

# **SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

## **HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

February 15, 2007



**Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

HCC's involvement in AQIP provides a renewed focus and energy around the assessment of student learning. An assessment of student learning plan has been developed through a process of broad campus participation. The plan clearly articulates the administrative responsibility for the assessment program. The Assessment Committee, with the Writing Across the Curriculum and the Data Committees as standing committees, has been charged with facilitating the implementation of the plan at the level of the academic division. There has been significant progress on the articulation of learning outcomes for general education, the occupations, and the transfer programs. In addition to external measures such as licensing exams, HCC has begun to gather local data from imbedded assessments within courses. Opportunities for further development include: 1) although occupational program advisory committees are mentioned, the connection between course development and program assessment and external stakeholders (e.g., employers and the community) is not described; 2) HCC states that the hiring, development, and assessment of faculty are an integral part of assessment of student learning, but often does not explain the correlation between the two; 3) assessment of non-credit courses; 4) the presentation of a comprehensive assessment model (including feedback loops that reflect on-going monitoring and assessment of the process); and 5) reporting the results of the survey of faculty and academic staff about their knowledge and satisfaction with the assessment process.

The college has six thematic categories for accomplishing other distinctive objectives. These themes include access, civic/community responsibility, cultural, financial resources, outreach activities, and partnering. The six thematic categories are linked to how the mission is carried out (cultural needs for lifelong learning, international education, economic development, access). However, while the college has a number of efforts in each of the six thematic categories for accomplishing other distinctive objectives, HCC does not have a measurement system to systematically analyze the results for these areas.

HCC demonstrates a commitment to and an interest in understanding the needs of stakeholders, and the college has developed a variety of processes to determine some of their stakeholder needs. The college has begun to use data to examine some of their processes and results. HCC has the opportunity to continue to build on success in assessing the needs of their stakeholders, to respond to those needs, and to expand their interaction with all their stakeholders. There is an enormous opportunity to better utilize data to improve programs and services, processes and systems, set targets for the future. The college's Action Project and the new Director for Institutional Research should enhance the college's ability to address these needs.

HCC recognizes that there is room for improvement related to the training and development of its employees. A focus on this will allow the college to continue to move towards a learning centered college and to effectively address the strategic challenges.

HCC's adoption of the principles of servant leadership, core values, and leadership programs can set the tone for a campus committed to quality improvement. The college recognizes the need to develop a system to improve current leadership and communication processes. HCC's commitment to AQIP (e.g., development of an Action Project about employee enhancement and training), as shown in the survey about AQIP principles (8R1, figure 8.1), provides the impetus and framework for the completion of this endeavor.

The college has many programs and services in place for students. However, many of the processes are informal and differ in each department. HCC recognizes the need to develop a formal system to address and assess current processes and systems related to supporting institutional operations and have identified 17 measures to collect and use data to continuously improve the student and administrative support service processes and systems.

While HCC recognizes the need to develop a formal process for its measuring effectiveness systems, the significant number of process category questions not discussed in the portfolio (5/7) and the lack of any discussion of an overall internal process that drives improvement is troubling. An internal quality improvement process is a key essential in the movement to an AQIP institution. HCC has the opportunity to take advantage and augment the data that it has collected and stored for external reporting purposes and internal program improvements

and to move beyond the individual department use of data to a more comprehensive analysis of data across the institution.

HCC has a Strategic Plan in place through 2008 that was developed in 2002 using an inclusive process. This plan identified six primary themes and has identified data indicating success in implementing those themes. Subsequent data have indicated a disconnect in the institutional understanding and function of the plan as well as a reduction in an inclusive process. The college is to be commended on recognition of this disconnect and the implementation of corrective actions which include an emphasis on the problem by the Interim President, the creation of the Institutional Researcher function, and focused action plans. The addition of a more inclusive improvement in the process and feedback loops will further enhance these efforts as the institution begins developing the Strategic Plan for the next five years.

The college describes several successful collaborative relationships, and the results of those partnerships have been beneficial for the college. HCC acknowledges that the assessment and improvement of these relationships needs to be part of a comprehensive, continuous improvement process.

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

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## **ELEMENTS OF Highland Community College's FEEDBACK REPORT**

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

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team had only your *Systems Portfolio* to guide their analysis of your institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement.

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

**Executive Summary.** Summative statements agreed upon by the Systems Appraisal Team based upon the institution's achievements and challenges in regards to each of the nine AQIP Categories. Strategic challenges for the institution are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

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

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

and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in the Report.

**Category Feedback:** The Report's feedback on each of AQIP's nine Categories specifically identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build.

Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your *Systems Portfolio*, offer brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report. At the end of the list of strengths and opportunities for each Category is the team's consensus assessment of the institution's stage of development on that particular Category. This section consists of a series of statements reflecting the reviewers' assessment of the institution's current status in relation to critical quality characteristics: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback, and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that the Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

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## **STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES**

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

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

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

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

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

HCC has the opportunity to fully deploy a continuous improvement culture through the development and refinement of **key processes**. First, HCC only responded to 37 (45.6%) of the 68 process (P) questions in the portfolio. While AQIP does not require a response to all of the questions, the development and/or refinement of these processes would allow HCC to continue along its journey to transform into a learning-centered culture. Second, the responses provided for many of the process (P) questions often provided a "what" (e.g., things done) instead of outlining the process or system (e.g., key steps). For example, while the strategic planning process (and other key processes throughout the portfolio) was referenced throughout the portfolio, the process including the key steps, timelines, criteria, and people involved were not clearly delineated or included in the portfolio.

HCC has the opportunity to assess progress against its mission and strategic plan by addressing issues related to **accountability and continuous improvement**. First, HCC has six general education outcome areas with 31 competencies and only provided one year worth of results for 10 (32.2%) of the 31 identified competencies. Albeit, the college stated that “attempting to assess thirty-one competencies within the six general education outcomes areas has proven to be more than challenging” (p. 20). Second, there is a lack of information (e.g., does not have any or trend data) and accountability related to how the college collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement (Category 7). Category 7 is particularly important since it is about measuring effectiveness (e.g., accountability). Third, HCC did not provide a response to 11 (61.1%) out of 18 improvement (I) questions. AQIP strongly encourages that institutions fully address at least 66% of the questions to get the maximum amount of feedback. Addressing these and other related issues would allow HCC to progress along its continuous improvement journey by systemically measuring its effectiveness.

