

**Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

Highland Community College

February 6, 2015

for

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A commission of the North Central Association

## Contents

Elements of the Feedback Report .....  
Reflective Introduction and Executive Summary .....  
Strategic Challenges.....  
AQIP Category Feedback .....  
    *Helping Students Learn* .....  
    *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* .....  
    *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs* .....  
    *Valuing People* .....  
    *Leading and Communicating* .....  
    *Supporting Institutional Operations* .....  
    *Measuring Effectiveness* .....  
    *Planning Continuous Improvement* .....  
    *Building Collaborative Relationships* .....  
Accreditation Issues .....  
Quality of Systems Portfolio .....  
Using the Feedback Report .....

## Elements Of Highland Community College's Feedback Report

Welcome to the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. This report provides AQIP's official response to an institution's *Systems Portfolio* by a team of peer reviewers (the Systems Appraisal Team). After the team independently reviews the institution's portfolio, it reaches consensus on essential elements of the institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by AQIP Category, and any significant issues related to accreditation. These are then presented in three sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*: "Strategic Challenges Analysis," "AQIP Category Feedback," and "Accreditation Issues Analysis." These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating institutional performance, surfacing critical issues or accreditation concerns, and assessing institutional performance. Ahead of these three areas, the team provides a "Reflective Introduction" followed closely by an "Executive Summary." The appraisal concludes with commentary on the overall quality of the report and advice on using the report. Each of these areas is overviewed below.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team has only the institution's *Systems Portfolio* to guide its analysis of the institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, the team's report may omit important strengths, particularly if discussion or documentation of these areas in the *Systems Portfolio* were presented minimally. Similarly, the team may point out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving widespread institutional attention. Indeed, it is possible that some areas recommended for potential improvement have since become strengths rather than opportunities through the institution's ongoing efforts. Recall that the overarching goal of the Systems Appraisal Team is to provide an institution with the best possible advice for ongoing improvement.

The various sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* can be described as follows:

**Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary:** In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: 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 each AQIP

Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

**Strategic Challenges Analysis:** Strategic challenges are those most closely related to an institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Teams formulate judgments related to strategic challenges and accreditation issues (discussed below) through careful analysis of the Organizational Overview included in the institution's Systems Portfolio and through the team's own feedback provided for each AQIP Category. These collected findings offer a framework for future improvement of processes and systems.

**AQIP Category Feedback:** The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* addresses each AQIP Category by identifying and coding 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. Through comments, which are keyed to the institution's Systems Portfolio, the team offers brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by AQIP Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is often considered the heart of the *Feedback Report*.

**Accreditation Issues Analysis:** Accreditation issues are areas where an institution may have not yet provided sufficient evidence that it meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. It is also possible that the evidence provided suggests to the team that the institution may have difficulties, whether at present or in the future, in satisfying the *Criteria*. As with strategic challenges, teams formulate judgments related to accreditation issues through close analysis of the entire Systems Portfolio, with particular attention given to the evidence that the institution provides for satisfying the various core components of the *Criteria*. For purposes of consistency, AQIP instructs appraisal teams to identify any accreditation issue as a strategic challenge as well.

**Quality of Report & Its Use:** As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the institution by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state, as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative

that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

## **Reflective Introduction and Executive Summary For Highland Community College**

The following consensus statement is from the System Appraisal Team's review of the institution's *Systems Portfolio Overview* and its introductions to the nine AQIP Categories. The purpose of this reflective introduction is to highlight the team's broad understanding of the institution, its mission, and the constituents that it serves.

The College is cognizant of the Quality Improvement Journey and has been conscientious about addressing opportunities for improvement since the last Appraisal Team's feedback in 2010, HCC's third AQIP Systems Portfolio. They have made changes in the use of data as they appear to be making more informed decisions based on survey results internally as well as comparison results from like institutions. It is evident they have made efforts to change decision making processes and some quality improvement efforts.

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 has made progress since the last portfolio review. The previously identified strengths in the area of Helping Students Learn, combined with focused improvement efforts in academic processes and direct assessment, have positioned Highland Community College for continued maturity in AQIP.

However, as an institution that has written its third Systems Portfolio, it is not evident that HCC is fully aligned and has developed the comprehensive processes needed to yield results. It was not apparent that in the area of reporting results that HCC's processes are mature as some results are benchmarked and comprehensive while in other areas, no results at all are presented. HCC has not clearly demonstrated that it has developed a culture of assessment of student learning; the College has an immediate opportunity to develop comprehensive assessment processes with accountability for results shared across

all areas of the campus.

HCC has defined a process for managing and determining its other distinctive objectives. The process map gives guidance to faculty and staff decision makers and the process itself is flexible and responsive enough to allow for realignment and re-focus. Within the information provided, it appears that both community and student needs are being met by the College. However, opportunity exists to better align objectives with strategic planning and to integrate the relationships formed with the overall mission and objectives of the College. In addition, in the areas where results are described, there is not alignment with goals

HCC employs a variety of methods to collect data that helps it to understand the needs of both its students and other stakeholders and it is apparent that the College has made a number of improvements since its last Systems Portfolio. HCC has a mix of data that will potentially allow it to employ appropriate benchmarks that in turn could be used to institute change through data driven decision-making for planning purposes. However, it is unclear how the data informs decisions across all initiatives for stakeholders. There is opportunity to be more comprehensive in strategic planning, benchmarking, data collection and analysis, and planning and using data and results to make meaningful decisions.

HCC has strong processes established to help employees feel valued and listened to. The processes include checks and balances so that there is alignment with employee credentials, job descriptions, and goals with the overall strategic direction of the College. HCC has also put into place a number of measures of Valuing People and begun to use the results of these measures. HCC is to be commended for the numerous changes they made as a result of feedback. The institution has an opportunity to use all of its measures for benchmarking, goal-setting, and strategic planning.

HCC has made improvements to Leading and Communicating with stakeholder groups. Specifically, changes to the President's Council and College Council, as well as enhancements to various methods of communicating with various stakeholders, show a focus on responding to previous opportunities. However, the College appears to be reactive and not comprehensive in its planning. Opportunity lends itself to a more detailed review, benchmarking, and analysis of data and how the data can strengthen planning and alignment between the overall Strategic Plan, RAMP, and goals of academic and student

affairs divisions. It is evident HCC has made great strides since the last review and is committed to the AQIP quality journey.

HCC identifies instructional support needs by analyzing the results from a variety of measures. HCC lists units and metrics it uses to gauge progress, yet results were not provided for all measurements in this category. HCC has an opportunity to develop and present, in greater detail, the processes in place for the institution. If HCC creates systematic and comprehensive processes for prioritizing, planning, and implementing improvements relative to *Supporting Institutional Operations* overall, the College could respond more effectively to the opportunities it has identified and will be able to identify additional opportunities for improvement. Specific process integrations of information culminating in recommendations and action and quality improvement may be beneficial to move the institution to a more mature assessment level for this category and institutional support processes.

