the Feedback Report: Accreditation Issues Analysis, Critical Characteristics Analysis, and Category Feedback. These components are

interrelated in defining context, evaluating performance, surfacing critical issues, and assessing institutional performance.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team had only your *Systems Portfolio* to guide their analysis of your institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, their report may omit important strengths — if you were too modest to stress them in your *Systems Portfolio*, or if your discussion and documentation of them was unconvincing. Similarly, the team may have pointed out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving the institution's attention. Again, the team used its best judgment in identifying improvement opportunities. If some of these areas of potential improvement are now strengths rather than opportunities because of your own focused efforts, that is all to your credit. If the team was unsure about an area, we urged it to err on the side of giving your institution the best possible advice about where investing your efforts might pay off. If some of their advice comes after the fact, after you've already tackled an area, no harm is done.

Executive Summary: Summative statements agreed upon by the Systems Appraisal Team reflecting the reviewers' assessment of the institution's current status in relation to critical quality characteristics: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback, and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that the Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

Strategic challenges for the institution are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis: Strategic issues are those most closely related to your institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Accreditation issues are areas where you have not yet provided evidence that you meet the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, or where the evidence you have presented suggests you may have difficulties, now or in the future, in meeting these expectations. If accreditation is essential for your institution then any accreditation issues identified are, by definition, also strategic. The Systems Appraisal Team identified both of these kinds of issues through analysis of your Organizational Overview and the feedback it provided for each Category, as well as by reviewing the Index to the *Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided along with your *Systems Portfolio*. This list of strategic issues offers a framework for addressing

ongoing improvement of processes and systems, serving as an executive summary of the
Report's key findings and recommendations.

Critical Characteristics: Your Systems Portfolio's Organizational Overview provides context
for the team's knowledge of your institution's identity, mission objectives, strategic goals, and
key factors related to improvement. Critical Characteristics are those features most important for
understanding the institution's mission, environment, stakeholders, competitive position, goals,
and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in
the Report.

Category Feedback: The Report's feedback on each of AQIP's nine Categories specifically
identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the
double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build.
Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more
significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your *Systems Portfolio*, offer brief
analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team's
findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report.

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the team attempted to identify the broader issues that
present the greatest challenges and opportunities for your institution in the coming years. These
are all strategic issues, ones you need to grapple with as you identify your institution's strategies
for confronting the future and becoming the institution you want to be. The team also examined
whether any of these strategic issues put your institution into jeopardy of not meeting the Higher
Learning Commission's accreditation expectations.

Issues Affecting Compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*. An important goal for the
Systems Appraisal was to review your institution's compliance with the Higher Learning
Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. The peer quality experts who served on the team were
all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission's *Criteria*, and the
Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the
Criteria as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your
institution's systems and processes under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-

related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the *Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the *Criteria* and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.

The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Highland Community College has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five *Criteria for Accreditation* and each of their Core Components. Although the Systems Appraisal does not in itself constitute a review for continued accreditation, the team's conclusion upon reviewing your Portfolio against the Criteria will serve as a telling piece of evidence during the Commission's next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies. The Systems Appraisal Team identified the following strategic issues to assist Highland Community College in prioritizing and taking action on the important broad challenges and opportunities it faces. From these you may discover your vital immediate priorities, shaping strategies that can lead to a quantum leap in the performance of your institution. Implementing these strategies may call for specific actions, so AQIP's expectation that your institution be engaged in three or four vital Action Projects at all times will help encourage your administrators, faculty, and staff to turn these strategic goals into real accomplishments. Knowing that Highland Community College will discuss these strategic issues, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified:

- The College must develop criteria and techniques used to select and measure data for performance assessment. Institutions participating in AQIP should be participating in AQIP across the institution, meaning there should be coordinated and overarching continuous quality improvement efforts which guide every unit of the College regardless of that particular unit's developmental maturity within the organizational framework.

- There is not enough evidence provided in the portfolio to verify that the College is consistently collecting data and evidence on operations or is utilizing the information that it does collect to affect improvement. After seven years, HCC should be collecting and making decisions on more quantitative data than qualitative evidence.

- Information provided in the portfolio does not conclusively indicate that HCC has built a strong culture of evidence. Though there are isolated examples that demonstrate otherwise, an overall institutional infrastructure that values data and that actively practices collaboration is not apparent.

- Evidence indicates that progress has been made by HCC in broadening institutional participation in making decisions. However, evidence here portrays the college as one in which decision making is predominantly administratively driven. In keeping with the principles of high performing organizations, HCC could seek more collaboration in decision making and in responsibility sharing.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

The AQIP *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* is intended to initiate action for improvement. It is therefore important that the Report produced by the Systems Appraisal Team stimulate review of organizational processes and systems. Though decisions about specific actions are each institution's, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement. At the next Strategy Forum an AQIP institution attends, its peers will examine in detail how it is using the feedback from its Systems Appraisal.

An organization needs to examine its Report strategically to identify those areas that will yield greatest benefit if addressed. Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of the Report may be: How do the team's findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned?