The college identified three **vulnerabilities related to financial challenges** and a **fragile economy** in the Institutional Overview. However, there is a lack of information throughout the portfolio that suggests that the college has developed processes and systems to systemically address these issues. For instance, the issue associated with the fragile economy related to the ability to attract qualified staff. While the portfolio delineates a process to hire employees, six (60%) of the 10 valuing people process questions were not addressed. This suggests that HCC does not have the processes and systems in place to address this issue. Also, there appears to be a lack of information in the portfolio to suggest that HCC has any short- or long-term strategies in place to address the financial challenges. For example, while two of the five short- and long-term strategies (question 8C2) from the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan related to expenditures and cost-effective programming, there was a lack of information related to the strategies or measures associated with these two items.

HCC faces several key challenges in relationship to using **data to develop and use continuous improvement processes and to develop a learning-centered culture**. First, the portfolio contains **no comparative data** outside of Category 1—Helping Students Learn. While many of the other categories provide some trend data, there is a lack of data and information related to how these results compare to key competitors. Second, while the college may be collecting data on a regular basis, HCC does not present the data in a manner that would allow the examiners to make the connection between the Process (P), Results (R), and Improvement (I) questions. The hiring of an institutional researcher is a step in the right direction—but, this is not a panacea for the college’s data and information

needs. HCC will be challenged to assess its performance without a regular flow of data and information throughout the college and a commitment to making it a part of the culture.

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## USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

How an organization interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP's core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration and integrity. Based solely upon an organization's *Systems Portfolio*, the Report reflects a disciplined, external review of what an organization says about itself. The report should help an organization identify ways to improve its *Systems Portfolio* so it functions better to communicate accurately to internal and external audiences. But the Report's chief purpose is to help you to identify areas for improvement, and to act so that these areas actually improve. These improvements can then be incorporated into an updated *Systems Portfolio*, guaranteeing that future Systems Appraisals will reflect the progress an institution has made.

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

institution as it addresses these priorities through Action Projects that will make a difference in institutional performance.

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## CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

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

### Item Critical Characteristic

- 01a HCC is a public, not-for-profit comprehensive community college that is a part of the Illinois Community College System. The college serves three counties (Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and Carroll) and part of a fourth (Ogle) in a predominantly agricultural area of Northwestern Illinois.
- 01b HCC's Foundation is the first community college foundation in the state of Illinois and the second in the nation.
- 01c In 1997, the college president and the Board of Trustees adopted the principles of servant leadership as set forth by the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, committing the college to operating under this philosophy.
- 01d Highland's Leadership Programs are a distinctive feature of the college and are characterized by being administered through the college, not a business-directed entity, and by the fact that they have expanded to include high schools students.
- 01e HCC's mission is "...shaping the future of our communities by providing quality education and learning opportunities through programs and services that encourage the personal and professional growth of the people of northwestern Illinois."
- 01f HCC has "...committed itself to the core values of integrity, compassion, and respect."

- 01g In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.
- 01h A satellite campus, Highland West, was opened in 2004 in Jo Daviess County, providing more opportunities for the western part of the college district.
- 02 HCC offers five different associate degrees in two categories. The transfer degrees offered are the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Engineering Science. The non-transfer degrees offered are the Associate of Applied Science and the Associate of General Studies degrees. Additional offerings are provided in developmental education General Education Diploma (GED), English as a Second Language, adult literacy, and workplace and community education.
- 03a Approximately, half of the students enrolled at HCC are part-time. They are adult learners with the average age between 29-32, mostly female (64%), and for whom of the majority (75% of those who take placement tests) will need to take one or more developmental courses. The minority student population is 13%.
- 03b HCC reports a retention rate of 85 percent for fall to fall enrollment and a 34% degree completion rate within three years which surpasses the state rate of 22.6%.
- 04a HCC fosters collaborative partnerships with community, educational, business and governmental bodies that in turn bring additional resources to HCC through the partnerships. This allows HCC to better provide quality education at an affordable cost. For example, the cost and use of a campus sports complex available for students is shared with a local YMCA.
- 04b The HCC Foundation enjoys strong community support and has raised funds for both scholarships and capital projects including upcoming building improvements for nursing education.

- 05a The college has four major academic and administrative divisions: (1) Academics and Student Services, (2) Institutional and Community Development, (3) Administrative Services, and (4) Community Relations and Special Services.
- 05b The college's employee base consists of 49 administrators, 48 full-time faculty, and 188 part-time instructors. Also, HCC has a total of 101 classified staff members, with 69 employed full-time and 32 employed part-time.
- 05c Two unions (Faculty Senate, Highland Custodial and Maintenance Council) represent 42 percent of the full-time staff and faculty or 18 percent of the college's entire faculty and staff.
- 05d HCC utilizes various types of computer equipment and technology (e.g., computers, Local Area Network, Wide Area Network) among the geographic service areas of the college. The service areas include the main campus, the west campus and 3 outreach sites.
- 06a The college sits on 140 acres and the main campus has been designated as a regional arboretum by the Illinois Department of Conservation and includes a 5-acre natural prairie, a woodland, a two-acre pond, and athletic fields. The main campus includes nine buildings.
- 06b HCC's vocational programs (nursing, automotive, and cosmetology) are regulated by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. The automotive programs (auto mechanics and auto body) meet Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) standards and have had Master Automotive Certification status from the NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) since 2002.
- 06c HCC is governed by a seven member, locally-elected Board of Trustees.
- 07 HCC competes for students with regional four year colleges, on-line programs available in the district, and with business and trade schools in the area.
- 08a In 2004 HCC was selected by the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board to be the Title 1B Administrator for its programs. This means the college will be administering the work of the Workforce Investment Board in a five-county district enabling HCC to streamline services to the unemployed and under-employed and help improve the local economy.

- 08b While the passage of a \$1.5 million referendum in the spring of 2004 alleviated some immediate financial concerns, funding for HCC's programs will continue to be a challenge. Volatility in state and federal funding presents substantial difficulties for the college.
- 08c A fragile local economy results in a decreasing population from which HCC draws its student body and creates an environment that makes it difficult to attract faculty and staff to the college district.
- 08d Maintaining HCC's quality and culture in a transition period is an additional challenge. Many initial members of HCC's faculty and staff chose to stay with the college for the rest of their careers. Because of that, the college is in a period characterized by a relatively high employee turnover. The college faces significant personnel and financial challenges in its attempts to replace these employees with new experienced, highly qualified, full-time personnel.