HCC has, over recent years, started to implement data collection processes and systems for measuring progress toward institutional goals and overall effectiveness. An opportunity exists to provide more rationale as to how certain data are chosen for collection and to provide more clarity around the use of these data in connection with goal setting and decision-making. One path that might be fruitful would be for the institution to identify and select strategic key performance indicators, for which data could be collected and shared at regular intervals with key stakeholders so that progress is transparent.

HCC has some planning processes in place such as the college-wide Strategic Plan and linkages to unit or department plans. Additionally, the RAMP provides direction on resource allocation and budgeting throughout the planning cycle. However, there was limited evidence of peer comparisons of strategies and objectives that inform planning continuous improvement. Opportunity exists to develop more benchmarks, set measurable targets, and analyze results to inform planning processes and goal setting

HCC has developed a number of strong partnerships and has processes in place to do so. However, there are opportunities to build processes that measure collaborative relationships more consistently and comprehensively. Benchmarks, targets, and comparative data can be tied to the college-wide Strategic Plan, unit and department plans, and action plans. This will inform HCC on goal setting and help build continual alignment with the College's mission, vision, and values. HCC is to be commended for some improvements made

specifically in developing relationships with area school districts and dual enrollment programming.

**Note: Strategic challenges and accreditation issues are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.**

### **Strategic Challenges for Highland Community College**

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the Systems Appraisal Team attempted to identify the broader issues that would seem to present the greatest challenges and opportunities for the institution in the coming years. These areas are ones that the institution should address as it seeks to become the institution it wants to be. From these the institution may discover its immediate priorities, as well as strategies for long-term performance improvement. These items may also serve as the basis for future activities and projects that satisfy other AQIP requirements. The team also considered whether any of these challenges put the institution at risk of not meeting the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. That portion of the team's work is presented later in this report.

Knowing that **Highland Community College** will discuss these strategic challenges, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified the following:

HCC has begun to collect data; however, there is little evidence that the College routinely reviews, analyzes, communicates results, and develops plans for improvements based on these results. HCC has an opportunity to connect the analysis of performance results with the planning processes and the implementation of process improvements. In addition, several of the processes described are informal and ad hoc with a concurrent lack of results and benchmarking against other institutions or against best practices. Additionally, developing a culture of systematic data collection and analysis processes is encouraged. Communication of these data processes, results, benchmarks, and best practices across the college will help HCC become a data informed, AQIP mature institution.

HCC has developed a college-wide Strategic Plan and department/unit plans; however, it is not evident that plans are aligned and informed by data. Opportunities exist to align

planning to provide more assurance of adequate finances exist to utilize survey results to more clearly benchmark and set targets that inform the college-wide Strategic Plan. It was also not evident that HCC used data to inform planning processes and improvements; while some results were analyzed, there was little comparative data evident as well as comprehensive analysis to inform planning and goal setting. This more systematic analysis of data will inform decision-making, planning, and goal setting leading to more alignment and AQIP institutional maturity.

The College will complete the last year included in its most recent Strategic Plan in 2015. Although the Strategic Plan clearly identified three goals, along with specific planned outcomes and long and short-term strategies for reaching them, the portfolio does not demonstrate how this plan has guided the College in selecting processes and measures, analyzing and interpreting data, or making choices about areas for improvement. As the College nears the end of this Strategic Planning cycle, coinciding with the completion of an AQIP Review cycle, the College has an opportunity to more explicitly tie the Strategic Planning process and its implementation to AQIP processes

### **AQIP Category Feedback**

In the following section, the Systems Appraisal Team delineates institutional strengths along with opportunities for improvement within the nine AQIP Categories. As explained above, the symbols used in this section are **SS** for outstanding strength, **S** for strength, **O** for opportunity for improvement, and **OO** for outstanding opportunity for improvement. The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the team members and deserves the institution's 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.** This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education institutions and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 1.

HCC has made progress since the last portfolio review. The previously identified strengths in the area of Helping Students Learn, combined with focused improvement efforts in academic processes and direct assessment, have positioned Highland Community College for continued maturity in AQIP.

However, as an institution that has written its third Systems Portfolio, it is not evident that HCC is fully aligned and has developed the comprehensive processes needed to yield results. It was not apparent that in the area of reporting results that HCC's processes are mature as some results are benchmarked and comprehensive while in other areas, no results at all are presented. HCC has not clearly demonstrated that it has developed a culture of assessment of student learning; the institution has an immediate opportunity to develop comprehensive assessment processes with accountability for results shared across all areas of the campus.

**1P1, S.** Highland Community College (HCC) has developed a collaborative and systematic program for assessing student-learning outcomes. A General Assessment Committee, composed of faculty and academic administrators, determines the learning outcomes and is in the process of assessing the five key outcomes, beginning with written communication skills and moving on to oral communication skills. This committee has developed a rubric and an assessment plan is ongoing in 2015.

**1P2, S.** HCC has established a clear process for identifying program outcomes with key constituent groups involved in determining specific program learning outcomes. In addition, the use of outside agencies such as the Illinois Articulation Program and industry advisory committees are examples of developing program learning objectives based on transferability and industry need. One benefit of HCC's processes is the institution's ability to use its assessment results for longitudinal benchmarking, both internally and with peer institutions.

**1P3, S.** HCC has a well document process to guide new course development and new program development. This process is documented in the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Program Approval Manual. This process uses industry partner input, market research, business surveys and relevant site visits to better inform program and

curriculum design. This works to ensure that new program outcomes are in alignment with employer needs.

**1P4, S.** HCC engages various constituent groups in on-site high school visits, career fairs, academic program showcases, and focus groups in an effort to balance learning objectives, student needs, and employer needs. Additionally, HCC works closely with professional organizations to gain deeper understanding of employment needs. It is evident HCC has made improvements in this process compared to the last review.

**1P5, S.** HCC has developed an established placement process for reading, writing, and math using nationally normed instruments. The use of ICCB guidelines and required practices by licensure and degree requirements also inform HCC in preparation for student learning and specific outcomes. HCC also demonstrates the existence of pathways for all students, including those who might require remediation.

**1P6, S.** HCC has demonstrated that their admissions and student advising processes are clear, well defined, and well communicated to current and prospective students. A strength of these various activities is the clear requirement for first time, degree seeking students to meet with an academic advisor prior to enrollment. Student services personnel are further engaged in communicating with students through orientation, career exploration events, and program information sessions.

**1P7, S.** HCC offers a number of supporting services to help students identify programs and majors that fit their desires and interests. Career Cruising is a singular activity in this effort that is available not only to college students but to high school students even before they graduate. Once students are enrolled at HCC, in addition to meeting with academic advisors regularly to review plans and interests, students participate in surveys to update major and contact information and campus events like Major Madness and Major Pursuit help inform students about options for study.

**1P8, S.** HCC acknowledges the fact that they serve a large population of underprepared students. Therefore, after identifying the level of preparation of students, the college offers a number of support services to students needing additional assistance. Examples include enhanced services in the Success Center with tutoring services, a math lab environment in which students may work at their own pace through transitional math courses, the Fast Forward program, and the First-Year Experience Seminar.

**1P9, S.** HCC provides significant support for faculty members to aid them in teaching to

students' various learning styles. These include technology equipped classrooms, a MOODLE course management system, and an Academic Technology Resources Team. In addition, the First-Year Experience Seminar includes the opportunity for students to take different learning inventories which help them better understand their own learning styles.