How an organization interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP's core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration and integrity. Based solely upon an organization's *Systems Portfolio*, the Report reflects a disciplined, external review of what an organization says about itself. The report should help an organization identify ways to improve its *Systems Portfolio* so it functions better to communicate accurately to internal and external audiences. But the Report's chief purpose is to help you to identify areas

for improvement, and to act so that these areas actually improve. These improvements can then be incorporated into an updated *Systems Portfolio*, guaranteeing that future Systems Appraisals will reflect the progress an institution has made.

Within a year following the Systems Appraisal, an institution participates in another AQIP Strategy Forum, where the focus will be on what the institution has learned from its Appraisal (and from its other methods of identifying and prioritizing improvement opportunities, and what it has concluded are its major strategic priorities for the next few years. AQIP's goal is to help an institution to clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities through Action Projects that will make a difference in institutional performance.

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

The purpose of this section is to identify what team members understood to be the critical and distinguishing characteristics of your institution. They are the shared understanding of the most important aspects of Highland Community College, its current dynamics and the forces surrounding it, and its internal momentum and aspirations, at least as team members understood them. This section also demonstrates that the Systems Appraisal Team recognized and knew what makes Highland Community College distinctive. Should you find some characteristics that you think are critical and missing from this list, you may want to clarify and highlight these items when you revise your *Systems Portfolio* and other literature explaining your institution to the public.

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV1a Highland Community College, a public institution, serves approximately 6,000 students each year from a service area that includes a four county area with a population of approximately 90,000 students. This four county area includes 16 high school districts in northwest Illinois.

OV1b The College has identified and assesses student mastery of the General Education competencies and specific program outcomes and has processes in place to provide for an efficient and effective course delivery system.

OV2   Highland Community College is working to achieve its overarching objective of "encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois" through its other distinctive objectives of Leadership Programs, Summer Youth Sports Camps, Upward Bound, HCC Foundation, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

OV3   Since the submission and evaluation of its 2006 Systems Portfolio, Highland Community College has worked to better identify its student and stakeholder needs in order to improve relationships with these two groups.

OV4a   HCC has developed a Resource Allocation and Management Plan that looks at trends, potential challenges and opportunities, and college-wide needs for the coming five-year period. This plan provides information to use in financial and budgetary planning, which is directly related to the college's strategic plan, operational needs, and human resources.

OV4b   A reorganization in 2008 led to splitting Academic and Student Services into two separate divisions.

OV4c   Full-time faculty comprise approximately 28% of the total full-time workforce and approximately 21% of the faculty.

OV5   A critical committee on campus is the Policy Review Committee, and that group is involved with the ongoing process of both reviewing and updating College policy and considering new policy items. This group presents their recommendations to the Board through the College President.

OV6   Highland divides its support services into Student Services, Learning Resources and Administrative Services.

OV7   Accreditation and mandated federal and state requirements largely determine data collection, analysis, and reporting objectives.

OV8a   The key challenge facing the College is how to use its strategic planning process to develop both reactive and proactive plans to respond to enrollment variations from semester to semester.

OV8b   The College has experienced a tremendous level of community commitment throughout its nearly 50-year history. An example of this interaction is the recent development of the

Wind Technology and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs. Both programs resulted from community initiatives and needs. The EMS program was an outgrowth of communication and support provided by local fire and ambulance services.

OV9   The College documents a broad range of productive and high level partnerships and collaborative relationships to reinforce its mission. This includes location of a YMCA on campus.

CATEGORY FEEDBACK

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP Categories, selected *Critical Characteristics* are again highlighted, those the Systems Appraisal Team believed were critical keys to reviewing that particular AQIP Category. The symbols used in these "strengths and opportunities" sections for each Category stand for *outstanding strength* (SS), *strength* (S), *opportunity for improvement* (O) and *pressing or outstanding opportunity for improvement* (OO). The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the Systems Appraisal Team members, and deserves your thoughtful consideration. Comments marked SS or OO may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Helping Students Learn identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how your entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV1a   Highland Community College, a public institution, serves approximately 6,000 students each year from a service area that includes a four county area with a population of approximately 90,000 students. This four county area includes 16 high school districts in northwest Illinois.

OV1b   The College has identified and assesses student mastery of the General Education competencies, specific program outcomes, and has processes in place to provide for an efficient and effective course delivery system.

OV4c   Full-time faculty comprise approximately 28% of the total full-time workforce and approximately 21% of the faculty.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 1, Helping Students Learn.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
1P1	S	The reduction in the number of General Education competencies will enable HCC to focus its efforts on the competencies that the faculty designates as most important for the students to master.
1P2	S	HCC presents well-structured, collaborative processes for determining specific outcomes for transfer and occupational programs. State oversight committees mandate outcomes for some programs.
1P3	S	HCC presents a comprehensive, faculty-led process for the development and approval of new programs and courses. The process includes review and approval by the Illinois Community College Board and provides opportunities for collaboration with other institutions.
1P4	OO	Although the College responded to 1P2 and 1P3, responding also to 1P4 would allow HCC to specifically address how it designs academic

programs that balance and integrate learning goals and the realities of the employment market place. Therefore, it should consider taking advantage of this opportunity to address its process for achieving these goals in a future Systems Portfolio.

