



HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LOCATED IN NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

Quality Highlights Report



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HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE CQR HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report was presented to Highland Community College in February 2015. The feedback provided by the HLC Systems Appraisal Team solidified strengths of the institution while identifying opportunities for improvement and growth. Since receiving and reflecting on the feedback, the College has focused its improvement efforts on three key areas: 1) the assessment of student learning, particularly at the program and course level; 2) data collection and analysis and utilizing data to inform planning and goal setting; and 3) anticipating need. Within this CQR Highlights Report, the impact of these efforts will be emphasized and in addition, the Strategic Challenges and Compliance, New Opportunities and Growth, and our Strategic Plan will be addressed. In keeping with our commitment to shape “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,” Highland Community College (HCC) is committed to improving its practices and demonstrating that it is fully aligned as an AQIP institution.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES and COMPLIANCE

HCC Response to Systems Appraisal Feedback Report

In the 2015 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report, HCC received valuable feedback from the HLC Systems Appraisal Team regarding the institution’s Strategic Challenges and Outstanding Opportunities. The Strategic Challenges were identified as follows:

Strategic Challenge 1: Develop a Culture of Systematic Data Collection and Analysis

Strategic Challenge 2: Use Data to Inform Planning and Goal Setting

Strategic Challenge 3: Connect Strategic Planning to AQIP Processes

Rather than tackle these challenges in isolation, Highland’s strategy was to identify three Outstanding Opportunity focal areas where improvements would reap the most benefit for the institution. By developing projects and processes to improve these areas, the College is creating a system to embed data collection and analysis, which will ultimately ensure data is utilized to inform planning and goal setting. Goals and/or outcomes for every initiative will be stated with measures identified and targets set prior to implementation.

A recent initiative that exemplifies this improved system is HCC’s Strategic Planning process which began in Fall 2015 and is discussed in more detail later in the report. A key component of the Strategic Planning process incorporated College data and an environmental scan to create a framework for discussion and future planning. As the strategic goals were identified, measurable outcomes and metrics were created, timelines were established, and implementation strategies developed in keeping with the AQIP processes.

Outstanding Opportunities for Improvement

The analysis of the 2015 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report led to the identification of three key focal areas for improvement. HCC has created improvement strategies and is committed to implementing them to our greatest advantage.

OO 1P18, 1R1, 1R2, & 1R3: Assessment of Student Learning, particularly at the course and program level

To address four of the identified Outstanding Opportunities and develop a culture of assessment of student learning, the College has developed a systematic method to collect and document assessment of student learning information. In August 2016, HLC Senior Scholar, Dr. Susan Hatfield, presented an assessment workshop to faculty regarding Learner Outcomes, Program Outcomes, Designing Assessment Plans, Assessment Methods, and Implementation. Faculty now have documented assessment plans which identify benchmarks, assessment methods, assessment findings, and curriculum improvements based upon the findings. A documentation timeline has also been established to ensure that the process becomes embedded in the culture. This effort revealed that the assessment of student learning at the course and program levels was occurring across the institution, yet it was not being formally documented nor was it being shared. The systematic collection of this information each fall and spring semester will not only document the process, it will promote curriculum improvements and the sharing of best practices across the institution.

Institutional level assessment at HCC has traditionally been focused on written communication. The College has improved the assessment of the general education outcome for written communication by refining the process and structure of calibrating assessors prior to the assessment of collected samples. In previous attempts, the inter-rater reliability of assessor scoring has been varied at best. Prior to the most recent assessment, a series of calibration sessions were held where the assessors scored a set of sample essays and then discussed the scoring results. After the calibration sessions, scoring reliability improved which provided more reliable results. The results were presented to all faculty and analyzed by English faculty. Once enough data is available for a trends analysis, the data will be reviewed and targeted improvement strategies will be developed. This process will be replicated Spring 2017 to assess oral communication.