**1P10, SS.** HCC has developed several initiatives to aid special needs of student subgroups including visits to local high schools by the ADA Coordinator. The recent development of a community advisory committee to better understand and prepare for students with disabilities as well as an internal ADA committee signifies a comprehensive, mature approach to serving the population. Efforts to develop universally designed courses are notable as is the new initiative to improve transportation options through work with the City of Freeport. Awareness to better serve nontraditional students through the development of a task force and new action project to strategize on expanding Community Education is commendable. It is apparent HCC is using survey results and data to inform decisions. HCC is currently examining the transportation concerns/needs of students. Through these activities, the College is clearly demonstrating that it understands that student needs extend beyond the classroom or online environment.

**1P11, S.** From the initial hiring process to professional development workshops to faculty-run professional development opportunities, HCC defines, documents, and communicates effective teaching and learning expectations. The mentorship-based program for new faculty and the peer class review process are notable processes to aid faculty in successful teaching. HCC appears to be comprehensive in its approach to supporting effective teaching with regular in-service days to support these efforts.

**1P12, S.** HCC demonstrates its commitment to providing curriculum that meets the needs of the population it serves by the continued review of the course design, delivery, and review systems. This has been an area of both strength and focus. The commitment to the standards utilized by the State of Illinois system of higher education and the use of the MOODLE course management system demonstrates the commitment to technology and to preparation for the future. Additionally, the team of campus subject matter experts that keeps abreast of emerging technologies is evidence of thoughtful planning to inform processes and change.

**1P13, O.** HCC has an established program review process that both adheres to ICCB

requirements and that has used comparative data to effect change in programs that require professional certification examinations (with licensure pass rates informing them of program effectiveness). However, it is unclear how the effectiveness of transfer programs or those not requiring a licensure exam are determined and they do not demonstrate how similar data is utilized to effect change among all programs.

**1P14, S.** HCC has a well-defined and comprehensive process to review and/or delete programs and courses. Where previously the institution had demonstrated strength in its processes for determining and implementing revisions to course materials, they have also now added processes aimed at executing in a systematic way when courses need to be entirely removed. The oversight of the Dean and Curriculum and Instruction Committee provide accountability in the process.

**1P15, O.** HCC describes several learning support mechanisms for students. However, the information provided does not clearly describe how the College actively determines the support needs for students. Individual faculty may refer students for support and students may self-select themselves for support in the tutoring center, yet it is unclear how the college actively evaluates changing student needs. These resources are currently under utilized by HCC.

**1P16, SS.** HCC has responded to a previously identified opportunity to create more intentional linkages between curricular and co-curricular learning. Currently, HCC utilizes faculty to advise clubs and organizations and has developed a process for identifying the ways co-curricular activities such as student organization align with academic programs' goals. Evidence indicates there are strong parallels with several program objectives met in various individual clubs and organizations.

**1P17, O.** HCC has an opportunity to better describe how it determines that students who are awarded degrees have achieved learning and development expectations. HCC indicates that it conducts a degree audit to determine if the students have met the specific course requirements for graduation. Yet it is unclear what is used to determine that these students have actually achieved key learning and development outcomes.

**1P18, OO.** HCC in 2012 identified an Action Project that is focused on general education, with the assessment process and applicable rubrics to be used to gather data that will drive change in the future. This is a beginning, however, the college falls short of describing how assessment of student learning occurs at the course, program, and institutional levels.

**1R1, OO.** HCC has identified several measures they use to capture varied students' learning and development. The tools used identify successful transfer, career programming, transitional programming, adult education, and general education. It is unclear why only students in select occupational programs are measured for completion of program. In addition, HCC falls short of describing measures of student learning at course, program, and institutional levels which could be used to evaluate the level of student learning.

**1R2, OO.** HCC offers data from evaluation of written communication but fails to present any information related to student learning in general education courses, program specific courses, or other technical programs. It appears that the college has focused almost exclusively on the issue of written communication without documenting student learning in other academic areas. It is not clear how or why these particular measures were chosen nor how the results of this assessment will be used to inform curriculum development.

**1R3, OO.** HCC fails to present any definitive data documenting student performance results for specific programs or areas of study. The College presents only information related to a narrow group of medical studies. HCC has an opportunity to report specific outcomes for external licensure, specific program objectives, and other identified learning outcomes. HCC does not show how data gathered for other programs is being utilized.

**1R4, O.** HCC uses pass rates on licensing exams, data on transfer success provided by state universities, employer feedback, and alumni surveys to evaluate whether or not students have acquired the necessary knowledge valued by employers and other key stakeholders. It is not clear, though, how this data is collected and utilized campus-wide.

**1R5, O.** HCC presents evidence that Success Center tutoring clients are highly likely to earn a "C" or better in the related course; however, it is unclear that this is a systematic process campus wide.

**1R6, O.** HCC is utilizing benchmarked data to better evaluate student outcomes. In the case of the data reported, students are graduating at a higher rate in six years than comparable benchmark institutions. However, there is opportunity to provide comparison results and benchmarking related to occupational and adult education programs. In addition, it is unclear how the results are being used to effect change and with the development of a Student Services Strategic Plan and how this will impact the campus

as a whole.

**111, O.** HCC describes key changes in the management of transitional course systems. In addition, the college has made substantive changes in the offering of nursing curriculum in an online environment. However, the changes are not comprehensive across all programs.

**112, O.** Although HCC indicates that results of the PACE survey indicate a “healthy campus climate” it is worth noting that these data are from a single survey conducted in 2011. In addition, HCC has developed a Student Services Strategic Plan. However, HCC has an opportunity to document plans for continued improvement, additional data supporting the contention that the institution is “student centered,” and what plans are being made for improving outcomes in student learning

**AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.** This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution’s major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the institution’s character, it examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 2.

HCC has defined a process for managing and determining its other distinctive objectives. The process map gives guidance to faculty and staff decision makers and the process itself is flexible and responsive enough to allow for realignment and re-focus. Within the information provided, it appears that both community and student needs are being met by the College. However, opportunity exists to better align objectives with strategic planning and to integrate the relationships formed with the overall mission and objectives of the College. In addition, in the areas where results are described, there is not alignment with goals

**2P1, S.** HCC has articulated a process to identify its other distinct objectives and prioritizes those objectives assigning them to appropriate staff for approval or denial. HCC uses this process to help distinguish itself from similar institutions.

**2P2, S.** HCC clearly identifies its process to identify distinct objectives related to

relationships with secondary, post-secondary and community organizations. HCC uses this process to cultivate relationships with key stakeholders in its region in order to promote community service and lifelong learning.

**2P3, O.** HCC's process map for other distinct objectives is described in further detail with four examples. From these examples it is clear that HCC has designed specific communication processes that support its attainment of the other distinct objectives cited. However, beyond the four examples it is unclear how the communication process is facilitated across all aspects of the college.

**2P4, S.** HCC has a comprehensive process designed to assess and review objectives from the origination of the concept to full implementation with appropriate staff involved at each step.