1P7	S	HCC describes many services available to help potential and current students select programs of study that match their needs, interests and abilities. Of particular note is its "Career Cruising" internet-based program.
1P9	S	HCC provides a free, 16-week course that allows students to assess their individual learning styles and strengths and to improve their critical thinking skills, time management, and motivational skills. Faculty members are supported in their use of multiple teaching styles to respond to various learners' needs.
1P10	S	The Office of ADA Services provides a wide range of services to address the needs of special students.
1P12	S	HCC's course scheduling process uses multiple stakeholders to determine courses to be offered and enables the College to focus on student needs.
1P13	S	As mandated by the Illinois Community College Board, HCC uses specific processes to evaluate the effectiveness and the current content of its occupational programs and transfer areas.
1P14a	S	HCC describes a well-defined process to review and propose changes to courses.
1P14b	O	The process for changing or discontinuing programs is not as well defined as the process for changing or discontinuing courses. The College can benefit from development of a step-by-step process for changing or discontinuing programs based upon the existing process for making course decisions.
1P15	O	HCC describes changes made to the Success Center and the subjects in which tutoring is offered. However, it does not present a systematic

process for how student learning support needs are determined and addressed.

| 1P16 | OO | HCC recognizes the need to describe in its next Systems Portfolio its processes aligning co-curricular development goals with curricular learning objectives. However, the College missed an outstanding opportunity to address current processes. |

| 1P17 | O | Although the College describes the administrative process it uses for awarding degrees, it does not present the process it uses to determine if students have met the learning, development, and content mastery expectations of degrees awarded. |

| 1P18 | O | Although HCC describes an annual process for assessing General Education competencies; it does not present a data-driven process for continuous improvement in how it designs processes for assessing student learning. |

| 1R1-1R3 | O | HCC should consider presenting performance results on a broader set of programs that are based upon larger sample sizes to validate results; also, information is needed to show how data is utilized in feedback loops. |

| 1R1 | S | Measurements of student learning and development outcomes are presented for General Education, occupational, and transfer programs. |

| 1R2 | S | HCC provides performance results data for 14 of its General Education Competencies that it has collected for assessment since 2006. |

| 1R3 | S | The College presents performance results for two transfer programs and two occupational programs. HCC should consider presenting performance results on a broader set of programs that are based upon larger sample sizes. |

| 1R4a | S | HCC presents evidence gathered from licensing examinations, transfer rates, and alumni feedback to demonstrate that students have acquired the knowledge and skills required by stakeholders. |

1R4b	O	HCC states that results from employers are used to assess the knowledge and skills required by employers. However, it is unclear how this data is used.
1R5	O	HCC presents data about the use of computer labs, library services, and tutoring services; however, the use of this data is not presented.
1I1	O	Although the establishment of a Writing Center and Honors Program are examples of recent improvements to enhance student academic success, evidence is not presented to substantiate how systematic and comprehensive the College's processes and performance results really are for helping students learn.

AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of your mission. Depending on your institution's character, it examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives, alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* **section covering Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:**

Item Critical Characteristic

OV2 Highland Community College is working to achieve its overarching objective of "encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois" through its other distinctive objectives of Leadership Programs, Summer Youth Sports Camps, Upward Bound, HCC Foundation, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

OV9   The College documents a broad range of productive and high level partnerships and collaborative relationships to reinforce its mission. This includes location of a YMCA on campus.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
2P1a	S	The College identifies the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) as its primary other distinctive objective. The program has been at the College since 1973. Its local operations are subject to oversight of the RSVP Advisory Council.
2P1b	O	Although HCC has clearly defined steps to describe the initiation of new distinctive objectives, it provides no evidence of using them for other non-instructional processes.
2P2	S	HCC provides detailed information regarding the objectives of the RSVP and describes the process of soliciting community feedback every three years leading to re-establishment of a new MOU with each volunteer station.
2P3a	S	An Advisory Council to RSVP provides input and oversight. The Council consists of representative volunteers, volunteer station staff, and numerous community leaders. Examples of activities include tasks within the FHN health network, disaster preparedness, and food pantries.
2P3b	O	Although the RSVP communicates to its volunteers through newsletters, how it communicates the expectations regarding its objectives to its external stakeholders is not adequately addressed.
2P4	S	HCC uses an Advisory Council and evaluation tools provided by the Corporation for National Service to assess the RSVP. The program has used several evaluation forms over the years and uses this feedback to formulate program objectives.

2P5	OO	Except for project staff, the College does not address how it determines faculty and staff needs relative to this program or its other distinctive objectives.
2R1	S	HCC measures the effectiveness of non-instructional objectives pertaining to RSVP, Leadership Institutes, the Foundation, sports camps and Upward Bound. The College provides a specific list of measures collected and analyzed regularly and also provides corresponding examples through tables, charts, and graphs.
2R2	S	Survey and funding data are presented as evidence of results of the RSVP and Leadership Development programs and of the HCC Foundation.
2R3	S	HCC is one of five such RSVP programs in Illinois that are sponsored by community colleges. HCC provided comparative data for the five programs including grant dollars, number of volunteers, number of volunteers per district population, staff FTEs, and cost per hour. The RSVP at HCC compares favorably with the corresponding programs at other area institutions of higher education.
2R4	S	HCC currently has 462 RSVP volunteers serving in 90 different volunteer stations. HCC has provided continuous service from thousands of volunteers over the course of 37 years in the four-county service area. In 2009, volunteers reported contributing over 89,000 hours of service. The College is supported indirectly by strengthening the communities it serves through this program.
2I1	O	While HCC has provided extensive detail on the RSVP and has implemented recent improvements, it does not provide evidence that systematic and comprehensive processes are in place to address this category as a whole.

AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification, student and stakeholder requirements, analysis of student and stakeholder needs, relationship building with students and stakeholders, complaint collection, analysis, and resolution, determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV3   Since the submission and evaluation of its 2006 Systems Portfolio, Highland Community College has worked to better identify its student and stakeholder needs in order to improve relationships with these two groups.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
3P1	S	HCC has developed a three-year institutional survey plan designed to collect data from multiple student stakeholder groups. Previous surveys are described to demonstrate HCC's responsiveness when a need is identified, including a survey of evening students to determine a host of needs and preferences, a student activities survey, a climate survey for underrepresented groups, a course scheduling preference survey, and a needs survey for community education students.
3P2	S	HCC uses a variety of techniques to build and maintain relationships with potential and existing students. The College follows up with students

after they leave the College with surveys that provide feedback about their perspective of the College.

3P3	O	While HCC describes various methods of college personnel interaction with key stakeholder groups, no evidence is provided demonstrating that these methods are formal or comprehensive or that HCC selects courses of action based on those methods.
3P4a	O	HCC outlines a number of activities in its communication network with its stakeholders such as "Regular communication initiated." Except for its relationships with the local high schools, the process is primarily through informal means including informal meetings. The college might consider developing a specific process, for example, that defines what type of communication is initiated and by whom.
3P6	S	HCC has a very specific process for addressing types of complaints and makes those processes available to students. Additionally, complaints about specific areas are directed to an individual in charge of that area, which enhances accountability. This continuity and clarity is to be commended.
3R1	S	HCC provides multiple sources of data in the form of charts and graphs to demonstrate the results of student and stakeholder satisfaction, and the institutional survey plan is scheduled for administration on a three-year rotational basis. The college recognizes that the results of the surveys show opportunities for improvement and has begun implementing plans to address them.
3R2	S	The College presents longitudinal and other data to support its effectiveness in the identification of alumni satisfaction with the school and individual programs. For example, in a 2008 institutional alumni satisfaction survey, the highest rated item was "classroom instructors" which earned 97.8%.
3R3	S	Since 2006, HCC has engaged in an AQIP action project to create an integrated set of student services functions and to streamline and improve the user-friendly access to such functions. Although preliminary survey

data indicate results from the initiative are effective, the fact that the team is not satisfied with the results and so is initiating a point-of-service survey indicate a strong desire to make data-driven decisions to identify improvements.

3R4 S HCC provides positive evidence that it is starting to achieve a measure of success in building relationships with students and key stakeholders through the use of tools such as a community leaders survey.

3I2 O Although HCC describes an ongoing quality improvement training program taking place over the last five years, it does not attempt to define the role that its culture and infrastructure play in setting targets and improving performance results. For example, the results of the alumni satisfaction survey show a significant satisfaction decline in areas involved in student intake processes (advising) over the same time frame as this training. HCC may want to make clearer connections between the training and the benefits it has produced.

AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE

Valuing People explores your institution's commitment to the development of your employees since the efforts of all of your faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 4, Valuing People:

Item	Critical Characteristic

OV4a HCC has developed a Resource Allocation and Management Plan that looks at trends, potential challenges and opportunities, and college-wide needs for the coming five-year period. This plan provides information to use in financial and budgetary planning, which is directly related to the college's strategic plan, operational needs, and human resources.

OV4b A reorganization in 2008 led to splitting Academic and Student Services into two separate divisions.

OV4c Full-time faculty comprise approximately 28% of the total full-time workforce and approximately 21% of the faculty.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 4, Valuing People.

Item	S/O	Comment

4P1 S The institution follows specific guidelines as set by the HCC Board for position skills and credentials for faculty. Staff credentials are outlined in Position Analysis Questionnaires which are used as guidance for developing job descriptions. The use of Position Analysis Questionnaires creates a collaborative process that involves the current employee in evaluating the credentials and training needed.

4P2 S HCC identifies strategies and the process it uses to ensure faculty, staff, and administrators possess the required credentials, skills, and values required and expected of an HCC employee.

4P3 S Based on its 2006 Systems Portfolio the College follows typical processes for the recruitment and hiring of employees. Its retention efforts are in the form of evaluations, professional development opportunities and tuition assistance.

4P4 S The employee web site and a staff mentoring program aid new employees in becoming familiar with the college's mission, values and strategic priorities.

4P5a   S   HCC reports that a process for determining human resource needs has been implemented. A "New Position Staffing Requisition Worksheet" provides a means for managers to submit requests early in the budget year.

4P5b   O   Due to the state's decrease in funding levels, as well as restructuring of the President's Cabinet, this new Position Worksheet process was not utilized in FY10. HCC might consider adaptation of this form to include justification for existing positions or for the re-assignment of positions from one office to another.