Information Literacy will be the next Institutional Outcome to be included in the assessment cycle. After attending a conference about the assessment of information literacy, a sample assignment has been identified, a scoring rubric is being developed as an assessment tool, and an implementation timeline is being created.

OO 4R3, 4R4, 6R3, 6I2: Use of Data to Implement Change

The Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey was highlighted in the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report as an example of an opportunity for the institution to use data and survey results to implement improvements. In response, the PACE was again administered to all College employees in the fall of 2014. The full report of the PACE results was shared with all employees, presentations highlighting results were given, and

employees were invited to ask questions about the results. An outside consultant facilitated focus groups to help contextualize the survey results in Spring 2015. The College Cabinet utilized the survey and focus group report results to develop a set of strategies, targeting areas that were in most need of improvement: Institutional Organization, Information Sharing, and Teamwork.

The first of these strategies was implemented throughout FY16 and included disbanding the College's leadership team in exchange for a larger and more representative Core Cabinet and Full Cabinet. These groups also began to examine the College's committees, looking at the purpose and membership of each to ensure each is active, relevant, accurate, and timely. The College's program for employee recognition was also evaluated and modifications are being made as a result.

Additional strategies have been proposed for FY17 for all three targeted areas, complete with person(s) responsible and proposed measures and documentation to ensure the intended results. For example, to address Information Sharing, a public forum, referred to as Campus Connections, has been initiated to provide opportunities for campus committees, coordinators, administrators, faculty and staff to share the work and initiatives that are in progress in their areas. The 30 minute sessions will occur twice per semester and will be recorded for those who are unable to attend. Follow-up questions and feedback will be gathered at the end of each session in an effort to create a more open and ongoing dialogue across campus. Once these strategies have been implemented, PACE will be administered and results communicated a third time to measure whether or not the changes have had the intended impact. The processes developed in relation to the PACE to use data to implement change will serve as a model that can be replicated with other projects across campus.

OO 212 & 312: Anticipating Needs

The College recognizes the opportunity to be more proactive by anticipating the needs of stakeholders and its constituents. By developing a culture of systematic data collection and analysis, which will inform planning and goal setting, the College will be poised to anticipate needs and respond in a more proactive manner. The College has demonstrated a proactive approach by hosting an active shooter drill, identifying and implementing a new Strategic Plan, entering into several articulation agreements with transfer institutions, creating new programs, and updating its distance learning equipment.

As a prime example of anticipating needs, the College participated in an active shooter emergency exercise on July 22, 2016. Participants included Highland Community College staff and students, the Stephenson County Emergency Management Agency, the Stephenson County Sheriff's Department, the Sheriff's Reserve, the Freeport Police Department, the Freeport Fire Department, eight additional local fire districts/EMTs, the Freeport Health Network Hospital, the American Red Cross, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. Over 100 individuals participated. The exercise was formed from a scenario devised by the Stephenson County Sheriff's Department and included actions taken by the College's Behavioral Intervention Team prior to the full scale exercise. The exercise included comprehensive planning amongst agencies, which resulted in relationship

building and familiarized area emergency responders with HCC's campus. Following the exercise, a thorough evaluation of agency responses was conducted. Some areas for improvement specific to the College include: the process by which information is shared amongst agencies during an emergency should be more consistent, communication between Highland's Strategic and Operational Teams may be hindered by insufficient communication capabilities, and the manner and clarity in which campus emergency call boxes communicate information could cause uncertainty and confusion. Work has begun to improve these challenges. Some improvements were quickly made, for example, Highland's College Emergency Operation Plan (CEOP) team members now carry cell phones with them at all times. Other improvements will take more time. Additionally, a work group has convened to review solutions to either improve the emergency call boxes or replace them with a different solution. For more information about the active shooter emergency exercise, see the Active Shooter Emergency Response – [Exercise Plan](#) and [After-Action Report](#).