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### **CATEGORY FEEDBACK**

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

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### **AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN**

*Helping Students Learn* identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how your entire

institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- 01e HCC's mission is "...shaping the future of our communities by providing quality education and learning opportunities through programs and services that encourage the personal and professional growth of the people of northwestern Illinois."
- 01g In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.
- 02 HCC offers five different associate degrees in two categories. The transfer degrees offered are the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Engineering Science. The non-transfer degrees offered are the Associate of Applied Science and the Associate of General Studies degrees. Additional offerings are provided in developmental education General Education Diploma (GED), English as a Second Language, adult literacy, and workplace and community education.
- 03b HCC reports a retention rate of 85 percent for fall to fall enrollment and a 34% degree completion rate within three years which surpasses the state rate of 22.6%.
- 06b HCC's vocational programs (nursing, automotive, and cosmetology) are regulated by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. The automotive programs (auto mechanics and auto body) meet Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) standards and

have had Master Automotive Certification status from the NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) since 2002.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 1P1a        | S          | For the first HCC faculty-developed assessment plan, which was written in 1995, faculty converted all college syllabi to learning outcomes derived from clearly defined competencies, "...marking a significant shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on student learning;" general education outcomes (proposed by a steering committee and "...discussed and revised by faculty from all academic divisions until a final document was accepted by all faculty") specified the "...cognitive and affective knowledge, skills, and attitudes all students should acquire at Highland Community College." |
| 1P1b        | OO         | Even though program faculty "...meet to determine program outcomes, select assessment tools, gather data, and review the results for its implication for curriculum and course delivery," there does not appear to be a standardized, formal program assessment procedure in place. The specific process that is used to identify program student learning outcomes is not described.   |
| 1P2         | O          | No reportable information is provided concerning the design of new programs and courses to facilitate student learning.   |
| 1P3         | S          | HCC has multiple strategies and processes to determine the preparation required of students for specific curricula, programs, courses, and learning. For example, mandatory placement tests (in reading, writing, and mathematics) are required for all certificate and degree-seeking students. Also, preparation requirements for occupational programs are   |

establish by program faculty, outside accreditation agencies, or other internal programs.

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|------|---|--|
| 1P4  | S | The college employs a variety of methods to communicate expectations regarding student preparedness and learning objectives to prospective and current students.   |
| 1P5  | O | No reportable information is provided for how HCC aids students in the selection of programs of study to fit their needs, interests, and abilities.  |
| 1P6a | S | The college is using the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) as a vehicle to improve its processes to determine and document effective teaching and learning. This type of self-awareness allows the college to achieve its mission to “provide quality education and learning opportunities. . .” and to establish a learning-centered environment.   |
| 1P6b | S | Processes and timelines have been put in place to identify and implement instructional and curricular changes and faculty and academic staff have been surveyed to assess their knowledge of and satisfaction with the assessment process.   |
| 1P6c | S | A component of the Assessment Committee, the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee gathers and analyzes data related to writing performance across the college, presents options for enhanced writing in courses across the curriculum, and manages an on-going program in Writing Across the Curriculum. The Data Committee investigates and implements additional data-gathering activities related to the general education outcomes. With guidance from the co-chairs of the Assessment Committee and the chief academic officer, the Data Committee shares results with all faculty for further discussion or action. |
| 1P6d | S | HCC has established a four-part process for the evaluation of faculty that includes self-assessment, classroom observation by the dean, student evaluation of instruction, and a meeting between the faculty member and the dean in which they discuss the results and set goals.  |
| 1P7a | O | HCC has identified a mismatch between room assignments and the technology needs of the instructors. Developing systems to correct the  |

- mismatch between instructor needs and classroom technology is important for the facilitation of student learning.
- 1P7b O HCC describes a process heavily dependant upon the knowledge and experience of deans and associate deans. There was little or no discussion of the use of data to help drive delivery of efficient and effective courses.
- 1P8 O No reportable information is provided for how HCC monitors the currency and effectiveness of the curriculum.
- 1P9a S HCC has extensive support services involved in determining student and faculty needs for learning support and in the student learning and development processes. Placement tests, the Learning Assistance Center, library services, and student resources/ academic advising are key components. These may contribute to HCC's high retention rate (85%) and shorter time to degree (three-year) compared to the state (34% vs. 23%, respectively) in spite of the fact that 75% of its students need remediation.
- 1P9b SS The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) takes a variety of proactive approaches to promoting student learning, including the College Success Skills course (90% of the students report that the course achieved its purpose and a range of 75% to 90%, depending on the item, rated the components of the course as "beneficial to me"). The retention rate for course completers is 77% compared to 44% for course non-completers.
- 1P10 O No reportable information is provided for how HCC co-curricular development goals are aligned with curricular learning objectives.
- 1P11a S The assessment plan, which provides for broad institutional participation, especially by full-time faculty, and for the establishment of an Assessment Committee, chaired by faculty and including administrators and data support personnel, was up-dated in 1999 and again in 2005. Designating the assessment of student learning as an AQIP project became a way to reemphasize and focus resources on assessment, and establish clear

goals and timelines. Responsibility for assessment of student learning spans administrative levels, residing with two co-chairs, one a faculty member and the other an academic dean. There are two standing committees, Writing Across the Curriculum and Data. Implementation is at the level of the academic division.