4P6   O   HCC describes the process for employee feedback during evaluations and lists voluntary employee opportunities for involvement. However, sufficient evidence is not provided demonstrating that comprehensive methods exist to design work processes and activities so they contribute to both organizational productivity and employee satisfaction. Fully articulating or developing such processes may allow HCC to better define the relationship between designing work/activities and employee satisfaction.

4P7   S   All employees received specialized ethics training from the State in 2006. Even though the College is no longer required under state law to provide such training, it is currently developing an online ethics-training module.

4P8   O   While HCC provides a broad overview of how training needs are determined, there is no specific description of the steps taken and persons responsible for deciding when new training is needed and how/when/for whom it will be offered. In addition, the issue of training related to short- and long-range organizational plans is not addressed.

4P9   S   Since its 2006 Portfolio the College has hired a staff development person to coordinate its activities. This has led to a "lunch and learn" series, supervisory development series and a faculty development program. The implementation of new hire surveys led to the development of a training plan worksheet for new hires.

4P10	S	A Study Group appointed in 2008 has led to a number of improvements in the annual feedback process. This includes linkage of goals to AQIP Principles and institutional goals and priorities. The study group also considered pay for performance and 360 degree evaluations.
4P11	O	Although HCC describes in detail the improvements and changes to the compensation structure, there is no discussion of processes for employee recognition, reward, and benefit systems as aligned with institutional objectives. Because this item received an "S" in the previous Portfolio and HCC is to be commended for achieving its objectives related to compensation, a description of other processes related to valuing people would be helpful.
4P12	S	HCC uses various tools as identified in Figure 4.4 to determine key issues related to motivation and provides a step-by-step process for collecting data and acting on issues identified as part of the data collection.
4P13	S	HCC provides a comprehensive, detailed list of programs and services related to employee satisfaction and describes the instruments used to evaluate their effectiveness.
4R1	S	The annual Employee Survey measures employee satisfaction in multiple areas. Exit interviews are used to gather information regarding factors that cause employees to leave the College as well as to give the institution their assessment of College morale.
4R2	S	HCC is focused on performance results in the employee survey. HCC identifies some strengths and some concerns from the FY10 survey. For example, an identified strength: 85% to 98% (depending upon classification) responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement, "I know what is expected of me at work"; An area of concern: Only 22% to 36% (depending upon classification) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement, "I believe the most qualified and best performers are promoted within the organization."
4R3	O	HCC provides only a process description and indirect data to indicate the productivity and effectiveness of its faculty, staff and administrators. The

inclusion of charts and/or graphs could help HCC demonstrate results in this area.

4R4	O	The College currently has no process but is evaluating the use of a national survey to generate comparisons. The college is encouraged to seek out instruments that will allow them to compare their results to national results.
4I1	S	Evidence is presented of improvements to human resource policies and practices resulting from intentional improvements made to existing HR processes.
4I1	O	The College should be complimented for the vast number of changes it has made in regard to the category of Valuing People. As an ongoing opportunity, HCC would benefit from improved documentation of the processes used to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve human resource practices.

AQIP CATEGORY 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

Leading And Communicating addresses how your institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction setting, future opportunity seeking, decision making, use of data, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV5   A critical committee on campus is the Policy Review Committee, and that group is involved with the ongoing process of both reviewing and updating College policy and considering new policy items. This group presents their recommendations to the Board through the College President.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 5, Leading and Communicating.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
5P1a	S	The College's mission is reviewed and reaffirmed periodically by the Board of Trustees. Its Core Values statement was developed in a collaborative process that included input from faculty and staff. The last review of the mission was conducted as part of the 2010 Strategic Planning Committee's work.
5P1b	O	Providing evidence of input from and communication with students and external stakeholders in its leadership processes will improve the College's ability to demonstrate leadership in addressing the needs and values of students and the communities it serves.
5P2	OO	The planning process identified and the table provided seem to address primarily the meeting of appropriate deadlines rather than ensuring alignment of strategic objectives across departments. Evidence is not presented of processes the College uses to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve leadership and communication at the institution or within the community.
5P3	S	HCC values input from key stakeholder groups (faculty, staff, students, advisory committees, and other groups) and makes strategic decisions in alignment with the mission, vision, and values using a process designed to involve these college stakeholder groups. HCC has identified a strategic objective of developing a "think tank" which will serve the President as a district-wide advisory or long-range planning group. The group first met in the fall of 2010.

5P4   O   Although HCC states, "Through a variety of mechanisms (i.e. staff development, best practice research, etc.), the College leadership encourages all faculty and staff to propose improvements and innovations and to seek new opportunities," it is unclear through what process these mechanisms take direction or are influenced by college leadership. HCC might consider developing a step-by-step description of the mechanisms available which allow new ideas to come to fruition.

5P5   OO   Evidence is not presented of processes the College uses to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve leadership and establish management accountability within the College. Evidence is also not presented of benefits derived from the use of the College's advisory committee structure nor from other stakeholders. While the Carver Policy Governance Model is mentioned in this response, it is not detailed in any other area of the portfolio, nor are the Ends Statements Reports provided. HCC acknowledges they are in the process of revising the committee structure; further clarification is needed of how teams, task forces, groups, and/or committees are used to make decisions.