Another illustration of anticipating need centers around dual credit and the partnerships HCC has with area high schools. Recognizing that the recently released HLC faculty qualification guidelines would impose limitations on dual credit offerings within the district, the College secured a grant to update its live stream video equipment. This equipment allows HCC instructors to provide instruction to area high school students from the Highland campus. The cost to the high schools is minimal and the benefit to the high school students is inestimable. Currently, one of the 16 high schools within HCC's district is utilizing this opportunity. HCC anticipates that additional high schools will see this upgrade as a viable alternative to offer dual credit when qualified faculty are not available within the high school.

Emerging Strategic Challenge

Due to many outside forces, including the State of Illinois' budget impasse, Highland has faced unprecedented fiscal challenges in the last 18 months that were not foreseen when the Systems Portfolio was written in 2014. Revenue has decreased by an average of 1%, or \$96,000, and expenses have decreased by an average of 1%, or \$85,000, over the four years comprising FY14 to FY17. The causes for reductions in revenue include declining property values, declining credit hour enrollment, and dramatic reductions in State of Illinois funding. State funding was \$1.9 million in FY14. Due to the budget impasse in FY16, State funding was only \$380,000 which accounted for 27% of what was anticipated. The operating funds fund balance has amounted to 24%, 25%, and 19% of expenses for the FYs 14, 15, and 16, respectively. The projected FY17 fund balance amounts to 19% of expenses. This exceeds the acceptable level used by the College, which is a minimum of 15%.

The College is and has been proactive and aware that complications with each major revenue source were arising. Many reductions in expenses have been thoughtfully made to better align expenses with revenues. In FY16, the College implemented reductions in force, eliminating five full-time and one part-time position, reducing three full-time positions to part-

time, and not filling several positions. In addition to staff reductions, other expenses were decreased, resulting in savings of \$780,000 (5% of budgeted expenses).

The College's financial planning includes periodic issuance of bonds. In FY15, \$3.2 million in general obligation bonds were issued and have funded important instructional, technological, and physical plant projects. In FY16, working cash bonds in the amount of \$2.4 million were issued to support cash flow. The College completed the rating process with Standard & Poor's on both issuances and received an AA- rating with a stable outlook.

For FY17, a deficit budget is anticipated; however, two of the three main funding sources are improving. Property values have increased slightly; a tuition increase was implemented for FY17 and enrollment has stabilized. State funding for FY17 is uncertain, with a stop-gap budget providing less than half of historical annual levels. Additional reductions to HCC's budget will be made and transfers from other funds will be recommended in order to align revenues and expenses as well as possible. It is likely that the fund balance will have to be utilized, as well to weather the budget impasse storm.

Strengthening the Institution through Compliance

Credit Hour Compliance

Highland's courses are required to comply with federal, state, and accreditation credit hour expectations. An internal credit hour policy has been adopted that meets all external requirements and is drafted in language familiar to HCC faculty and staff. The policy will strengthen communication about credit hour definitions. Specifically, it will at minimum address different instructional methods, different class formats, credit by examination, compressed format semesters, communication of expectations to students, and dual credit courses.

In addition to the adoption of a formalized policy, the faculty have been actively involved in the internal audit process to ensure that credit hours are being appropriately awarded. A workshop was held in Spring 2016 explaining the internal review process and desired outcomes. In addition to the all day workshop, work times were held throughout the Spring and Summer 2016 semesters to provide faculty with guidance and support as they reviewed their courses. Because of these efforts, faculty who identified discrepancies have made modifications to their courses to ensure that credit hours are being assigned appropriately.

Faculty Qualifications

In response to the recent release of HLC's Guidelines for Determining Qualified Faculty, Highland has been diligent in its review of faculty qualifications. An internal review of full-time, part-time and dual credit faculty qualifications has been performed, and, as a result of this review, Highland has elected to apply for the Extension as it relates to Dual Credit. Given the rural nature of the College and the funding challenges caused by the State's budget impasse, high schools within HCC's district struggle to employ Master's level instructors. Recognizing the value of dual credit to our in-district residents, Highland intends to collaborate with the high schools in our district to provide additional time for the

instructors to attain the educational credentials needed to meet the guidelines or identify alternative means for dual credit to be made available to the high school students within our district. It is anticipated that the solution will involve the use of the new interactive video system that Highland recently purchased through grant support from the Community Foundation of Freeport. Highland has also adopted a formal policy for faculty qualifications which will assist the identification of qualified faculty in the future.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND GROWTH

