

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

October 6, 2010



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

**30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504
www.AQIP.org
AQIP@hlcommission.org
800-621-7440**

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT
In response to the *Systems Portfolio* of
NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**
The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

October 6, 2010

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Elements of the Feedback Report	4
Strategic and Accreditation Issues	6
Using the Feedback Report	8
Critical Characteristics Analysis	9
Category Feedback	12
<i>Helping Students Learn</i>	13
<i>Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives</i>	23
<i>Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs</i>	27
<i>Valuing People</i>	34
<i>Leading and Communicating</i>	39
<i>Supporting Institutional Operations</i>	44
<i>Measuring Effectiveness</i>	48
<i>Planning Continuous Improvement</i>	52
<i>Building Collaborative Relationships</i>	56

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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

- **Category 1** - Northcentral Technical College has developed a number of outstanding services such as the remediation provided at no cost to students through the Learning Center and certification programs required for new faculty to ensure they have a good understanding of Northcentral Technical College's views and directions in teaching strategies and policies and procedures. However, there is no mention of the number of staff or faculty (especially full-time) in the portfolio. It is not possible to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these teaching strategies without knowing the faculty/student ratio and the percent of courses taught by fulltime faculty. Northcentral Technical College has allocated additional resources towards learning, and uses the Quality Review Process and Instructional Vitality Process to improve and select processes for student learning. Northcentral Technical College has expanded its regional centers and is using initiatives like Weekend College, Learn Your Way, and other alternative delivery methods to aid in student learning. Northcentral Technical College is also using its enhanced partnerships with business and education to enhance learning opportunities. Northcentral Technical College may want to look at how it solicits feedback on new learning opportunities.
- **Category 2** - While Northcentral Technical College emphasized its work with K-16 initiatives in this category, Northcentral Technical College has failed to explain how it addresses such things as economic development, lifelong learning for students of non-traditional age – both key elements of its mission – along with other potential distinctive objectives. It is atypical to not discuss all distinctive objectives in this category.
- **Category 3** - Northcentral Technical College has presented information which shows that it is seen as a key part of its community and that it is providing valuable and needed services to non-student stakeholder groups. Northcentral Technical College has utilized data from its various sources to develop a large number of improvements including an expansion of distance education opportunities, significant changes in development of strategic partnerships, and development of a student security force. Northcentral Technical College continues to increase the value of its relationships with both students

and stakeholders through initiatives like career coaches, advisory committees, Presidential Listening Sessions, and SPARK. Based on the Noel-Levitz results that are presented, student satisfaction at Northcentral Technical College is high, but additional data that could be collected with the CCSSE might also be valuable.

- **Category 4** - Northcentral Technical College's recent improvements in Valuing People include a Learning Management System, orientation and continuing education programs, safety and security audits, and a wellness program. Northcentral Technical College is very strong when it comes to recruiting and retaining qualified candidates, but may consider having more employee feedback when designing jobs. Northcentral Technical College does not address how it determines the training and development needs of adjunct faculty. Processes provided to reinforce professional development of College employees seem to focus only on fulltime employees. Adjunct faculty participation in the PACE survey will provide information on the specific needs of this work group.
- **Category 5** - The change in leadership at Northcentral Technical College has resulted in significant improvements in communication which has created a culture of collaboration as evidenced by the new infrastructure which emphasizes continuous quality improvement. Northcentral Technical College's recent improvements in Leading and Communicating include a redesigned Intranet, a college newsletter, and the posting of minutes from all meetings on the shared drive. By choosing to be a member of CQIN the institutions leadership has communicated a commitment to improved quality. The results from the PACE survey show a high degree of satisfaction with the institution's mission, leadership, and communication.
- **Category 6** - Northcentral Technical College has collected a large amount of data regarding its successes in Supporting Institutional Operations. Northcentral Technical College has utilized this data to make decisions in order to improve in these areas. In most cases, the performance measures indicate that Northcentral Technical College is performing well in relation to this category. Northcentral Technical College has made many recent improvements for Supporting Institutional Operations. These improvements include remodeled areas, technological improvements, financial aid process improvements, and security operations. While Northcentral Technical College has done a good job in this category overall, Northcentral Technical College should

attempt to provide more information on how it utilizes data and collects data to compare itself to other institutions. Northcentral Technical College could benefit from identifying a process for utilizing data that is systematic and easily explained to the reader – and hence easily explained to its stakeholders. Northcentral Technical College could also identify from streamlining measurable outcomes in the areas of student and administrative support services and developing a comprehensive set of these to ensure that it is measuring those areas most important to its stakeholders. Northcentral Technical College could also benefit from suggestions contained within the category comments such as the use of social media to gather additional feedback from stakeholder groups.