5P6   S   The college incorporates data, information, and performance results into the four-year comprehensive strategic planning process in accordance with the requirements of the ICCB and provides specific examples of how data was used to inform decision-making about certain academic programs. Information is available for goal setting at the departmental or institutional level. The most recent planning sessions produced the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

5P7   S   HCC leadership is aware that on-going efforts to enhance formal and informal communication methods are a priority. For example, the President and Vice President of Administrative Services have held focus sessions to keep staff updated on the current budget crisis. HCC is to be commended for continuing improvement efforts in communication and recognizing and responding to opportunities identified through the annual employee survey.

5P7-5P8	O	HCC describes very general processes to provide communication. Although the list of communication activities is significant, it does not document a systematic plan. HCC recognizes the need for further efforts from leadership to communicate a shared mission, vision, and values. While the college states that "a great deal of process work has been done to ensure we are communicating expectations regarding the culture of the College," further description of this process work would be helpful in evaluating progress since the 2006 Portfolio submission.
5P9	S	HCC responded to the opportunity indentified in the 2006 Portfolio. For example, the Employee Leadership Institute helps participants understand and benefit from the Servant-Leadership model.
5P10	O	HCC recognizes that no process currently exists for succession planning in both leadership positions and the faculty and states that the institution is in the early stages of creating a six-month contingency plan. Since no formal roadmap currently exists, it is not readily apparent to employees what advancement opportunities exist. Successful development and implementation of such a plan will be critical for the continued achievements of HCC.
5R1	S	HCC received an "S" in this area in the 2006 Portfolio and provides an extensive list of measures still collected and analyzed regularly. The College continues to improve development of metrics to assess leading and communicating.
5R2	O	The College presents survey data used to assess Leading and Communicating. However, comparative data from prior years is not presented to provide a context or basis for assessing performance improvement.
5I1a	S	HCC describes several improvements made in this category since the submission of the previous Portfolio and recognizes that further work is still to be done. The College has utilized the analysis of two independent data sources to determine a potential problem within the institution. To

that end, HCC has begun conducting focus groups to better understand some of its survey data regarding communications.

5I1b   OO   The improvements the College identifies are self-described as "suppositions" about the effectiveness of communications. This is an indication that HCC's processes for assessment and improvement of communications will benefit from development of a documented process to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve communications.

5I2   O   Evidence indicates that progress has been made by HCC in the area of Leading and Communicating since submitting its previous Systems Portfolio. Information related in the current Portfolio seems to portray the College as still having an institution at which leading and communication is predominately administratively driven. Although administrators are ultimately responsible for college decision making, HCC could seek more collaboration in decision making and in responsibility making.

AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

Supporting Institutional Operations addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV6   Highland divides its support services into Student Services, Learning Resources, and Administrative Services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
6P1a	S	In response to feedback provided in the 2006 Portfolio, HCC incorporated the use of a systematic and comprehensive (formal and informal) institutional survey plan for FY 2010-2012 to collect data on the needs of students, staff and other key stakeholders. A Community Leaders' survey was also created and implemented to provide feedback from outside constituents.
6P1b	O	HCC conducts annual surveys about students' experiences with its support areas. It has an opportunity to develop more formal processes to identify the support service needs of its other key stakeholder groups.
6P1c	S	The college gives its student trustee an advisory vote, which is not required by state statute. This indicates the college is committed to broad-based involvement in decision making and is respectful of student input.
6P2a	S	HCC engages in several formalized annual quality improvement reviews to identify the needs of faculty and staff. For example, the college has improved the supervisory skills of its employees by standardizing the implementation of policies and procedures. This contributes to a culture of involvement for all employee groups.
6P2b	O	HCC makes reference to a formalized timeline of departmental quality reviews and discusses the identification of administrative support service needs through the flow of communication between employees and supervisors. It has an opportunity to develop processes which can more directly solicit organizational support needs of its faculty, staff and administrators including evaluating process effectiveness.
6P3a	S	The College's Safety and Security Committee uses a process map to illustrate how key support processes contribute to campus safety. In

addition, HCC recently updated its All Hazards Emergency Procedures Plan which includes steps to design, maintain and communicate this plan.

6P3b	O	Evidence is not presented of processes the College uses to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve safety and security processes. Evidence is also not presented of the techniques used to communicate with and train employees and students on safety and security issues.
6R1	O	Although the College uses data from existing reports and surveys to asses organizational support services, evidence is not presented of processes the College uses to select, measure, track, assess, and use data to improve support services. Also, some of the measures relate to baseline outputs, not improvement outcomes.
6R1-6R2	S	HCC provides a list of measures related to student, administrative and organizational support services collected and analyzed regularly and then provides charts and graphs as evidence of the performance results. The college is to be commended for the implementation of the institutional survey plan that led to the ability to provide these results.
6R2-6R3	OO	The "N" is not identified for Figures 6.1-6.3, 6.5, and 6.6. This makes it difficult to evaluate the true effectiveness of services or processes as the data are not "normalized." As HCC continues to collect data related to support service processes, the development of trend analysis to support evaluation and improvement of services as needed is encouraged. Comparative data from prior years is not presented, making it difficult to provide a context or basis for assessing performance improvement, except in the financial aid arena.
6R3a	S	HCC uses a specific set of questions in the annual employee survey to gather performance results for administrative support service processes and provides two years of data for comparison.
6R3b	OO	Figure 6.9 includes a note that indicates that the differences in percentage agreement among the employee groups were most likely due to wording changes made to the items. However, that does not address

the significant variances in percentages in the two items where wording was not changed, nor did the institution discuss potential reasons for the wide variation in responses between the various employee classifications.