- 1P11 O While HCC has reemphasized assessment and appears to have a structure in place, the actual assessment model or process was not presented.
- 1P12 O No reportable information is provided for how HCC discovers how well students who are completing programs, degrees, or certificates are prepared for further education or employment.
- 1P13a S Six key components of general education outcomes were identified for assessment using existing embedded measures within various courses and four could be assessed using instructor and student surveys.
- 1P13b S All occupational programs have identified program outcomes and measures and academic areas in the transfer programs have begun to develop assessment measures and strategies.
- 1R1a S The college provided results related to 10 General Education Competencies that could be assessed. Data show satisfactory or higher performance on learning outcomes on embedded measures for general education. These results provide a baseline for continuously measuring and improving student learning.
- 1R1b OO There are no results reported for 21 of the 31 general education competencies. The assessment of these competencies will allow HCC to embrace the opportunity to commit to a collaborative and quality-centered culture, exemplified by participation in AQIP and to support its mission by measuring student learning have far surpassed the state passing rates.
- 1R1b O There is no evidence as to how the assessment process is connecting the findings and insights from the sophomore capstone experiences (1999, 2000, 2002) to the results gathered for the general education competencies (2005, 2006). Evidence could address, for instance,

whether students are performing better now with curricular improvements that have been implemented following the earlier findings. There is no link described between evaluating of faculty and student learning (process described in 1C2 and 1P6).

|       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| 1R2a  | S | Pass rates on licensing exams are consistently well above state averages.   |
| 1R2b  | S | The college has various results related to evidence that students have acquired the knowledge and skill base for transferring and employment. In general the results are positive with some comparative and longitudinal data provided. For example, all eight of the figures have longitudinal trends and six of these eight (Figure 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9) provide comparative data. |
| 1R2c  | S | HCC transfer students' average GPA are comparable to the GPA's of other 2-year transfer students (Figure 1.4). An interesting comparison would have been between transfer students and 4-year institution juniors.  |
| 1R3   | O | No reportable information is provided on the results of processes associated with how students learn.   |
| 1R4   | O | No reportable information is provided for how HCC results compare with the results of other higher education institutions.  |
| 1I1,2 | O | No reportable information is provided for how HCC improves current processes and systems or sets targets for improving results designed to facilitate student learning.   |

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## **AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES**

*Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of your mission. Depending on your institution's character, it examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives,

alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- 01d HCC's Leadership Programs are a distinctive feature of the college and are characterized by being administered through the college, not a business-directed entity, and by the fact that they have expanded to include high schools students.
- 01g In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.
- 04a HCC fosters collaborative partnerships with community, educational, business and governmental bodies that in turn bring additional resources to HCC through the partnerships. This allows HCC to better provide quality education at an affordable cost. For example, the cost and use of a campus sports complex available for students is shared with a local YMCA.
- 04b The HCC Foundation enjoys strong community support and has raised funds for both scholarships and capital projects including upcoming building improvements for nursing education.
- 08a In 2004 HCC was selected by the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board to be the Title 1B Administrator for its programs. This means the college will be administering the work of the Workforce Investment Board in a five-county district enabling HCC to streamline services to the unemployed and under-employed and help improve the local economy.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 2C1         | S          | HCC has identified six themes for its other distinctive objectives that it uses as a framework for drawing together its services and programs, and which are also aligned with "its broader mission objective of 'encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois'" and with its strategic plan.   |
| 2P2         | O          | No reportable information is provided for how HCC communicates expectations regarding other distinctive objectives.   |
| 2P3         | S          | HCC outlined broad steps (e.g., informal process) used to determine faculty and staff needs related to accomplishing their other distinctive objectives. These objectives are accomplished by direct communication between the administration and the leadership of each particular program or partner. The list of unmet needs is presented to the Highland Foundation for funding consideration.  |
| 2P3         | O          | While the college annually compiles a list of unmet needs, there is a lack of information related to a systematic process that delineates the specific steps (instead of broad), timelines, and criteria to determine and meet the faculty and staff needs related to accomplishing other distinctive objectives. This would allow the college to measure its progress toward the "encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois" aspect of its mission. |
| 2P4         | O          | No reportable information is provided for how HCC assesses and reviews other distinctive objectives. Also, there is a lack of information related to who is involved and how the feedback is incorporated in readjusting the objectives or processes that support them. The development of these processes would allow HCC to continue its journey toward transforming into a collaborative and quality-centered culture.   |

- 2P5 O The college recognizes that a system for across the board analysis of the six other distinctive objective categories does not exist.
- 2R1a S There are longitudinal trend data for each of the Figures provide with most providing at least five years worth of data. This allows HCC to examine trends over time.
- 2R1b O Trend data show that the total dollar amount of scholarships awarded is at a four-year low. With accessibility being central to HCC's mission, this is troubling. However, it is difficult to assess the full impact of the reduction in dollars without knowing the number of scholarships awarded.
- 2R1c O HCC listed 34 services and programs among the six thematic categories that represent the other distinctive objectives. There are only results for seven of these services and programs. In addition, there are no results reported for the thematic areas related to Access, Outreach Activities, and Partnerships. Having results for these other key services and programs along with the other thematic areas would allow the college to truly assess the effectiveness of the "encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois" aspect of its mission.
- 2R1d S Total program attendance rates for fine arts are at a four-year high, with two out of three showing increases since 2002.
- 2R2 OO No reportable data related to how HCC's other distinctive results compare with peer institutions. Comparative data would allow HCC to assess the effectiveness of the "encouraging the personal and professional growth of the people of Northwest Illinois" aspect of its mission against peer and competitive (listed in Institutional Overview) institutions.
- 2I1 S In almost all instances, improvements are made to the programs by gathering input and feedback from those served by these programs or by those providing the service.

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### **AQIP CATEGORY 3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- 01a    HCC is a public, not-for-profit comprehensive community college that is a part of the Illinois Community College System. The college serves three counties (Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and Carroll) and part of a fourth (Ogle) in a predominantly agricultural area of Northwestern Illinois.
  
- 03a    Approximately, half of the students enrolled at HCC are part-time. They are adult learners with the average age between 29-32, mostly female (64%), and for whom of the majority (75% of those who take placement tests) will need to take one or more developmental courses. The minority student population is 13%.
  
- 03b    HCC reports a retention rate of 85 percent for fall to fall enrollment and a 34% degree completion rate within three years which surpasses the state rate of 22.6%.
  
- 04a    HCC fosters collaborative partnerships with community, educational, business and governmental bodies that in turn bring additional resources to HCC through the partnerships. This allows HCC to better provide quality education at an affordable cost. For example, the cost and use of a campus sports complex available for students is shared with a local YMCA.