- **Category 7** - Northcentral Technical College provides a wide variety of different dashboards that it creates and distributes. However, it failed to clearly lay out the process of how these dashboards are used in systematic analysis and communication within the organization. Northcentral Technical College has defined how it collects and stores data, but it has not sufficiently addressed the question of accessibility to data.
- **Category 8** - The changes implemented by the new president seem to have successfully engaged the community and created a culture of continuous quality improvement at Northcentral Technical College. Some of the actual processes are unclear, such as how Northcentral Technical College evaluates strategies. In an organization there are always forces and projects competing for limited resources. It is unclear how Northcentral Technical College evaluates strategies to ensure resources are being distributed efficiently.
- **Category 9** - Northcentral Technical College works extensively with local school districts, other institutions of higher education, workforce development boards, and area employers. Northcentral Technical College has cited several improvements made in the area of partnerships including re-establishing a relationship with the College of Menominee Nation, and creation of a variety of departments as well as added positions to support initiatives in this area. Northcentral Technical College has also begun Presidential Listening Sessions, created a K-16 department, and created a Workforce Learning Solutions department. What is less clear is how Northcentral Technical College prioritizes these relationships, and how they develop relationships with their vendors.

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

ELEMENTS OF Northcentral Technical College's FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

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

Issues Affecting Compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*. An important goal for the Systems Appraisal was to review your institution's compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. The peer quality experts who served on the team were all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission's *Criteria*, and the Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the *Criteria* as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your institution's systems and processes under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the *Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the *Criteria* and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.

The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Northcentral Technical 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 Northcentral Technical 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 Northcentral Technical College will discuss these strategic issues, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified:

- Throughout the portfolio, the team was impressed by the wide variety of improvements described by the institution. The institution has made excellent improvements and adjustments in its operations for which it is to be commended. However, it was not always clear to the team how the processes and results responses were directly related to the improvements cited in a specific section. Making the linkage between the three areas clear in the writing will aid future teams in assessing the institutions use of data in a systematic matter rather than simply providing a list of improvements that are not linked to the provided results and processes.
- Northcentral Technical College has established a dashboard for presenting its quality indicators on a regular basis to its Board of Trustees and other stakeholders. However, the use of this dashboard, and potentially of other dashboards remained confusing to the team throughout the teams deliberations. As an example, in response to question 7P4, Northcentral Technical College provided a wide variety of different dashboards that it creates and distributes. However, it failed to clearly lay out the process of how these dashboards are used in systematic analysis and communication within the organization. The seemingly complex process of creating monthly then quarterly then yearly dashboards may be streamlined within the institution. However, this isn't clear to the reader and further leads to additional concerns that the institution is focused on potential unnecessary steps in process which was a focus of the strategic feedback in the last Systems Portfolio Review. The team was also concerned that there were a lack of dashboard measures related to certain categories such as Category 4.
- Specifically related to Category 1, Northcentral Technical College has an opportunity for growth in its overall assessment process and the reporting of results related to its assessment processes. Northcentral Technical College did not share data that provides a full picture on holistic assessment of student learning from course outcomes to program outcomes. Northcentral Technical College's lack of internal direct measures related to assessment of student learning may miss an opportunity for the institution to understand "Helping Students Learn" from another perspective. Northcentral Technical

College might want to consider in future portfolios combining answers to several complimentary questions to provide a clear picture on the institutions processes and clearly explain these.