Despite the uncertainty caused by the State of Illinois' budget impasse, Highland Community College has seized new opportunities resulting in growth. The College was ranked #3 in USA Today College's "The 10 Best Community Colleges in Illinois." The ranking initially published by Schools.com cited Highland's strengths in offering distance education courses and HCC's Success Center's assistance to students as they adjust to the college experience. The methodology used seven data points including percentage of students enrolled in distance education, cost of attendance, student-to-faculty ratio, average retention rate for full- and part-time students, graduation rate, transfer rate to senior institutions, and a flexibility score based on three data points from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Administrative Leadership

New administrative leadership and the College's leadership structure are key contributors to Highland's recognition of new opportunities. In anticipation of the retirement of HCC's President in June 2015, the College created a transition plan which involved the adoption of a new [organizational structure](#) including the creation of an Executive Vice President (EVP) position. This structure allows the President to focus more time on building partnerships and fundraising while the EVP focuses on the internal aspects of the College. During the restructuring, the role of the Associate Vice President of Student Development and Support Services was elevated to Vice President and now includes Adult Education, Athletics & Physical Education, and the High School Servant Leadership program. Due to a retirement and a resignation, the academic divisions were restructured and the Health, Natural Science and Mathematics Division was split into two separate divisions: Allied Health/Nursing and Natural Science/Mathematics. This divisional restructure allowed for the appointment of two Interim Associate Deans who are able to provide support in their areas of expertise. An Interim Dean with a Social Science and advising background was appointed to the Humanities/Social Science/Fine Arts Division during this reorganization. Due to the restructuring of the Institutional Organization and new administrative leadership, the College is focused on capitalizing on existing and creating new opportunities. The newly developed 2 + 2 agreements, the reclaiming of space for the Mass Communication lab, the growth of the Lifelong Learning program, and the revitalization of the Theatre program are just a few of the areas that have moved from opportunity to reality.

New Programs

A key area of focus has been on the creation of new programs and the revitalization of existing programs. The institution has been proactive in identifying programs that would attract students, offer promising transfer and/or career opportunities, and meet the needs of area employers. Mass Communication, Criminal Justice, and Hospitality Management programs were added in the 2015-2016 academic year.

The curriculum for the [Mass Communication](#) program is aligned with the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) and transfer institutions; furthermore, a 2 + 2 agreement has been signed with Western Illinois University. Space has been repurposed and equipment purchased so that students can learn in a simulated studio environment. In just its first year, the Mass Communication program partnered with the United Way and programs on HCC's campus to create promotional videos for advertising purposes. As an example of the high quality of the program, one of the Mass Communication students within the program was the winner of the 2016 Reel Illinois competition. Although only six students were identified as Mass Communication students in its initial year, in its second year there are 10 students identified as Mass Communication students and 18 students enrolled in the introductory course.

The [Criminal Justice](#) program has also aligned its newly developed curriculum with IAI, transfer institutions, and law enforcement. In just one year, the enrollment in the program has gone from 19 students to 29. Currently, dual credit is being offered through the local career and technical vocational centers and several partnerships are being developed with local law enforcement agencies. New courses are being developed to expand the curriculum offerings so that students can obtain an AA, an AAS, and/or Certificates. Future training opportunities for local law enforcement are also being explored as recommended by the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee.