**2P5, O.** HCC provides opportunities for relevant staff to participate in the feasibility of each idea, determining needs along the way to a final outcome. However, beyond the four examples, it is unclear how faculty and staff needs are determined across all aspects of the College.

**2P6, O.** The process map articulates the involvement of faculty and staff in the feasibility and planning of each idea presented as well as the periodic review and adjustment of both the process and the possible outcomes. However, the opportunity exists to detail how resources are allocated and decisions are made. It appears the College has the data, but what is not clear is how HCC uses that data to implement changes.

**2R1, S.** The process map dictates the regular collection of a limited number of specific measures related to each unique idea presented.

**2R2, O.** HCC provides some minimal performance data for each aligned distinctive objective. The institution has identified various benchmarks; however, the data noted is brief and an opportunity exists to strengthen and further develop this data set, resulting in an analysis that will aid in the decision making process.

**2R3, O.** HCC provides no comparative data of other organizations; as a result, there is an opportunity for HCC to provide a more comprehensive picture of how it uses its distinct objectives to address the institution's mission and objectives.

**2R4, O.** The relationships outlined by HCC clearly strengthen the college and make it a substantial organization in the community it serves; however, the opportunity exists,

through the use of both baseline and comparative data and results to tell a more complete story of HCC's successful relationship building efforts.

**2I1, O.** HCC has made improvements in the distinctive objectives category; however, the inclusion of the four examples does not necessarily provide substantial data and evidence that systematic and comprehensive processes are in place to address the entire institution.

**2I2, OO.** HCC has a well-designed and inclusive process to address relationships with the variety of organizations it aligns; however, as an institution that has completed its third systems portfolio, it is not clear that the distinctive objectives process is integrated into HCC's strategic planning process. The process itself has aspects of reacting to instead of anticipating needs. It is not clear how culture, infrastructure and resources are impacted and how the organization as a whole is impacted by these partnerships.

**AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.** This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 3.

HCC employs a variety of methods to collect data that helps it to understand the needs of both its students and other stakeholders and it is apparent that the college has made a number of improvements since its last Systems Portfolio. HCC has a mix of data that will potentially allow it to employ appropriate benchmarks that in turn could be used to institute change through data driven decision-making for planning purposes. However, it is unclear how the data informs decisions across all initiatives for stakeholders. There is opportunity to be more comprehensive in strategic planning, benchmarking, data collection and analysis, and planning and using data and results to make meaningful decisions.

**3P1, S.** HCC has developed a 3-year comprehensive institutional survey plan designed to identify student and stakeholder needs. Using various surveys and data, as illustrated

in Table 3.1, HCC uses both formal and informal channels to communicate the results gathered to various stakeholder groups both on and off campus.

**3P2, S.** HCC utilizes a variety of techniques to build and maintain relationships with both future and current students. HCC identifies a number of methods including, the First Year Experience Course, the Fast Forward program, the B4U Test, Quickstart, as well as a variety of co-curricular activities. HCC has reached a positive level of maturity in the development and implementation of its processes related to this area.

**3P3, O.** HCC utilizes a variety of formal and informal coordinated efforts to engage other stakeholders as referenced in Table 3.2, including foundation events, NCCBP data, a Community Leaders Survey, PACE, and Lunch with the President. While these efforts provide a depth of data that has the potential to significantly inform strategic plans, the process for analyzing the data and setting goals is not identified

**3P4, S.** HCC identifies a number of initiatives designed to enhance its relationships with key stakeholders and includes a number of campus representative groups.

**3P5, S.** HCC uses a variety of methods to determine the exploration of new student markets. HCC has begun to collect additional community input through the use of a “Community Input” option on its web site.

**3P6, S.** HCC utilizes a technology-based system (Maxient) for collecting and analyzing serious student issues. This process has the capability to route the concern or issue to the responsible party in a timely manner and HCC has seen a steady increase in its use since its implementation.

**3R1, S.** HCC provides evidence of the collection of multiple sources of data to address student and stakeholder satisfaction. Besides the collection of formal data, HCC utilizes a number of informal networks and locally produced methods to collect and analyze this data.

**3R2, S.** HCC provides a variety of graphs and data to address student performance results; and these results show that students have a degree of satisfaction with their educational experience.

**3R3, O.** HCC provides results from two areas that demonstrate the building of relationships with students during their college experience. The SENSE data provides a picture of positive student engagement that the College attributes to a change in academic advisor scheduling. However, it is unclear how this process is utilized across

the College as a whole and provides an opportunity to demonstrate how the data might be used in other ways across multiple departments.

**3R4, O.** HCC collects internal and external stakeholder satisfaction data utilizing the Community Leaders and PACE surveys. This limited data show a positive result across a variety of representative groups and individuals in the college's service area and provides a way to inform future planning. However, an opportunity exists to develop both benchmark and student data to better inform these processes across the institution

**3R5, O.** HCC provides several specific examples of stakeholder performance results that demonstrate the ability to initiate new activities. However, it is not clear what occurred as a result of these new initiatives and what their impact is on the rest of the college. An opportunity exists to provide a more comprehensive analysis that may include more initiatives, benchmarking and links to the strategic plan.

**3R6, S.** HCC provides comparative results data that shows the college performing well in eight categories. In addition, HCC collects employer data on graduates in Nursing and Allied Health. The College recognizes it has the opportunity to use the data collected to effect improvements on a variety of levels throughout the institution.

**3I1, S.** HCC has improved its process to better understand its constituent's needs by adopting a number of comparative surveys along with the NCCBP. There is some indication that HCC is beginning to utilize the data and performance results within its strategic planning process.

**3I2, OO.** HCC has an opportunity to set clear targets for improvements in understanding student and stakeholder needs and it appears that HCC has made cultural changes to make improvements and set targets; however, some targets are unclear and the College seems to be more reactive than proactive.

**AQIP Category 4: Valuing People.** This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 4.

HCC has strong processes established to help employees feel valued and listened to. The processes include checks and balances so that there is alignment with employee credentials, job descriptions, and goals with the overall strategic direction of the College. HCC has also put into place a number of measures of Valuing People and begun to use the results of these measures. HCC is to be commended for the numerous changes they made as a result of feedback. The institution has an opportunity to use all of its measures for benchmarking, goal-setting, and strategic planning.

**4P1, S.** HCC demonstrates a robust process for identifying the credentials, skills, and values required for various faculty and staff positions. The use of the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) provides a means for identification of job responsibilities and qualifications and the Board policy for faculty credential identification appear to be processes that add value to hiring well-qualified personnel.

**4P2, S.** HCC identifies existing strategies and processes to ensure faculty and staff credentialing and uses the NCCBP to determine the quality of its faculty as compared to other comparable institutions.

**4P3, S.** The hiring process for Highland faculty and staff has been clearly communicated. Newly hired employees receive a robust onboarding, and several employee retention efforts are in place.

**4P4, S.** HCC uses a variety of methods to orient new faculty and staff, including use of the website prior to employment, and a new staff-mentoring program that extends the traditional orientation.

**4P5, S.** The annual Resource Allocation and Management Plan (RAMP) and the New Position Staffing Requisition Worksheet provide thorough planned guidance to managers interested in hiring new employees. Various avenues of communication are built into the analysis and decision making process.