6R5a   S   In response to prior portfolio feedback, HCC has recently developed a three-year survey implementation cycle that provides for the administration of ten different surveys to students, staff, and faculty. The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is one of the standardized tools that has been selected to gain understanding of HCC's performance results as compared to those of peer institutions.

6R5b   O   HCC acknowledges that no current performance results are available for this question and recognizes the need to choose and implement a national standardized instrument for benchmarking to other institutions.

6I1   S   Two specific recent improvements are discussed in detail—the development and implementation of a payment plan solution and the implementation of a Common Intake System. Both projects involved multiple stakeholder groups and followed a continuous improvement model of Plan, Do, Check, Act. Over the long term this practice should continue to increase revenues, as well as decrease receivables.

AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Measuring Effectiveness examines how your institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data – at the institutional and departmental/unit levels; institutional measures of effectiveness; information and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV7   Accreditation and mandated federal and state requirements largely determine data collection, analysis, and reporting objectives.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
7P1	S	HCC has implemented numerous improvements and changes in the areas of data selection, management, and distribution as a result of feedback received in the 2006 Portfolio. The creation of an Office of Institutional Research and efforts to implement institutional and department level scorecards will further ensure HCC's success in improved data distribution. As well, HCC has provided relevant training in selecting appropriate and meaningful data and performance indicators. A Managing Data and Projects workshop was included in the Supervisory Development Series training coordinated by the Human Resources Department.
7P2a	S	Since the submission of the 2006 Portfolio, the College has enhanced its ability to measure effectiveness in order to improve control over processes and adherence to timelines at the institutional level. HCC formed a Strategic Planning Council that included several community members to develop the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This Council conducted a SWOT analysis, developed, gathered and considered regional demographic data, and reviewed existing data and documentation related to institutional performance. In addition, HCC is increasing the use of its ERP system to measure effectiveness, create reports, and disseminate information to stakeholders. Furthermore, the institution has identified its own need for a centralized repository for data and a more streamlined communication process. Reviewing processes used at other institutions might be helpful in creating this streamlined process.

7P2b	O	Data and performance information to support HCC's planning and improvement efforts are selected as part of the strategic planning process, are managed through various guidelines and template forms, and are distributed through a number of non-standardized methods. The College notes that it can improve the standardization of its data management and distribution processes; for example, HCC acknowledges that available information and planning tools are not used consistently throughout the College. This can lead to uneven data collection and analysis.
7P3a	OO	HCC acknowledges that this response is driven by information obtained at the department and unit levels that have implemented continuous quality improvement. As such, a comprehensive, step-by-step process does not currently exist to determine data collection, storage, and accessibility needs from all areas of the institution. Ensuring that all areas have a mission, short- and long-term goals, and a plan for data collection will allow HCC to develop a comprehensive process. Institutions participating in AQIP should be participating in AQIP institution wide; there should be overarching continuous quality improvement efforts which guide every unit of the College regardless of that particular unit's developmental maturity within the organizational framework.
7P5a	S	The ICCB requirements for standardized data are the main source of comparative data. Internally, the College has begun to utilize normed national surveys as a source of comparative information within higher education but not outside of the industry. HCC is increasing the utilization of survey and IPEDS data in its use of comparative analysis. HCC should, if possible, continue its evaluation of the NCCBP project and consider joining. Data gained through participation in this project is highly valuable.
7P6	O	Although HCC has begun providing training sessions focused on the collection and analysis of data at the department and unit levels, no intentional process currently exists to ensure that analysis at these levels aligns with the organizational goals.

7P7	S	The Information Technology Department is primarily responsible for the timeliness, accuracy, reliability and security of the information systems. It uses multiple tools and techniques to accomplish its responsibilities. Having a centralized department in charge of these processes is key to accountability.
7R1-7R3	OO	HCC lists measures that are collected for IT, but no charts or graphs illustrating the evidence collected (i.e. helpdesk statistics, student usage trends) are presented in 7R2 or in any other Category 7 response. The Balanced Scorecard is presented in 7R3 but appears to indicate the status of the overall institution rather than results related to information and knowledge management. As part of an Illinois community college peer group, HCC might look to those institutions for examples of comparison instruments for processes related to measuring effectiveness. In addition, the College presents insufficient evidence of the criteria and techniques used to select and measure data for performance assessment.
7I2b	S	HCC demonstrates how its culture and infrastructure have begun to help select process improvements by the "Measuring Effectiveness Campaign" and "Defining Key Processes and Performance Indicators." These initiatives were identified in HCC's second Strategy Forum and as an AQIP Action Project, respectively.

AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement

Planning Continuous Improvement examines your institution's planning processes and how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to institutional vision; planning; strategies and action plans; coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; measures; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV8a The key challenge facing the College is how to use its strategic planning process to develop both reactive and proactive plans to respond to enrollment variations from semester to semester.