The [Hospitality Management](#) program was added through extensive collaborative efforts between the Swift Hospitality Management Group and the College and its Foundation. These groups partnered to create and launch this new program. Northwest Illinois has ample employment opportunities for hospitality professionals, yet prior to launching this program neither Highland's district nor adjacent districts provided opportunities for specialized training for individuals interested in pursuing the Hospitality career pathway. The College currently offers a full AAS degree, and hopes to expand into specialized certificate areas. Each graduate of the AAS degree is positioned to earn three separate industry level Certified Hotel Association (CHA) certifications. There were eight students identified as Hospitality Management students in its initial year, and there are now 12 in its second year. It is believed that through continued marketing, community awareness, and industry partnerships, this program will continue to grow.

Three additional programs were developed for the 2016-2017 academic year: Environmental Science, Mechatronics, and Phlebotomy. [Environmental Science](#) has been added as an emphasis area within the Associate of Science degree. This program was added because there is a local need for employees in the field, students transfer into these programs at four-year institutions, and regional community colleges have begun to offer similar programs.

The [Mechatronics](#) program was developed to meet the ever increasing demand for skilled manufacturing systems maintenance workers. Regionally, this program addresses two concerns. First, much of the workforce will be retiring soon, so there is a need for this program to replace outgoing employees. Additionally, many of the current equipment maintenance staff have a limited skill set in one content area. Mechatronics is designed to provide a broader set of skills to include many of the Mechanical and Electronic/Electrical skills needed in today's advanced manufacturing environment.

The third program, [Phlebotomy](#), was also added to address a regional need. The growth rate regionally is much higher than the national average of 1.5%. Area employers have projected a 10% growth rate with an average wage potential of \$31,000 annually. After completing a 16-week course that has no required prerequisites, students who pass the certification exam are immediately employable.

Revitalization and Expansion of Existing Programs

While Highland has recognized the value of developing and offering new programs, the College has also invested resources to revitalize and expand existing programs including Agriculture, Advanced Manufacturing, Theatre, Nursing, and Chemistry. The HCC district is a rural, agriculturally based community. Recently, through combined efforts and partnerships, the Agriculture program has seen many changes. The curriculum has been updated as have the degrees and certificates. Extra-curricular activities have been added to include a [Post-secondary Ag Student \(PAS\) organization](#) that is doing well at regional competitions, an Ag Club, and a [Dairy Judging Team](#). The program has received several significant [monetary donations](#) allowing the program to upgrade equipment, purchase a drone, acquire laptops, and support the judging team.

Regionally, there has been a concerted effort by the College's district economic development groups to promote Advanced Manufacturing. The HCC Foundation [secured donations](#) that allowed the College's manufacturing program to update its [CNC equipment](#) and purchase an industry quality 3D printer. This new equipment, and the hiring of a new, highly skilled instructor, positions the College to meet the needs of area businesses.

In addition to strong community support for the Agriculture and Advanced Manufacturing programs, the HCC district enjoys a rich history in visual and performing arts. After years of not having a full-time theatre faculty member, the program was restored in Spring 2016 when a full-time Theatre instructor was hired. The curriculum is being reviewed and will be updated to reflect IAI and transfer institution requirements. Active recruitment is taking place in district high schools and enrollment in acting courses has already increased. The [Spring 2016](#), [Summer 2016](#), and [Fall 2016](#) productions were well attended and generated community interest.

The nursing program was also identified as an area for potential growth and a [part-time nursing program](#) was launched in Spring 2016. HCC's part-time nursing program is one of the only part-time programs available in the State of Illinois. Designed for the working adult, students can complete the program in seven semesters. The program encourages students

with a strong health care background to apply because working knowledge of the health care field is an advantage to knowledge retention. The program compares to the full-time program in rigor, assessment, and faculty. The amount of time to completion is the only difference noted.

Highland has also revitalized the learning spaces associated with the Chemistry program. The new [Chemistry lab](#) provides a table arrangement that promotes group work and collaboration on experiments. With the addition of laptops, students can collect and analyze data from instrumentation. The lab complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and has fume hood space sufficient for the entire class. The hood space allows for safe implementation of a larger variety of experiments and benefits students working on long-term research projects as part of the Honor's Program.