**4P6, S.** HCC has developed a decision-making flowchart to help leaders understand the impact of proposed employee activities.

**4P7, S.** HCC has a strong state-supported ethics training program in place with mentoring, workshops, and other incentives in place to insure that faculty, staff, and administrators understand their ethical responsibilities.

**4P8, O.** HCC offers a variety of training opportunities aligned to the college's strategic initiative of increasing student retention. HCC has an opportunity to plan these efforts systematically, connecting training and development needs to strategic and annual planning while also addressing needs that arise over time.

**4P9, S.** Professional development funds as well as college sponsored in-services, workshops, and other professional development opportunities appear to add value to employee careers. Of particular note is the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners as a guide to provide training and development to this specific group of employees.

**4P10, S.** The HCC evaluation process is determined by board policy, individual goal setting, and department and college goals. Faculty and staff goal setting and performance appraisals are connected to AQIP initiatives and institutional goals.

**4P11, S.** The design and implementation of several new awards are aligned with AQIP principles and have been designed to highlight HCC's values and mission. HCC has developed new processes for custodial employees to be recognized signaling a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to employee recognition.

**4P12, S.** HCC uses a simple and straightforward process to determine key issues related to motivation of faculty and staff. Data from this process is then analyzed in a comparative method by appropriate staff.

**4P13, S.** HCC uses a variety of tools to evaluate employee satisfaction, including regularly administered surveys. In addition, the college links Maxient software use with a Behavioral Intervention Team, a security plan, and regular and open communications with internal and external stakeholders.

**4R1, S.** As table 4.1 indicates, HCC has several types of survey tools to measure employee satisfaction, from new hire feedback to exit interview feedback, signaling a comprehensive approach to understanding employees.

**4R2, S.** HCC has many excellent performance results for Valuing People. Some changes were made in response to feedback from the Six-Month New Hire Survey. The changes in the employment process and the addition of the Staff Mentoring Program appear to add value to HCC's employees.

**4R3, OO.** HCC administered the PACE survey in 2011 and does not have more recent results to present. It appears that the results for HCC are close to the national means.

However, HCC does not explain what these results mean or how the College is using them for improvements.

**4R4, OO.** As noted in 4P3, the PACE survey is used to effect changes, but it's unclear how many participants completed the survey. In addition, HCC does not explain how these results are used to make changes. HCC could extend their benchmarking practices to truly make comparisons and changes.

**4I1, O.** HCC reports improvements made in the way the College values people including an orientation for part-time faculty, the staff-mentoring program, and expansion of the wellness program; however, these improvements are in their preliminary stages and an opportunity for improvement still exists.

**4I2, S.** HCC demonstrates shared governance by employing a College Council that provides representation from faculty and staff, and in its numerous planning practices.

**AQIP Category 5: Leading and Communicating.** This category addresses how the institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide planning, decision-making, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction-setting, use of data, analysis of results, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 5.

HCC has made improvements to Leading and Communicating with stakeholder groups. Specifically, changes to the President's Council and College Council, as well as enhancements to various methods of communicating with various stakeholders show a focus on responding to previous opportunities. However, the College appears to be reactive and not comprehensive in its planning. Opportunity lends itself to a more detailed review, benchmarking, and analysis of data and how the data can strengthen planning and alignment between the overall Strategic Plan, RAMP, and goals of academic and student affairs divisions. It is evident HCC has made great strides since the last review and is committed to the AQIP quality journey.

**5P1, S.** HCC's mission and core values undergo annual review in a process that is highly collaborative.

**5P2, O.** HCC has made progress on this item since its last portfolio. The RAMP helps with alignment in the area of finance and operational planning. However, it is unclear what the process is to ensure alignment with academic affairs, student services, and enrollment management functions and goals.

**5P3, O.** While HCC indicates that AQIP Action Projects take into account needs and expectations of students it is unclear how students and internal stakeholders are involved. There is evidence indicating feedback from external stakeholders through the Lunches with the President; however, evidence like this example working across the college is needed.

**5P4, O.** While the systems are in place to insure that administrators are focused on student achievement and future opportunities, an opportunity exists for HCC to create a fully integrated system that is more focused and measurable. This might include personal development plans from all administrators that set measurable goals for enhancing student achievement, responding to emerging opportunities, and working to keep abreast of current and emerging trends. The plans might also include how the information learned will be shared within the larger HCC community. The lessons gleaned from the completion of these development plans can help drive further improvements.

**5P5, S.** HCC has significantly improved its inclusive decision making process from its last systems portfolio. The addition of the College Council broadens the decision making process and provides a forum of all representative employee groups in the planning and operations of the institution. In addition, advisory committees and periodic focus groups such as the agricultural forum and the manufacturing forum provide a broad base of community input

**5P6, S.** HCC's College Strategic Plan is evidence of data, information, and stakeholder feedback in setting direction and developing goals. The planning processes for Leading and Communicating seem to be comprehensive and thoughtful as the College is beginning to get feedback for the next strategic planning process.

**5P7, S.** HCC has several communication channels established that allow for employees to receive the information in different forms such as email, the web, social media, or face-to-face through assemblies and committees. The College acknowledges there is opportunity to gather more data on how effective the communication channels are; however, HCC appears to be systematic in its approach to communication.

**5P8, O.** HCC has an opportunity to articulate how they reinforce the characteristics of high performance organizations within the communication strategies described in their portfolio.

**5P9, S.** HCC provides numerous internal and external leadership development opportunities for faculty, staff, students, the community and other stakeholders; the institution has embraced a leadership model focused on servant leadership.

**5R1, S.** HCC utilizes data from the PACE survey, as well as several other tools, to make adjustments in its communication plan. Currently the PACE instrument rates the college as having a high consultative management style.

**5R2, O.** While some data for Leading and Communicating is provided, an opportunity exists for HCC to provide more context for this information by analyzing historical trends, benchmarks, and the alignment of the evaluation system with HCC goals.

**5R3, S.** HCC used the results of the PACE survey to make an organizational change that had a direct impact on the communication flow of its decision making process. However, HCC acknowledges that there is room for improvement when their results are benchmarked against comparable institutions; it is also unclear if the 60 climate study comparisons are a fair representation of two-year comparable institutions.

**5I1, S.** HCC has made improvements since its last AQIP review to processes and procedures for internal communications; specifically, the College's President's Council and College Council have been reorganized utilizing feedback from the PACE survey.

**5I2, O.** While HCC has made improvements, they appear to be somewhat reactive and not a strong component of the culture. There is opportunity to further analyze data and develop processes for planning that aligns across all divisions; in particular the academic affairs and student services division. Additionally, there may be an opportunity to involve students and other internal stakeholders more in planning processes as this was not evident.

**AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations.** This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 6.