- The team is concerned with the singular focus on K-16 initiatives in Category 2 with no discussion of other activities in this area or acknowledgement of any other distinctive objectives. Northcentral Technical College provided in-depth coverage of its K-16 initiatives in this category, however no other areas were discussed in this category. Northcentral Technical College needs to develop processes and results for areas other than K-16 initiatives that are other Northcentral Technical College distinctive objectives or state that it has no other distinctive objectives.
- The institution's strategic goals all seem to be highly focused on growth. While there is nothing wrong with focusing on growth, this must come with an evident discussion on both resource availability and maintaining and improving quality. There was little discussion throughout the portfolio on things such as budget capacity, staffing ratios, etc. There are no measures of these items found in any of the dashboards included in the portfolio either so the team cannot make determinations as to whether or not the institution is maintaining appropriate ratios and stability in these areas. This is critical to ensure that the institution is staying healthy while focusing on growth.
- The institution relied heavily on PACE data throughout the portfolio. PACE is an excellent tool, however the institution may be relying solely on this one tool without a look at other sources where relevant data might be acquired.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

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

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

The purpose of this section is to identify what team members understood to be the critical and distinguishing characteristics of your institution. They are the shared understanding of the most important aspects of Northcentral Technical College, its current dynamics and the forces surrounding it, and its internal momentum and aspirations, at least as team members understood them. This section also demonstrates that the Systems Appraisal Team recognized

and knew what makes Northcentral Technical 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

- OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses.
- OVb Since its last portfolio, Northcentral Technical College has experienced a significant cultural shift resulting in re-focused mission and vision statements and a change from operating principles to core beliefs and new strategic directions. The college named a new president, Dr. Lori Weyers, in 2006.
- OV1a Northcentral Technical College offers both credit and non-credit offerings that help support its mission to build a competitive workforce and meet its student learning goals of occupational skill attainment and mastery of core abilities. The college offers 33 associate degree programs, 24 technical diplomas, 114 certificates, and 9 apprenticeship programs through six academic divisions.
- OV1b Northcentral Technical College is building a culture of evidence of learning through early and frequent feedback to students (formative) and evaluation of levels of mastery (summative). While the primary instruction within Northcentral Technical College occurs on its physical campuses, the college serves a widely dispersed rural community using Interactive Television, web-conferencing, and electronic delivery.
- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies

and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in 2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.

- OV3 Northcentral Technical College faces a great deal of competition for students and training opportunities. While it identifies numerous competitors - including both public state institutions and for-profit institutions - which challenge the college to remain focused on its mission, the college acknowledges it is mutually beneficial to collaborate with these entities to benefit its students.
- OV4a Northcentral Technical College operates under shared governance between the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board and the Northcentral Technical College Board of Trustees.
- OV4b Northcentral Technical College is structured in a hierarchical system of teams, from the governing boards and the Executive Learning Teams to specific teams such as support services and learning; teams utilize action plans for strategic direction. Internally, Northcentral Technical College's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), reporting directly to the President, is responsible for actions that fulfill the college's mission, vision, and strategic directions. Most college employees are represented by one of four bargaining units.
- OV5 The president of Northcentral Technical College holds triennial listening sessions with the community. Sessions are held with groups from the community, business and industry leaders, representatives from K-12, employees and students. These sessions provide the necessary feedback for the college Board and Executive Leadership Team to set strategic direction.
- OV6a Northcentral Technical College has no residence halls, but maintains a partnership with UW-Marathon County to provide students with residence rooms. The college maintains seven sites in the district, encompassing 549,533 square feet, and is currently

expanding two of the sites by creating the Wood Technology Center of Excellence and the Agriculture Center of Excellence.

- OV6b Northcentral Technical College shows commitment to student services through acquisition and improvement of facilities, enhancement of equipment (such as PeopleSoft & Blackboard) as well as improving technology through a five-year technology plan. The college possesses a sophisticated ITV system and 96 smart classrooms in order to leverage technology to meet its large service area.
- OV7 As part of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), Northcentral Technical College's data collection and reporting is driven by state requirements. The college follows all federal data requirements, and operates under nine aligned data systems within the WTCS.
- OV8 Northcentral Technical College operates on a three-year planning cycle that allows the institution to identify key commitments, constraints, challenges, and opportunities. The college's key commitments include growth, innovation, strategic partnerships, organizational development, continuous quality improvement, fiscal strength, and sustainability. Constraints include reduced funding, increasing competition, increased calls for accountability, image, providing equal services in a large rural district, and increasing costs.
- OV9 Northcentral Technical College has fostered many partnerships from the local to the national level to provide pertinent and cost-effective educational services to its communities. Northcentral Technical College collaborates with various institutions within business and industry (including unions), community organizations, governmental organizations (including tribal government), and other institutions of higher education (including Community Colleges for International Development, the Georgetown Center for Intercultural Education and Development, the Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education, and the Continuous Quality Improvement Network).