Highland's program expansion and revitalization has purposely targeted several discipline areas to appeal to a variety of students while also meeting local employer needs. To further enhance the student experience, HCC also added a men's NJCAA bowling team in 2012-2013 and a women's NJCAA bowling team in 2013-2104. Despite the fiscal challenges it has faced, the institution has remained committed to providing a quality educational experience enhanced by a variety of extra-curricular opportunities.

HCC Foundation Support

Without the support of the HCC Foundation, the College could not have expanded and enhanced programming as it has done recently. The HCC Foundation exists to support the College in as many ways as feasible. Over the 54-year relationship, approaches to support, and, therefore, fundraising strategies, have changed in order to provide what is most needed. Scholarships have always been a priority. The HCC Foundation has awarded more than \$7 million since 1962; however, the support for curricular programs and special needs has changed. For years, significant donations supported various academic programs, fellowships, or chairs. More recently, and in keeping with the College's need for funding for new programs and support for continuing programs, the Foundation has been actively pursuing donations for annual or multi-year funding for programs such as Hospitality Management, the Agriculture department, CNC Machining Technology, Leadership, Theatre, and Music. Strategies are being developed for seeking support from donors for Mass Communication, Mechatronics, and other new programs.

In addition, the Foundation and the College developed a grant proposal to the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL), based in Rockford, IL, to fund scholarships for high school and college students who demonstrate financial need. The \$1,000,000 raised by the HCC Foundation will be matched by CFNIL and will generate \$80,000 per year in scholarship funds starting in 2018.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Strengthening the Institution through Continuous Improvement (AQIP Projects)

Highland Community College has four AQIP Projects underway and in varied stages of completion. The projects target the three strategic goals that were identified in HCC's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan:

Goal #1- Proactively identify emerging programmatic opportunities.

Targeted Planned Outcomes: Improve our district's awareness and identity with Highland Community College through structured outreach efforts.

Increase the number of faculty and staff engaged in community outreach efforts and providing feedback regarding programmatic opportunities

Goal #2- Meet program delivery needs of current and prospective students.

Targeted Planned Outcome: Increase penetration in Highland Community College district.

Goal #3- Increase college-level enrollment

Targeted Planned Outcomes: More students will be retained through transitional courses and enroll in college-level courses

More students will place into college-level courses.

Cultivating Collaborative Relationships with External Partners of HCC

Project Start: 9/30/2014

Anticipated Completion Date: 8/30/2017

Recognizing that stronger outreach efforts would address Goal #1 of the Strategic Plan, increase external funding opportunities, and align with the mission of the institution, the College acknowledged in the 2014 Systems Portfolio that there would be a great benefit in creating a more aligned and integrated process for building collaborative relationships. This was the impetus for creating the AQIP project. Since the inception of this Action Project, the College has identified potential areas of growth (i.e. dual credit, Lifelong Learning) and created goals for each area. Based upon those goals, the College has purposefully cultivated relationships with organizations, institutions, and individuals that would intersect with these goals.

In its most recent AQIP update, HCC noted the partnerships that have been established and/or enhanced including those with regional school districts, the P-20 Network, Business and Industry, the Collaborate Freeport initiative, the Oregon Together Initiative, the HCC Strategic Planning Initiative, the Freeport Community Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois.

In conjunction with the AQIP project focused on cultivating collaborative partnerships, Highland has identified new ways to connect with the communities that it serves, namely by sending representatives to local events across the district, and hosting new events on campus. For example, [The Friends of the Fine Arts \(FoFA\)](#) organization has been formed to increase the level of participation and expand the opportunities for those interested in the visual and performing arts. FoFA members are interested in promoting and enhancing HCC's educational endeavors that center on the culture and art in the community.

The inaugural Homecoming 2016 event "[Paws to Celebrate](#)" is another initiative focused on connecting Highland with the communities in its district. Highlighting the paws of the HCC school mascot, the Cougar, the event took place the day of the opening double header for men's and women's basketball. In addition to the athletic events, the celebration showcased the renovated Chemistry lab, the Mass Communication studio, and the Nursing simulation lab with campus tours and an open house. Area veterans were recognized between the women's and men's basketball games, a free lunch was provided, and there were also inflatables and face painting for children and a post-game celebration for attendees. The event provided an opportunity for the community to see the College's progress and celebrate the institution's continued success.