08a In 2004 HCC was selected by the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board to be the Title 1B Administrator for its programs. This means the college will be administering the work of the Workforce Investment Board in a five-county district enabling HCC to streamline services to the unemployed and under-employed and help improve the local economy.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 3C1         | O          | A methodology is not evident for insuring connection between college personnel and many of the college’s diverse stakeholder groups.  |
| 3P1a        | S          | The college surveys a wide variety of personnel, and uses a number of tools to identify the changing needs of students. Figure 3.3 (Tools for identifying changing needs) delineates 11 key tools used to determine the changing needs of students.   |
| 3P1b        | O          | There is a lack of evidence regarding clear and systematic processes for identifying the changing needs of students and other stakeholders.   |
| 3P2         | O          | No reportable information is provided concerning building and maintaining relationships with students and other key stakeholders.   |
| 3P4         | O          | No reportable information is available related to how the college builds and maintains relationships with key stakeholders.   |
| 3P5         | O          | No reportable information is provided concerning the identification of services for new student and stakeholder groups within educational offerings and services. For example, since occupational program enrollment has fallen in 2005, a process for identifying new student groups may be important. |
| 3P6a        | S          | There is a comprehensive process concerning student complaints and issues of harassment, as well as a documented appeals process. The student code of conduct violations and treatment in other academic  |

- matters are delineated in the College Catalog. Also, the catalog describes the process to analyze the information, selecting a course of action, and communicating the results to all appropriate parties.
- 3P6b O Complaint procedures are limited to academic and student code of conduct violations. There is no mechanism evident for collecting information regarding other stakeholder needs or concerns, analyzing that information, or communicating actions.
- 3P7 S The college uses a variety of measures to assess the changing needs of student stakeholders.
- 3R1a S Highland Community College collects data concerning enrollment, course evaluations, employment retention, as well as student complaints from a multi-year perspective to measure student satisfaction.
- 3R1b, 3 S Headcount and enrollment figures, combined with data about student persistence, indicate that HCC is meeting the needs and supporting its students as they work to fulfill degree and certificate programs. In addition, based on student evaluation of transfer courses, students report high levels of satisfaction with instruction.
- 3R1c O There is a lack of evidence related to key data for the direct stakeholder group. For example, under-prepared and special need student results are not reported. These two groups were mentioned specifically in the Organizational Overview and in Figure 3.1 (Direct Stakeholders). Also, there appears to be a lack of results related to non-credit students.
- 3R1d O Alumni surveys indicate a lack of satisfaction with counseling and advising, with satisfaction rates ranging from 55% for transfer counseling and 75% for academic advising. Estimated benchmarks can support the college in its efforts to create a continuous improvement culture.
- 3R2 O No reportable data are included for how HCC builds relationships with its students and other key stakeholders.
- 3R3 O There are a lack of results related to stakeholder satisfaction. For example, there are no results related to State agencies (e.g., audit

- compliance), Board of Trustees/Taxpayers (e.g., fiscal management, cost control), and transfer institutions (e.g., properly prepared students).
- 3R4 O No reportable results related to the building of key relationships with key stakeholders.
- 3R5 O No reportable data are included here for how HCC compares the results of its processes for supporting students and key stakeholder to other peer institutions.
- 3I1 O No reportable information is provided for improvement of processes and systems for understanding the needs of students and stakeholders.
- 3I2 S HCC acknowledges that the College does not have a systematic process to build targets for improvement. This realization provides the college the opportunity to maximize its participation in AQIP and to develop a more learning-centered institution.

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#### **AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE**

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

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- 05a The college has four major academic and administrative divisions: (1) Academics and Student Services, (2) Institutional and Community Development, (3) Administrative Services, and (4) Community Relations and Special Services.

- 05b The college's employee base consists of 49 administrators, 48 full-time faculty, and 188 part-time instructors. Also, HCC has a total of 101 classified staff members, with 69 employed full-time and 32 employed part-time.
- 05c Two unions (Faculty Senate, HCC Custodial and Maintenance Council) represent 42 percent of the full-time staff and faculty or 18 percent of the college's entire faculty and staff.
- 08c A fragile local economy results in a decreasing population from which HCC draws its student body and creates an environment that makes it difficult to attract faculty and staff to the college district.
- 08d Maintaining HCC's quality and culture in a transition period is an additional challenge. Many initial members of HCC's faculty and staff chose to stay with the college for the rest of their careers. Because of that, the college is in a period characterized by a relatively high employee turnover. The college faces significant personnel and financial challenges in its attempts to replace these employees with new experienced, highly qualified, full-time personnel.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 4C3         | S          | The college has responded to stagnant or declining population growth and high school graduates by targeting the retraining of unemployed and underemployed persons. As a result, the college hosts the Workforce Investment Act partners program which has added 21 staff to serve this population.   |
| 4P1,3,5     | O          | No reportable information related to how the college identifies specific credentials, skills and abilities along with how HCC's work processes and activities contribute to communication, high performance and innovation. Also, there is no reportable information about how the college determines |

training needs and how these training plans aligned with college plans in Category 8 -Planning Continuous Improvement.

- 4P6,8,9 O No reportable information is provided concerning determination of training needs, key issues related to employee motivation, or how HCC provides for and evaluates employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being.
- 4P2 S The college has had a AQIIP Action Project from 2003 to 2006 in the area of employee development and training that has resulted in its new Employee Enhancement program, and that has resulted in well articulated processes for hiring, retaining, orienting and planning for needed personnel changes.
- 4P4 S A newly-initiated employee training and development model attempts to "...expand awareness among different departments and divisions to reduce 'silo' thinking and promote the broader vision of all employees having important roles as members of the college team in meeting its mission."
- 4P7 S The college has several reward and recognition programs in place, and the board is developing a compensation philosophy tied to the college mission.
- 4R1-3 O The College does not provide key valuing people data and results related to processes (e.g., orientation, training, recruitment), productivity, and effectiveness. The valuing people data on processes is extremely important since HCC indicated that the procedures to hire well-qualified faculty is an essential aspect to ensure and meet student-learning expectations (Item 1C2). Without these data, it is difficult for HCC to assess student learning and the effectiveness of its valuing people processes.
- 4R4 OO HCC does not provide key valuing people data and results. Consequently, they are unable to compare their results with those of other higher education institutions.

- 411, 2            O        HCC does not identify a systematic process by which they improve their current processes and systems related to Valuing People. Rather, the college has identified issues it will address.