HCC identifies instructional support needs by analyzing the results from a variety of measures. HCC lists units and metrics it uses to gauge progress, yet results were not provided for all measurements in this category. HCC has an opportunity to develop and present, in greater detail, the processes in place for the institution. If HCC creates systematic and comprehensive processes for prioritizing, planning and implementing improvements relative to *Supporting Institutional Operations* overall, the institution could respond more effectively to the opportunities it has identified and will be able to identify additional opportunities for improvement. Specific process integrations of information culminating in recommendations, action and quality improvement may be beneficial to move the institution to a more mature assessment level for this category and institutional support processes.

**6P1, S.** The support service needs of students and other key stakeholder groups are identified through processes involving standing committees and teams, organizational units, surveys, advisory boards, and ad hoc work groups charged with assessing stakeholder needs. HCC provides examples of various processes through which organizational units and groups identify support service needs for key stakeholders.

**6P2, S.** HCC has developed a variety of formal and informal methods for identifying the administrative support needs of faculty, staff, and administrators, including the PACE employee survey, IT needs assessments, and strategic plans developed with each major college unit.

**6P3, S.** HCC has physical safety and security protocols developed from a combination of internal and external inputs, such as students, faculty, staff and the Department of Public Safety; the institution's Emergency Response System has been tested for effectiveness.

**6P4, O.** While HCCs institutionalized feedback mechanisms identify the needs of multiple stakeholders, several of these data collection processes are still relatively informal; an opportunity exists to systematize these efforts and in so doing enable the institution to connect these efforts to formal planning processes.

**6P5, O.** HCC documents support processes through webpages, bulletins, handbooks, guides, and business process and procedure manual. However, HCC does not describe how these activities encourage knowledge sharing, innovation and empowerment to foster change.

**6R1, S.** There are numerous measures spanning across student, administrative, and institutional services. The instruments are unique to the service being measured and are administered regularly.

**6R2, O.** The results provided related to student support service do not clearly measure related processes. The PACE surveys are useful; however, an opportunity exists to measure not only existing services but also to collect feedback and measures allowing the institution to discern additional support service needs.

**6R3, OO.** HCC has an opportunity to identify tools to measure and analyze communication satisfaction efforts to improve communication on campus. How the data provided contributes to a comprehensive improvement plan is not clear. Evaluating whether targeted projects are having the desired results is an element of continuous quality improvement. HCC is encouraged to measure progress on such projects and to share results with employees and other key stakeholders.

**6R4, O.** HCC collects and communicates its performance results; however, an opportunity exists to articulate processes for the use of these data and details supporting the implementation of improvement efforts towards becoming a data-driven culture.

**6R5, O.** HCC provides comparison data from the National Community College Benchmark Project Report and IGEN but an opportunity exists to clearly demonstrate how these data are used to make decisions and to support continuous improvement at the institution.

**6I1, S.** HCC documents a number of improvements to its support services including emergency planning, enrollment, advising, testing services, and student engagement.

**6I2, OO.** Opportunities exist for HCC to clearly demonstrate how the culture and infrastructure assists in improving and setting targets for continuous improvement.

**AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.** This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 7.

HCC has, over recent years, started to implement data collection processes and systems for measuring progress toward institutional goals and overall effectiveness. An opportunity exists to provide more rationale as to how certain data are chosen for collection and to provide more clarity around the use of these data in connection with goal-setting and decision-making. One path that might be fruitful would be for the institution to identify and select strategic key performance indicators, for which data could be collected and shared at regular intervals with key stakeholders so that progress is transparent.

**7P1, O.** HCC is developing a systematic process of determining whether new data is required and evaluating whether existing data sources are sufficient to fulfill the emerging need. An opportunity exists for HCC to provide more information on how it goes about selecting and disseminating data.

**7P2, O.** An opportunity exists for HCC to provide more information on how it selects and disseminates data. The development of a comprehensive plan that includes data collection, communication, and analysis would be one to provide this information.

**7P3, O.** Although HCC has demonstrated that each department and unit has developed goals and a mission, an opportunity exists for the institution to further refine its processes for integrating a data collection and analysis system into the institutional planning process.

**7P4, O.** HCC uses multiple means of communicating data to various groups and for various purposes. However, it is unclear how this data is analyzed and communicated across campus.

**7P5, S.** HCC has systematic processes established relative to comparative data and information; the criterion for comparative data seems to be comprehensive. HCC is open to using new comparative data sources such as the NCCBP which shows an interest in using comparison data that is relevant, reliable, and valid.

**7P6, O.** HCC has planning processes in place that include a college-wide strategic plan and major unit plans that help align goals and data needs. However, it is unclear how HCC analyzes current results in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their long-range goals.

**7P7, S.** HCC assures the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of information systems and process through use of a centralized information technology system which provides standardized management tools with event and alert generation and notification for key personnel, daily analysis of critical systems logs, and environmental safeguards.

**7R1, S.** HCC has begun to use knowledge management tools, such as WebFOCUS.

**7R2, O.** HCC identifies the units responsible for evaluating various dimensions of the information management system. However, an opportunity exists to present information about how effective the information management system is (e.g., the evaluative judgments made), trends in effectiveness, or areas of relative strength and weakness.

**7R3, S.** HCC has an appropriate focus on benchmarking, as well as a set of instruments (for example, Educause) it utilizes for this purpose.

**7I1, S.** HCC has made a number of improvements in measuring effectiveness, including the use of the NCCBP for benchmarking, centralized information housing and retrieval, annual long and short range goals, introduction of environmental scanning, a long term survey plan, and an increase in the use of a analytics and data reporting tool.

**7I2, O.** There seems to be processes in place for measuring effectiveness and efforts to provide support to the campus community members with the addition of an IR person; however, target setting is unclear and does not appear to be fully integrated into the College culture.

**AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement.** This category examines the institution's planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping to achieve the institution's mission and vision. It examines coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 8.

HCC has some planning processes in place such as the college-wide Strategic Plan and linkages to unit or department plans. Additionally, the RAMP provides direction on resource allocation and budgeting throughout the planning cycle. There was limited evidence of peer comparisons of strategies and objectives that inform planning continuous improvement. Opportunity exists to develop more benchmarks, set measurable targets, and analyze results to inform planning processes and goal setting.

**8P1, S.** HCC has a five-year Strategic Plan that is related to the College's mission, vision, and goals. Long-range objectives, annual goal setting, and the budgeting process are linked and align with the college-wide Strategic Plan.

**8P2, O.** It appears that HCC aligns short- and long-term strategies with the college-wide Strategic Plan and progress is reviewed annually; however, there is an opportunity to describe specific processes used in greater detail.

**8P3, O.** HCC identified three Action Projects; however, it is not evident that action planning occurs within short- and long-term strategic planning. Opportunity exists to develop and align action plans to organizational strategies.

**8P4, O.** Major unit and department planning processes and organizational strategies are coordinated with the college-wide strategic planning process; however, it is unclear how action plans are coordinated as there is no evidence of alignment with planning and budgeting.

**8P5, O.** The college-wide Strategic Plan helps define objectives while Institutional Research helps units identify measures; however, it is not evident how targets are set. Opportunity exists to articulate quantifiable metrics and how Action Projects are integrated into planning processes.

**8P6, S.** The RAMP gives guidance to HCC leaders as they develop strategies and goals as the annual budget process is inclusive of all campus units. The Vice President of Administrative Services meets regularly with budget managers to monitor expenditures and balances.