Due to these efforts, a number of partnerships have generated new revenue streams and enrollment increases that would not have otherwise been realized. This is demonstrated by the following:

- Enrollment for the Fall 2016 semester is up 3.7 percent in unduplicated head count and 1.9% in credit hours (as of week 13 of the semester)
- The number of Lifelong Learning classes offered during the past school year increased by more than 300 percent
- Dual credit and concurrent enrollment increased by 20 percent in FY16 as compared to FY15.
- HCC Foundation grants to HCC for FY16 were over \$1.6 million dollars

Expanding and Evolving Community Education toward "Lifelong Learning"

Project Start: 8/25/2014

Anticipated Completion Date: 5/30/2017

The [Lifelong Learning \(LLL\)](#) project relates to HCC's Strategic Goals #1 and #2 as well as a strategic initiative for the College to be more responsive to needs and expectations of stakeholders. The original goals of the project were:

1. Develop and implement a Marketing Plan
2. Create a process for course development with less than 20 steps
3. Increase LLL course offerings by 50%
4. Increase LLL courses that are held by 50%
5. Increase enrollment in LLL courses by 50%

These initial goals have been expanded to also include:

6. Streamline the enrollment process for prospective students (online registration, acceptance of credit card payments, not requiring Social Security numbers) to remove barriers to growing the program as identified by stakeholders
7. Provide increased teaching opportunities for Lifelong Learning courses to current and potential full- and part-time faculty and staff
8. Offer at least one LLL class in every county of the Highland district
9. Expand LLL course offerings to include additional categories of continuing education for professional advancement, and additional content areas to reach a wider segment of our district population

At this phase of the project, the only goals that have not been met are goals 6 and 9. To date, classes have been offered in every county of the district, and over 600 students have been served. Programming has also been expanded to include summer opportunities for children. To address goal 6, Highland has identified an option for online registration and is currently attempting to identify funding to support this endeavor. Although programming has expanded to include children, additional categories of continuing education for professional development are under exploration to meet goal 9.

Developing a Comprehensive Transitional (Developmental) Math Studies Program

Project Start: 8/25/2014

Anticipated Completion Date: 12/13/2016

The College is close to wrapping up an AQIP Action Project that was directly tied to the College's strategic priorities. Identified goals for this project include:

- 1) Reduce the amount of time required for transitional students to move from transitional courses into transferable college-level courses
- 2) Increase the retention rate for transitional students
- 3) Increase the completion rate for transitional students

The best practices of transitional education and instructional design were identified by a multidisciplinary committee composed of internal and external stakeholders. Implemented changes included modularization of math courses, early alert, additional pathways for learners, and on-site tutoring support.

Since the project update in Fall 2015, the following has occurred:

- The College replaced a part-time math lab coordinator position with a full-time Math Achievement Center manager position, which allows that individual to focus on professional development and teaching methodologies in the Math Achievement Center (MAC).
- Data collection was expanded to include attendance data in the transitional mathematics courses and mini-lectures; number of contacts with embedded tutors; number of tests and repeat tests; tutoring hours sought outside of the course.

- Initial Course Completion Outcomes: 15% improvement when comparing the second eight weeks of Spring semester 2015 to the second eight weeks of Spring semester 2016.

The preliminary data indicates that the course completion outcomes for transitional math students has improved considerably because of the changes implemented. Prior to the completion of the project, more faculty training will occur and a faculty handbook outlining best teaching practices for the new educational format will be developed.