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**AQIP CATEGORY 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- 01c    In 1997, the college president and the Board of Trustees adopted the principles of servant leadership as set forth by the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, committing the college to operating under this philosophy.
- 01d    HCC's Leadership Programs are a distinctive feature of the college and are characterized by being administered through the college, not a business-directed entity, and by the fact that they have expanded to include high schools students.
- 01f    HCC has "...committed itself to the core values of integrity, compassion, and respect."
- 05b    The college's employee base consists of 49 administrators, 48 full-time faculty, and 188 part-time instructors. Also, HCC has a total of 101 classified staff members, with 69 employed full-time and 32 employed part-time.
- 06c    HCC is governed by a seven member, locally-elected Board of Trustees.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 5C1a        | S          | HCC has a leadership structure in place that includes the HCC Community College Board of Trustees; the president; the Leadership Team including administrative vice-presidents and directors, and the Cabinet made up of the Leadership Team, academic and student support services deans, and representation from each employee classification and the two unions. |
| 5C1b        | S          | Communication within the college seems valued and is promoted through college-wide events and through an extensive committee system, both of which serve to increase opportunities for face-to-face communication. HCC has 13 Standing Committees and six Task Forces in place.   |
| 5C1c        | O          | It is unclear how HCC communicates decisions, findings, goals, priorities, etc. of the leadership, committees and task forces to its stakeholders. There does not appear to be a systematic process in place for communication.   |
| 5C2         | S          | HCC currently has ends statements addressing four major areas: occupational preparation, workforce development, transfer, and recruitment and retention.  |
| 5C3         | S          | Key core values that involved college-wide input have been identified.  |
| 5P1         | O          | No response was provided for how leaders set directions in alignment with mission, vision, and values and that are conducive to high performance.   |
| 5P2         | O          | No response was provided for how leaders guide the institution in seeking future opportunities.   |
| 5P3a        | O          | HCC describes how decisions are made; for example, the Leadership Team or the Board of Trustees approves decisions that are forwarded by  |

various committees, teams, and task forces. However, there is a lack of information about the processes through which these decisions are implemented once made.

- 5P3b, 5R1     O     HCC states that it has adopted the Carver Policy Governance Model in which the Board of Trustees holds the President accountable for the institutional ends. The President, in turn, manages the institution to achieve these ends. However, there is a lack of information that describes the process and roles that the Board and President uses to govern the institution. For example, does the Carver Policy Governance Model allow for the Board of Trustees to conduct focus groups to address issues raised from the Employee survey?
- 5P4             O     No response was provided that leaders use information and key results in their decision-making processes.
- 5P5a            S     HCC has multiple avenues through which open communication can occur, and these include CougarNet, various print communications, Pizza with the President, and campus meetings.
- 5P6             O     No response was provided for how leaders communicate shared mission and related performance expectations regarding institutional directions and opportunities.
- 5P7a            S     Needs for disseminating the philosophy of servant leadership and building a culture for leadership on campus are being addressed through the Leadership Institute, and have been addressed through a two-day leadership training retreat in 2005 for the academic and administrative leaders. Similarly, HCC is working to address staff needs through the addition of a track on supervisory training which has been added to the AQIP Action Project, "Employee Enhancement and Training."
- 5P7b            O     There was no evidence for how effective the leadership training has been in promoting or strengthening servant leadership among its leaders.
- 5P8             O     No response was provided for how a leadership succession plan is being developed.

|           |    |  |
|-----------|----|--|
| 5P9       | S  | HCC collects and analyzes a variety of measures of leading and communicating including the annual HCC Employee Survey as well as supervisor surveys, feedback sessions, alumni surveys, graduate surveys, occupational surveys, student life surveys, and exit interviews.   |
| 5R1a, 4R1 | O  | Employee survey data suggests the need to improve employee moral: specifically it shows lower scores from 2004 to 2005 for seven of the 12 items (q5, q7, q8, q9, q10, q11, q12) (Figure 4-11 Valuing People Results).   |
| 5R1b      | S  | Following concerns with the results of the Employee Survey data, three improvements were implemented, including "...the development of a decision-making model, an administrative retreat to promote leadership training and team building, and college-wide involvement in establishing the institution's core values." |
| 5R1c      | S  | In survey questions addressing leadership at HCC, employees were asked about the extent to which "the college has leaders and leadership systems that support a quality culture." Improvement was noted in this question from the 2005 and 2006 surveys.   |
| 5R2       | OO | No response was given for how HCC compares its results for leading and communicating with the results of other higher education institutions.  |
| 5I1       | O  | No response is given for how HCC improves its current systems for leading and communicating.   |
| 5I2       | O  | HCC has identified that it does not have a systematic process for "regularly and consistently evaluating leadership and communication at different levels of the college," and yet given this recognition there was no discussion of plans to implement such a process.  |

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**AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS**

*Supporting Institutional Operations* addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of

needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- 04b The HCC Foundation enjoys strong community support and has raised funds for both scholarships and capital projects including upcoming building improvements for nursing education.
- 05a The college has four major academic and administrative divisions: (1) Academics and Student Services, (2) Institutional and Community Development, (3) Administrative Services, and (4) Community Relations and Special Services.
- 05d HCC utilizes various types of computer equipment and technology (e.g., computers, Local Area Network, Wide Area Network) among the geographic service areas of the college. The service areas include the main campus, the west campus and 3 outreach sites.
- 08b While the passage of a \$1.5 million referendum in the spring of 2004 alleviated some immediate financial concerns, funding for HCC's programs will continue to be a challenge. Volatility in state and federal funding presents substantial difficulties for the college.

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

| <b><i>Item</i></b> | <b><i>S/O</i></b> | <b><i>Comment</i></b>   |
|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| 6C1                | S                 | HCC identifies three key areas in which processes for supporting institutional operations fall. These include: Student Services, Learning Resources, and Administrative Services. |

- 6C2a S HCC cites examples of student services that reinforce student learning, such as the Learning Assistance Center, which administers placement tests to ensure students are placed in the correct classes and also provides tutoring and the Library and Academic Computer Support that assure students have the bibliographic and software support to be successful.
- 6C2b O A generic description of how some services can support student success was listed, but there was no discussion of an actual process to measure if they are effective.
- 6P1 S The college has both formal and informal processes to identify student support service needs. A task force has been convened, and is working on a common intake process that would systematically provide assessment of student needs, goals, and desires.
- 6P1,2 O There is a lack of evidence related to a systematic process that identifies support and administrative service needs of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and key stakeholders. While some examples are provided for a few organizational units, there is lack of information related to a system that is deployed institution wide or within each of the three key process categories (student services, learning resources, administrative services).
- 6P2 O The identification of the administrative support services needs occurs primarily through the immediate supervisor. Currently, there is no systemic approach to collecting this information.
- 6P3 O Recognition that perceptions regarding use of data collected are uncertain allows the institution to develop processes to develop improved understanding, but because there is no systematic process currently in place to identify needs there is no way to manage or document the processes.
- 6P4 S HCC has identified that they do not have a “systematic approach to data collection and analysis,” and they have hired an institutional researcher in an attempt to resolve this issue.