**8P7, S.** HCC assesses and addresses risk in its annual planning processes by conducting a SWOT analysis on risks identified from community surveys, forums, focus groups, and a review of state and College reports. The risk management plan and the IT department's continual analysis of information systems further informs HCC of risk and provides information for planning.

**8P8, O.** HCC is addressing the needs for faculty and staff development through training sessions held on campus with training and development based on specific needs. However, it is not clear how these specific needs are identified and the training program determined.

**8R1, S.** HCC collected and analyzed measures of the effectiveness of planning processes and systems by conducting a mid-point review of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. The College has measures in place that include feedback from external stakeholders, college employees through the PACE survey, and the Community Leaders' Survey.

**8R2, O.** While some goals and completed objectives were noted, no quantitative or qualitative measures were identified along with results. An opportunity exists to develop specific measures with targets linked to strategies and action plans.

**8R3, O.** An opportunity exists for HCC to develop quantitative and qualitative measures with targets that are specific to timelines and benchmarks.

**8R4, O.** HCC presented the PACE survey results; however, other benchmarks were not presented. An opportunity exists to identify additional benchmarks and analyze the results to inform planning and goal setting.

**8R5, O.** HCC provided examples of results of the Strategic Plan review; however, the College did not identify the measurement and evaluation of its planning processes and activities. Likewise, effectiveness of such processes and activities was not evident.

**8I1, O.** Expansion of the IR department to provide more data to a wider audience is a direct improvement of the planning process as well as the expansion of access to more

individuals across the college. However, an opportunity exists to identify and articulate specific success measures.

**8I2, O.** HCC's consultative process for selecting and implementing AQIP Action Plans demonstrates the College's culture and supporting infrastructure for continuous improvement; however, an opportunity exists to become more systematic in the use of data, such as success measures, to inform decision-making, planning, and goal setting.

**AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships.** This category examines the institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution accomplishing its mission. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, and building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **Highland Community College** for Category 9.

HCC has developed a number of strong partnerships and has processes in place to do so. However, there are opportunities to build processes that measure collaborative relationships more consistently and comprehensively. Benchmarks, targets, and comparative data can be tied to the college-wide Strategic Plan, unit and department plans, and action plans. This will inform HCC on goal setting and help build continual alignment with the College's mission, vision, and values. HCC is to be commended for some improvements made specifically in developing relationships with area school districts and dual enrollment programming.

**9P1, S.** HCC has implemented specific steps for developing and prioritizing relationships to ensure they are aligned with the College mission and strategic goals. The process has helped HCC sustain various strong community partners.

**9P2, S.** HCC has created and prioritized relationships with four-year institutions by developing articulation agreements through involvement with the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). The process for such relationship development is outlined in 9P1. Additionally, the Business Institute has specific steps in the development of relationships with businesses.

**9P3, S.** HCC identified many units and service areas that maintain relationships with organizations that serve students, and each unit or area has internal processes for creating, prioritizing, and monitoring the relationships.

**9P4, S.** HCC follows legal regulations in building relationships with vendors and reviews such relations when a contract is near expiration to analyze costs and compare to other vendors. The College is cognizant of service and supply needs and creates, prioritizes, and builds relationships based on this awareness.

**9P5, O.** It is evident HCC has some very strong external relationships and partnerships; an example of a successful partnership is the joint educational agreement among Highland, Blackhawk Technical College and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College that allows students to take programs at partner colleges without paying out-of-district tuition. However, the process used for reviewing and prioritizing such relationships at an institutional level is unclear; an opportunity exists to identify how partnerships align with strategic goals.

**9P6, S.** HCC administers several student surveys and conducts community leader surveys. Surveys are analyzed and relationships prioritized based on results. The results are part of strategic and program planning processes. Additionally, partners are included in the planning process.

**9P7, S.** The College has several ways to communicate with employees that include bi-annual campus-wide meetings, emails, the website, reports, and social media. Additionally, HCC has a committee and administrative structure that encourages communication and collaboration.

**9R1, S.** HCC measures its efforts in building collaborative relationships through student, community leader, and placement survey data, success of transferring students, percentage of high school graduate recruited, and retention rates.

**9R2, O.** HCC presents numerous longitudinal performance results related to its collaborative relationships; however, an opportunity exists to place these results in the context of actual goals and targets the institution seeks to achieve for each of these initiatives.

**9R3, O.** Although HCC provides comparative results data for transfer students that are positive, an opportunity exists to provide targets, benchmarks, and results relative to other relationships the College has developed.

**911, S.** HCC has made recent improvements specifically with the CollegeNOW program. The program shows progress through some data. HCC’s focus on collaboration, engagement, and regional stewardship lays the foundation for a systematic and comprehensive approach for building internal and external relationships.

**912, O.** HCC acknowledges the need to develop processes that cross the institution as well as the need for additional data analysis and benchmarking. An opportunity exists to develop more systematic and comprehensive targets which would better inform processes to build collaborative relationships.

**Accreditation Evidence Highland Community College**

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components, or that it may face difficulty in meeting the Criteria and Core Components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Place evidence issue(s) here. If there are none, add “No evidence issues noted by the team,” or similar statement.

Criterion 1: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	1A	1B	1C	1D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.			X	X	
Adequate but could be improved.	X	X			
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 2: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X		X
Adequate but could be improved.				X	
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 3: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate but could be improved.					

Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.					
Adequate but could be improved.	X	X	X		
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 5: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.					
Adequate but could be improved.	X	X	X	X	
Unclear or incomplete.					

**5P1 & 5P2. HLC Core Component 1.A The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.**

Although the Board reviews the mission statement annually at a quarterly planning retreat, little evidence is provided to demonstrate how it guides the board’s goals-setting and decision-making processes.

Although long-range strategic decisions are described as “mission driven” and budget priorities are described as derived from the mission and strategic plan, no specific examples are provided.

**5P3 & 5P8. HLC Core Component 1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.**

Although HCC’s mission statement is included in the College Catalog and on the College Website, it is not presented in a clear and accessible format.

**1P4 & 1P10 HLC Core Component 1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.**

HCC professes a strong commitment to serving its community. Its mission recognizes the need to serve a diverse population and has programs that are attuned to the needs of the community, employers, accrediting entities, and national standards.

The Portfolio could include a more direct discussion of HCC’s role in a multicultural society.

**3P3 & 3P5. HLC Core Component 1.D. The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.**

HCC provides both formal and informal evidence that it is meeting its student and stakeholder needs. A formal method cited is the college's use of the Community Leaders Survey. A more informal method, Lunch with the President, provides additional data that may enhance the information received from the Community Leaders Survey.

HCC provides evidence of its commitment to the public good in its presentation of Table 3.3 – Examples of Building Relationships with Key Stakeholders. HCC takes its role as a community partner seriously and demonstrates it through a series of partnerships and organizational alignments that contribute to the college's key role in the region.

**4P7 HLC Core Component 2.A The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.**

A Board Ethics Policy outlines the ethical practices to which board members are expected to adhere; similarly, the College's Ethics Policy states the ethical standards to which employees are expected to hear.