OV8b The College has experienced a tremendous level of community commitment throughout its nearly 50-year history. An example of this interaction is the recent development of the Wind Technology and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs. Both programs resulted from community initiatives and needs. The EMS program was an outgrowth of communication and support provided by local fire and ambulance services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement*.*

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
8P1	S	HCC has responded to feedback from the 2006 Portfolio related to a lack of information about strategic planning and annual goal-setting processes by including bullet points related to the strategic planning process and annual goal-setting process. HCC indicates that it revisits the strategic planning document on a regular basis as it sets annual goals.
8P2	O	The College's long-term strategies are set by the Strategic Planning Council, but no description is provided of how short-term strategies are selected.
8P3-8P4,8P6	O	HCC has improved the description of the annual resource planning and budgeting process. However, the process used by the College to measure, track, assess, and use data to improve planning processes is not described. The absence of such information makes it difficult to demonstrate the College's use of a data-driven, continuous improvement techniques in planning processes.

8P3	S	HCC states that one tool adopted in the institutional planning process is a Charter Document that helps identify and select key steps, team members and targets for College processes. HCC has provided training for all College employees to use the Charter Document.
8P5	S	The College notes that its major processes for defining objectives, selecting measures and setting its performance targets include Community Strategic Planning, Campus Surveys, and Key Informant Feedback.
8P8	S	HCC states that through the addition of the College's Employee Leadership Institute and Supervisory Development Series, the College is better able to address emerging needs and skill development that is relevant to the institution's priorities.
8R1	O	The College is developing and utilizing various tools to measure and assess performance, and it provides a partial list of ways that these tools are used to measure internal and external relationships. However, evidence is not presented of the effectiveness of its measuring instruments or how information is used to continuously improve performance.
8R4	OO	While the College compares its strategic planning processes with other outside organizations, it provides no comparative results for Planning Continuous Improvement.
8R5	O	Although HCC describes many planning activities, the college provides minimal evidence of the effectiveness of its performance in Planning Continuous Improvement or of measuring and evaluating its planning processes and activities.
8I1	O	Although it provides process information in 8P1 - 8P5, HCC has not presented sufficient evidence in the results and improvements area to show that it is adopting more systematic processes which rely on data for driving decision-making.

8I2	OO	As in other categories, HCC does not define its culture nor provides any evidence of how its culture and infrastructure help it to select processes for improvement and set targets. HCC must also strive to remove barriers to success in this area. For example, HCC has identified one barrier to improvements as the need for additional support from the Information Technology and Institutional Research departments. The College will need to monitor the staffing adequacy of these departments as the continuous improvement efforts continue.

AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Building Collaborative Relationships examines your institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Highland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV8b The College has experienced a tremendous level of community commitment throughout its nearly 50-year history. An example of this interaction is the recent development of the Wind Technology and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs. Both programs resulted from community initiatives and needs. The EMS program was an outgrowth of communication and support provided by local fire and ambulance services.

OV9   The College documents a broad range of productive and high level partnerships and collaborative relationships to reinforce its mission. This includes location of a YMCA on campus.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Highland Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
9P1	S	HCC has built upon a previously identified strength by amplifying its efforts around outreach to local high schools with newsletters that inform individuals about College services, important deadlines, and new processes.
9P2	O	Although HCC provides a list of collaborative partnerships and describes their purposes, there is not enough information on how the institution prioritizes and builds on these relationships once they are created.
9P3	O	HCC builds relationships with local organizations that provide service(s) to students on a formal and ad hoc basis. However, the methods described for creating and prioritizing relationships with the organizations that provide services to HCC students are not systemized, and no mention is made of intentional and ongoing systems for conducting needs assessments or evaluating the efficacy of such relationships.
9P4	O	HCC uses a "bid process" to procure the materials and services it needs to support student learning. However, it does not describe a system for creating, prioritizing and building relationships with these organizations or conducting needs assessments or evaluating the efficacy of such relationships.
9P6	O	The response to this item illustrates an example of a process utilized to evaluate a partner relationship. However, HCC can benefit from establishing and implementing more comprehensive evaluation and feedback processes at the institutional level to ensure partnerships are meeting their needs.
9P7	O	HCC lists a variety of internal communication methods. The Portfolio does not indicate how relationships are built among and across units and how

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the College assures integration and communication across many of its internal relationships.

9R1   O   Although HCC has some data to support the measures of student success, transfer success and relationships with other schools, there is little information provided for other external stakeholders. The College would benefit from more comprehensive data gathering and analysis of external relationships.

9R2   O   Focusing on the results achieved in high school recruitment, dual enrollment, and transfer graduation only tells part of the story of the collaborative relationships that HCC outlines in 9P3. By measuring its performance in other areas of relationship-building, the college could enhance its ability to develop the flexibility to respond quickly to opportunities that could improve collaborative relationships in order to remain competitive.

9I1   O   HCC provides examples of improvements in building collaborative relationships in its Business and Technology Division. No evidence is presented that its processes or performance results are systematic or comprehensive.

9I2   OO   While HCC's selection as a county-wide emergency disaster response site is commendable, there is no description of how the College uses its culture and infrastructure to improve and to set targets for improved performance results.