- 6P5 O A list of measures was provided, but there was no discussion of how they are used in a process for improvement.
- 6R1 S The results provided for the Learning Assistance Center for spring 2003 and 2004 highlight improvement in the post-test scores of students completing the developmental class.
- 6R1,2 OO HCC listed 29 key student services (14), learning resources (5), and administrative services (10) areas in item 6C1. However, there are no results for 28 of these organizational units. Without these results, it is difficult for HCC to address issues related to the competitive environment, opportunities and vulnerabilities, and the mission and strategic plan.
- 6R2a S HCC leadership revised the budget process (only 9 percent of employees felt they had direct involvement in building a budget) based on results from the annual employee survey.
- 6R2b O “Data collected by the Information Technology department show that while most employees understand the concept of measuring effectiveness, it is not something they do, and most decisions made are not data driven.”
- 6R3 OO There are no results reported related to how HCC compares to other higher education institutions or organizations.
- 6I1 S HCC recognizes that it has no process in place to assess student and stakeholder service needs and has outlined the following steps to rectify the situation:
- Develop formal processes in all support service departments to measure needs.
  - Develop a process to prioritize identified needs.
  - Create a strategic process that formally links prioritized needs to the strategic plan and budgetary process.
  - Develop a comprehensive communication plan to convey the results and background of decisions that have been made.

Implement the recommendations of the Spacewalk Team.

Form a Quality Improvement Team to review archiving college materials and develop a process to determine what to keep, for how long, and how to store what is kept.

Review the process for room scheduling. Gaps and overlaps were discovered preventing maximal use of classrooms and teaching time.

- 612            O    No results are given for how current processing and systems for identifying student and administrative support processes are improved or what improvement priorities are being targeted and how they will be addressed.

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**AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- 01a    HCC is a public, not-for-profit comprehensive community college that is a part of the Illinois Community College System. The college serves three counties (Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and Carroll) and part of a fourth (Ogle) in a predominantly agricultural area of Northwestern Illinois.
- 01g    In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing

accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.

- O3b HCC reports a retention rate of 85 percent for fall to fall enrollment and a 34% degree completion rate within three years which surpasses the state rate of 22.6%.
- 05d HCC utilizes various types of computer equipment and technology (e.g., computers, Local Area Network, Wide Area Network) among the geographic service areas of the college. The service areas include the main campus, the west campus and 3 outreach sites
- O6b HCC's vocational programs (nursing, automotive, and cosmetology) are regulated by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. The automotive programs (auto mechanics and auto body) meet Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) standards and have had Master Automotive Certification status from the NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) since 2002.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>  |
|-------------|------------|---|
| 7C1         | S          | Processes and electronic systems for collecting and storing information and data show the implementation of the industry standard SunGard product Banner, along with numerous other programs implemented to meet the more specialized needs of departments and programs.  |
| 7C1         | O          | In some departments/areas, multiple systems are used for the same purposes. For example, Faculty use both SunGard Banner or Blackboard for grading. With adult education information the same basic data (demographics, goals, test scores, student schedules) is entered into three different database programs: STAIRS, a program required by the state; IDMS, a program developed in-house for tracking students; and Banner, required by HCC. Multiple entry can increase the likelihood of |

error, storing data in three databases can lead to server space issues, and the use of different systems to record the same type of data can make it difficult to pull the data and use it in analysis and decision-making.

- 7P1 O Sources of data were discussed, but there was no mention of an overriding quality process connected to data collection and analysis. Evidence presented does not indicate how data needs are used to track effectiveness within the college or how this is tied into their process for improvement.
- 7P1 O Evidence is not identified for processes to assist users in meeting the challenge of efficiently staying informed in the face of the evolving nature of the information system at the institution.
- 7P2-7P6 OO No reportable information is provided for how HCC: determines needs of its departments and units related to information and data collection, storage, and accessibility; determines the needs and priorities for comparative information and data; analyzes information and data regarding overall performance; ensures department and unit analysis and data aligns with its institutional goals regarding student learning; or ensures the effectiveness of its information systems and related processes. Without addressing these processes, HCC cannot:
1. Determine the effectiveness of data related to student learning.
  2. Address the challenges identified.
  3. Achieve its mission.
- The development of processes and systems around these key measuring effectiveness areas will allow HCC to examine how the college collects, analyzes, and uses information to drive performance improvement.
- 7P7 OO Some internal and external surveys and audits were mentioned, however, the link between these, an overall system of measuring effectiveness, and college goals is missing. Further, without delineating the systems and processes in 7P2-7P6, it is unclear how measures of effectiveness could be developed.

- 7R1            OO    The College does not provide any results for processes associated with information and data collection, analysis and use. For example, there are no results reported that are related to information (Hardware/software) system accessibility, reliability and confidentiality, and internal satisfaction. This is a major portion of the AQIP criteria for this category that is not addressed.
- 7R2            OO    There are no results reported related to how HCC compares to other higher education institutions or organizations.
- 7I1, 2        O     The College does not have a system in place to improve its current processes and systems related to measuring effectiveness. In addition, there are not any targets for improvement established or communication strategies identified. Recommendations for the effective use of institutional data include improving its use and staff access, and doing this in part by integrating institutional research with the staff and resources of information systems.

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#### **AQIP CATEGORY 8: PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- 01e HCC's mission is "...shaping the future of our communities by providing quality education and learning opportunities through programs and services that encourage the personal and professional growth of the people of northwestern Illinois."
- 01g In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.
- 08b While the passage of a \$1.5 million referendum in the spring of 2004 alleviated some immediate financial concerns, funding for HCC's programs will continue to be a challenge. Volatility in state and federal funding presents substantial difficulties for the college.
- 08d Maintaining HCC's quality and culture in a transition period is an additional challenge. Many initial members of Highland's faculty and staff chose to stay with the college for the rest of their careers. Because of that, the college is in a period characterized by a relatively high employee turnover. The college faces significant personnel and financial challenges in its attempts to replace these employees with new experienced, highly qualified, full-time personnel.