The board Audit Committee meets with the College auditors several times a year.

**1P6 HLC Core Component 2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.**

HCC aspires to transparency in communicating with students and the public regarding programs, costs, faculty, control and accreditations. Key information is made available through the website, catalogs, and departmental communications.

HCC has clearly published standards and goals. HCC's Mission and Goals are well developed and continually assessed for relevance. Results of assessment are public and accessible.

**5P2. HLC Core Component 2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.**

The Board of Trustees is comprised of seven elected members elected from voters in the College's district, plus a student represented elected by the student body.

**1P11 HLC Core Component 2.D The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.**

HCC notes that it has a policy on academic freedom and expresses its support for intellectual freedom.

**4P7 HLC Core Component 2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff**

**acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.**

Students can attend research workshops and receive one-on-one assistance with proper methods of conducting research and citing resources.

HCC's Institutional Research Board (reviews and approves all research projects that involve human subjects).

HCC has established clear expectations for academic integrity for both faculty and students. Training and support is available to ensure these standards are met.

**1P4 & 1P12 HLC Core Components 3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.**

HCC's degree programs are regularly assessed and reviewed by HCC, the State and, where appropriate, by external program accreditation entities.

HCC designs academic programs that reflect its commitment to mission and vision while continuously working on new delivery platforms such as online and hybrid courses

Documentation that this Core Component is met would be improved by additional evidence showing that the institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery (e.g., by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortia arrangements, or any other modality).

**1P1 & 1P2 HLC Core Components 3B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.**

HCC has in place a faculty driven, stakeholder-informed process for developing appropriate course, program and general education outcomes that are systematically reviewed, assessed and evaluated with the intention of continuously improving student learning outcomes

HCC has clearly identified student competencies, effectively communicates these competencies to students, the University community and interested stakeholders. The progress toward accomplishing these goals is regularly measured.

In its 1P1 and 1P2 responses, HCC could have confirmed more directly that "the education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work." While General Education encompasses these general attributes, no mention is made of how or if these attributes are incorporated into all academic programs.

**4P2 & 4P10 HLC Core Component 3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for**

**effective, high-quality programs and student services.**

HCC's student/faculty ratio of 12.9 places it in the top 12% of U.S. Community Colleges participating in the National community College Benchmarking Project.

Student responses to items on the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction inventory related to faculty availability and engagement with students rate faculty above the national benchmark.

Money is budgeted annually to support the faculty and staff development through participation in professional activities.

**1P7 & 1P15 HLC Core Component 3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching. (1P7 and 1P15)**

HCC demonstrates that it provides a variety of support services for students through student government, disability support services, academic advancement center, instructional services, international student services, career development center, and counseling & health services. Additionally, students are evaluated upon application to determine appropriate academic placement.

HCC provides a range of faculty training, development, and mentoring opportunities. HCC monitors support and development services and adds new initiatives as needed

The Portfolio provides descriptions of resources aimed at supporting teaching and learning. Evidence that these support services succeed in improving teaching and learning would improve HCC's ability to meet 3.D. Currently, the Portfolio shows that services are available and frequently used, and that users like them.

**1P16 HLC Core Component 3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.**

HCC has established clear student outcomes designed to ensure a well-rounded education.

**1P4 & 1P13 HLC Core Components 4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.**

HCC sets high standards for itself and its students and has committed the resources and energy needed to achieve those standards. Strategies are regularly assessed and modified as needed to ensure quality

HCC systematically assesses the quality of its academic programs and the quality of education, scholarship and service its programs offer in alignment with its vision.

Programs and courses are reviewed for changes or retirement systematically and in clear alignment with faculty governance structures

**1P2 & 1P18 HLC Core Component 4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.**

HCC has in place comprehensive and systematic processes for the assessment student learning that include direct and indirect means of assessment. Assessment is ongoing and is a driver for continuous improvement.

More explicit evidence of how co-curricular programs are intentionally designed or selected to contribute to shared student learning outcomes and evidence that co-curricular programs contribute to student learning outcomes would strengthen the accounting for this Core Component.

**3P1. HLC Core Component 4.C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.**

HCC's Institutional Survey and Metrics Plan- Fiscal Year 2013 to 2015 (Table 3.1) documents the college's commitment to gathering data to address its retention, persistence and completion rates. The addition of the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) provides additional evidence that the college is systematically thinking of ways to use data and results to better enhance its position.

**8P6. HLC Core Component 5.A. The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.**

The RAMP provides historical trend information, prior fiscal year results, and identifies current concerns that may impact budgetary and program planning. Additionally, the plan's main component is financial projections. This provides information for planning that ensures a base of resources to support the plans.

The Vice President of Administrative Services meets regularly with budget managers to ensure balanced division/unit budgets.

The College administers surveys to help inform planning and budgeting processes. For example, the program planning survey is administered to provide input from faculty regarding program needs such as staffing, equipment, etc. HCC also surveyed College

Council members to understand College-wide needs and prioritization as administrators develop a proposed bond.

While HCC has a resource base that adequately supports planning and educational programs as evidenced by strong hiring and training processes, an opportunity exists to provide more evidence relative to integrated college-wide planning and resource allocation.

**5P5 & 5P9. HLC Core Component 5.B. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.**

HCC Board of Trustees members are elected by the residents of its district and include a student represented elected by the student body. The Board meets on a monthly basis and holds quarterly retreats at which they receive updates from College departments.

College-wide committees such as the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Assessment Committee, Policy Committee and Technology Committee establish academic requirements, policies, and processes.

Employee rights and responsibilities are clearly articulated in the Board Policy manual, Faculty Contract, Custodial/Maintenance Contract, and College Catalog.

**5P2 & 5P6. Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component 5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.**

One example of integrated planning is that the College Cabinet and Council recently completed a process to determine what projects should be included in the Capital Improvement Bond project

AQIP Action Project teams include stakeholders from across the College, depending upon the focus and purpose of the project, which allows for a better-integrated planning process.

HLC Core Component 5D. The College works systematically to improve its performance.

HCC has, over recent years, started to implement data collection processes and systems for measuring progress toward institutional goals and overall effectiveness. An opportunity exists to provide more evidence as to how certain data are chosen for collection and to provide more clarity around the use of these data in connection with goal-setting, bench marking, and decision-making.

## **Quality of Systems Portfolio For Highland Community College**

Because it stands as a reflection of the institution, the *Systems Portfolio* should be complete and coherent, and it should provide an open and honest self-analysis on the strengths and

challenges facing the organization. In this section, the Systems Appraisal Team provides Highland Community College with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

In comparison to HCC's previous portfolio submissions, it appears that many improvements have been made and the portfolio included a variety of charts and graphs that made the portfolio visually pleasing. However, throughout the portfolio, it appeared that HCC's submission included a variety of voices and viewpoints. This led to inconsistencies in responses from section to section, making it difficult to decipher how impactful some of HCC's improvements have been. In addition, some sections had incomplete responses and did not include sufficient data to support HCC's claims.

### **Using the Feedback Report**

The AQIP Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for institutional improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution, the Commission expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of this report may include: 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.

The Commission's goal is to help an institution clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.