CATEGORY FEEDBACK

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP Categories, selected *Critical Characteristics* are again highlighted,

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

AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northcentral Technical 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

OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square

miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses.

- OV1a Northcentral Technical College offers both credit and non-credit offerings that help support its mission to build a competitive workforce and meet its student learning goals of occupational skill attainment and mastery of core abilities. The college offers 33 associate degree programs, 24 technical diplomas, 114 certificates, and 9 apprenticeship programs through six academic divisions.
- OV1b Northcentral Technical College is building a culture of evidence of learning through early and frequent feedback to students (formative) and evaluation of levels of mastery (summative). While the primary instruction within Northcentral Technical College occurs on its physical campuses, the college serves a widely dispersed rural community using Interactive Television, web-conferencing, and electronic delivery.
- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in 2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.
- OV3 Northcentral Technical College faces a great deal of competition for students and training opportunities. While it identifies numerous competitors - including both public state institutions and for-profit institutions - which challenge the college to remain focused on its mission, the college acknowledges it is mutually beneficial to collaborate with these entities to benefit its students.
- OV6b Northcentral Technical College shows commitment to student services through acquisition and improvement of facilities, enhancement of equipment (such as PeopleSoft & Blackboard) as well as improving technology through a five-year

technology plan. The college possesses a sophisticated ITV system and 96 smart classrooms in order to leverage technology to meet its large service area.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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	Northcentral Technical College reevaluated their core abilities which resulted in refined common learning objectives. The objectives were validated both internally and externally. From this, Northcentral Technical College developed indicators for each objective and they have integrated these objectives throughout the organization.
1P1b	O	Northcentral Technical College has included many people in the process of establishing common learning objectives, but has not revisited the initial process since 2003. Who is involved in the curriculum modification process is not clear.
1P1c	O	After seven years, examining the currency and efficacy of these seven core abilities through another group validation could assist Northcentral Technical College in improving its core abilities.
1P2	S	Northcentral Technical College has a strong process for determining program learning objectives and aligning course competencies with those program learning objectives. Once set, these objectives are reviewed by advisory committees on an annual basis. For programs that have external accreditation, Northcentral Technical College establishes program outcomes based on accreditation. For programs offered in response to local workforce and industry needs, Northcentral Technical College employs Designing A Curriculum Process (DACUM). This process allows both internal and external stakeholders a voice in shaping program outcomes.
1P3a	S	Northcentral Technical College uses employability, wage, and competitive program data to determine if a new program is needed. Both the

- Northcentral Technical College and WTCS boards participate in this process.
- 1P3b OO While Northcentral Technical College describes a product development plan process, Northcentral Technical College does not provide a detailed program and course design process. Further the role of faculty is not clear. Clarifying the role of faculty and stakeholder input and streamlining the need to go to both the Northcentral Technical College and WTCS Board of Trustees could assist the college in its ability to be nimble in the market place.
- 1P4 O While Northcentral Technical College offers a variety of curricular opportunities such as short-term certificates, one- and two-year technical diplomas, and associate degrees, the process to design these programs is done at the discretion of the Northcentral Technical College District. Incorporating a process of periodic environmental scans or survey instruments might assist Northcentral Technical College in a more defined process of designing responsive academic programs. A single focus on current business and market needs may limit the creativity and innovation of curriculum that advances new knowledge and new ideas, beyond merely meeting current needs.
- 1P5 S Northcentral Technical College utilizes a variety of assessment instruments to ensure students are ready to learn at each phase of their academic career. Academic deans meet with teams to review and recommend entry-level program admission requirements using a variety of external criteria. Northcentral Technical College further analyzes student successes in line with these assessments to ensure that the assessment strategy remains valid.
- 1P6 S While serving 22,100 students and a large geographic area, Northcentral Technical College employs a number of methods, including web and print communication, face-to-face advising, enrollment advisors within K-12 schools, Career Coaches, and the Student Service team, to communicate with prospective students about the required preparation for programs.