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

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>   |
|-------------|------------|--|
| 8C1         | S          | The five to ten year institutional vision statement is supported by the college's 2003-2008 strategic plan, which articulates six themes including the building of "an integrated quality assessment culture," although the vision is not projected five to ten years from the current date. |
| 8C2a        | S          | The college strategic plan has identified five issues that the college must confront as challenges which, if handled well, could become opportunities for improvement.   |

- 8C2b O There is a disconnect in the understanding of the vision and direction of the college between the leadership and the internal customers.
- 8P1a S The Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of a representative of the Board of Trustees, as well as representatives of HCC's faculty, staff, and constituents in the four-county district. The plan covers the years 2003-2008.
- 8P1b O There is a lack of information about the key steps in the college's strategic planning process. For example, the key steps and the people who participated in the process are not identified along with the timeline and factors that were addressed or considered.
- 8P2a S The college made efforts to improve the annual college-wide goal process between 2003 and 2006. The focus of the improvements related to getting more college-wide input and involvement.
- 8P2b O There is a lack of information related to the specific steps in the process (annual college-wide goal) to select short- and long-term strategies.
- 8P3a S HCC has a process to develop key action plans to support institutional strategies. The process includes the following steps: (1) selection of staff, (2) selection of a team, (3) development of action plans to address specific goals, (4) minutes of meetings are shared with Leadership Team, (5) Leadership Team submits summary report to president, and (6) the president shares the report with the Board of Trustees.
- 8P3b O The action plan development process as described did not include the criteria used to develop action plans, strategies to insure stakeholder representation within the action teams, or strategies to coordinate action plans across the institution.
- 8P4 O No reportable information is provided for aligning planning with varying institutional levels.
- 8P5 O No reportable information is provided for measure selection and performance projection for institutional strategies and action plans.

- 8P6 O No reportable information is provided for accounting for resource needs within strategy selection and action plan implementation.
- 8P7 S The college has used the AQIP Action Project process to develop an Action Project to systematize employee development and training. This project identified procedures to build upon the existing training system to challenge silo thinking in training planning as well as including procedures to address institutional strategic training needs.
- 8P8a S Efforts by the institutional researcher to create a “balanced scorecard” for presentation and analysis of performance data in a more understandable fashion will greatly benefit the institutional improvement efforts.
- 8P8b O HCC reports collecting a variety of data, but does not report on these data in a manner that can be easily used or understood. There was no evidence presented demonstrating how these data are analyzed or of an overall process or system for planning for continuous improvement.
- 8R1a S Results show progress in all of the six key theme areas identified for the strategic plan including an increase in employee perception of the extent to which the college has attained the ten AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations.
- 8R1b O There was no mention of how the results mentioned above are used as part of a continuous improvement process.
- 8R2 O No reportable information is provided for 1-3 year projections of performance for strategies and action plans.
- 8R3 OO No reportable information is provided for comparison of strategic and action plan comparisons with other higher education institutions.
- 8R4 O No reportable information is provided for effectiveness of planning continuous improvement.
- 8I1 O No reportable information is provided for how the institution improves current processes and systems for planning continuous improvement.

- 812            O        No reportable information is provided for setting improvement targets based on current results, setting improvement priorities or communicating current results.

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**AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- 01g    In 2002, HCC completed a comprehensive strategic plan that identified six primary themes that the college needs to address. These six themes are: build an integrated quality assessment culture; develop competitive programming and instruction optimizing accessibility; enhance the college's marketing; build partnerships that promote the college's mission and fill the community's needs; support development of college personnel; and pursue strategies to increase funding.
- 04a    HCC fosters collaborative partnerships with community, educational, business and governmental bodies that in turn bring additional resources to HCC through the partnerships. This allows HCC to better provide quality education at an affordable cost. For example, the cost and use of a campus sports complex available for students is shared with a local YMCA.
- 04b    The HCC Foundation enjoys strong community support and has raised funds for both scholarships and capital projects including upcoming building improvements for nursing education.

08a In 2004, HCC was selected by the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board to be the Title 1B Administrator for its programs. This means the college will be administering the work of the Workforce Investment Board in a five county district enabling HCC to streamline services to the unemployed and the underemployed and help improve the local economy.

**Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as [Institution]’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.**

| <i>Item</i> | <i>S/O</i> | <i>Comment</i>   |
|-------------|------------|--|
| 9C1, 2      | S          | HCC has identified four areas of key relationships with educational institutions, businesses, community organizations, and the Highland Community College Foundation, and each of these areas of partnership supports and furthers HCC in the pursuit of its mission and strategic goals. Two strategic goals relate directly to partnerships and these are developing competitive programs and services and building key partnerships that support the college mission. |
| 9P1         | S          | HCC has discerned that the “...highest priority relationships are those that support and are essential to the college’s state mission to provide educational preparation to students transferring to a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution, completing a vocational degree or certificate, seeking to upgrade workplace skills, and striving to meet individual developmental or general educational goals.”   |
| 9P2         | O          | The college describes some ways faculty and staff work with their partners, but no process for assessing if the partner’s needs are being met is mentioned. In fact, the portfolio says this is the responsibility of the partner, not the college.  |
| 9P3         | O          | Formal and informal processes for building relationships are mentioned, but there is no description of a purposeful quality process for building relationships.  |

- 9P4 S HCC identified a representative sample of indicators for assessing the results of collaborative relationships (Figure 9.1). The key areas include educational institutions (e.g., percent of high school graduates attending HCC), businesses (business institute business survey), and community organizations (RSVP survey).
- 9R1a S Highland has documented results for some of the relationship partners. Reported results include enrollment figures, retention and transfer rates, as well as dual credit enrollment, and foundation support.
- 9R1b O While HCC has stated results, there is no information provided concerning benchmarking of results, and it does not appear that the results are tied into an overall improvement process.
- 9R2 OO No data relating to how HCC compares to other institutions in terms of building key collaborative relationships is provided.
- 9I1, 2 O The college does not have a system in place to improve its current processes related to building collaborative relationships. In addition, there are not any targets for improvement established or communication strategies identified.