Redesign of Pivotal Transitional English Course (COMM 090)

Project Start: 3/1/2016

Anticipated Completion Date: 3/1/2019

The redesign project is an extension of the transitional math action project and directly tied to Highland's strategic initiative to improve transitional education, thus, improving retention and completion rates among these high-risk students. The project requires the institution to reexamine HCC's transitional writing curriculum and make course modifications to ensure the transitional courses are properly aligned with the college-level courses. The focus of the project will be on redesigning HCC's highest level transitional (developmental) writing course (COMM 090) and exploring alternative delivery formats such as co-requisite models like Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP). Since transitional writing and reading are so closely related, the transitional reading sequence will also be reexamined. Ultimately, the project will target the curriculum alignment of all English composition classes at HCC to determine how well each course supports the next.

Strengthening the Institution through Strategic Planning

The College began the development of its new strategic plan during the 2015-2016 academic year by holding two sessions with faculty and staff during the Opening Days in-service to gather input. Plans were developed to once again utilize a community-based planning process with guidance from the *Building Communities Through Strategic Planning: A Guidebook for Community Colleges* by Kay McClenney, McClenney, Nancy Armes, and R. Jan Lecroy, July 1997. The President recruited a retired school district superintendent, Dr. Peter Flynn, to chair the Strategic Planning Council and invited 40 Council participants from across the College district including 19 internal staff and faculty.

Following input from the faculty, a sub-committee structure was developed for the Council with deans, faculty, and staff serving as facilitators. Each full Council meeting included information gathering that could be further processed by the sub-committees. 13 guest presenters provided context and information including an environmental scan presented by Northern Illinois University Governmental Studies; information from the updated Community Leaders Survey data; enrollment related data and trends; HLC information and Action Projects in transitional education; vision for the future and growth of new programs from the President; and additional guest speakers who shared community perspective and economic development insights.

The Council held a series of 13 community focus groups. The data gathered through focus groups across the district was discussed and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis followed. Sub-committees synthesized the information and developed draft goals for the strategic plan. The College has prioritized the goals and is in the process of developing the strategic plan document. Specific outcomes and performance indicators for the goals will be developed as well. The Strategic Planning Goals for 2017-2022 have been identified as follows:

- Strengthen and expand high quality educational pathways for diverse student populations
- Enhance affordable and convenient access to educational opportunities
- Develop sustainable models to address student financial needs and challenges
- Expand and strengthen educational program offerings and modes of instructional delivery
- Cultivate and strengthen partnerships with other educational institutions, business, and community organizations
- Continuously assist with faculty and staff professional development in order to maintain high performance learning environments and services contributing to a caring and supportive campus climate which encourages student engagement
- In collaboration with fundraising partners, maximize new and existing alternative funding resources in order to offset decreasing state funding and to sustain growth momentum
- Provide safe, comfortable, eco-friendly learning environments in terms of infrastructure, facilities, and technology
- Strengthen marketing mix and strategies in order to more fully showcase College strengths in ways that connect effectively with diverse audiences-especially potential new and returning students, alumni and other potential friends of the College
- Further develop and cultivate interactive communication channels with external constituents and stakeholders
- Further develop and cultivate interactive communication channels between College departments and members of the College community
- Exhibit commitment to engage more collaboratively in continuous improvement processes and dialogue

CONCLUSION

Highland Community College remains committed to strengthening the institution by addressing strategic challenges and compliance, embracing new opportunities, and creating a sound strategic plan for the future. Through these efforts, the College demonstrates its resolve to be a fully aligned AQIP institution. The College is anticipating the CQR visit and the insightful feedback that will further enhance our commitment to shape the future through quality education.

INFORMATIONAL LINKS:

[Academic Calendar](#)

[HCC 2015-2017 Catalog](#)

[HCC Organizational Chart](#)

[Student Handbook](#)

[Strategic Plan 2010-2015](#)

[Active Shooter Emergency Response- Exercise Plan](#) and [After-Action Report/Improvement Plan](#) (*both adhere to the Department of Homeland Security format*).

[“Paws to Celebrate” web page](#) and [photos](#)

[FoFA page on web](#)

[Lifelong Learning page on web](#)

[Promotional stories for new programs](#)