- 1P7a O Although Northcentral Technical College provides information to students on programs through career decision workshops, this does not address the matching of students' interests with a career choice. There are many tools available, like Career Cruising, which are aimed at helping students make better career choices.
- 1P7b O While Northcentral Technical College has created a rapid response team to respond to mass layoffs and business closings, Northcentral Technical College did not describe how it used this team specifically to help these displaced workers select appropriate programs of study. The role of faculty appears to be absent in this process.
- 1P8a S Northcentral Technical College has developed a series of remediation programs which allow students to prepare for any areas where they may not meet program admission standards. These programs, offered through the Northcentral Technical College learning center, include GED/HSED preparation; skill building in basic reading, writing, math and science; study skills; preparation for college entrance exams; English Language Learners (ELL) and computer and financial skill development. Upon completing the required remediation, students are eligible for acceptance into a program.
- 1P8b O It is unclear what process Northcentral Technical College has incorporated to validate its methods of placement and the efficacy of its remedial programs. For instance, it is not clear if students are required to retest to ensure that their skills are sufficient after completing remediation.
- 1P9 SS All faculty are required to take the WTCS instructor certification course in teaching methods, which instructs them on identifying various learning styles. Northcentral Technical College also provides many different options of delivering content, including Learn Your Way courses that allow students to select delivery methods that match their learning style.
- 1P10 S Northcentral Technical College has demonstrated a commitment to serving the special needs of student subgroups through a variety of internal efforts including increased basic adult education services,

leveraging technology to serve these students, and assisting with ELL students. Northcentral Technical College has also obtained federal assistance with a Trio Grant to assist first-generation students, low income students and students with a disability. Northcentral Technical College has hired a minority student coordinator/advisor to address the needs of Asian students and parents.

- 1P11a S Northcentral Technical College uses instructor training and certification courses, WIDS, Educational Support Services, and new faculty orientation to communicate its expectations for effective teaching and learning, student evaluation, faculty self-analysis, classroom observation, and supervisor evaluation. In turn, faculty communicate these expectations to students.
- 1P11b OO Although it is clear how expectations are communicated to full-time faculty, it is unclear how Northcentral Technical College communicates these expectations to its adjunct faculty. Further, it is unclear what specific role faculty play in these processes.
- 1P12 S Northcentral Technical College has developed a clear set of guiding questions in its Course Utilization Policy which allow it systematically ensure that it is offering an effective and efficient course delivery system. All curriculum standards are based upon performance standards which students must meet. This approach supports Northcentral Technical College's focus on being a performance-based institution.
- 1P13 SS Northcentral Technical College has a thorough, systematic process – which also allows for feedback input and relatively flexible changes – that allows it to ensure its program and course currency and effectiveness. Processes include semi-annual advisory committee feedback, annual curriculum modification, Quality Review Process and Return on Investment which take in a significant amount of stakeholder feedback as well as other qualitative and quantitative data sources, uses that data to make recommendations and develops a plan for implementation of needed changes.

- 1P14a S The Instructional Vitality Process reviews and analyzes instructional offerings based on several measures including graduate placement, instructional cost per FTE, enrollment, retention and labor market projections to determine program enhancement or discontinuation.
- 1P14b O While Northcentral Technical College described in its response to question 1P13 a seemingly thorough process of evaluating its curriculum, it didn't describe the Instructional Vitality Process in that context to allow the reader to understand fully where this process sits both in time and procedurally with the remainder of the Quality Review Process. For example, if a decision is made to discontinue a program or course, how does Northcentral Technical College ensure that current students are accommodated? Including this as a part of the overall process would help the reader understand where this fits within Northcentral Technical College's entire system of program review and evaluation.
- 1P15a S Northcentral Technical College determines learning support needs through Presidential Listening Sessions, the Noel-Levitz SSI, the Student Governing Board, the Perkins Performance Scorecard, and student services. Northcentral Technical College addresses learning support needs through academic advising, counseling, peer tutoring, placement assistance, transfer assistance, and the TRiO program.
- 1P15b O While Northcentral Technical College has created a single position of an Online learning Specialist position to aid the completion and retention of online students, this goal would appear to require much broader support than a single position and appears to lack a central role of faculty in helping students complete their online programs.
- 1P16a S Northcentral Technical College has numerous student organizations that are aligned with specific educational programs and appears to have a mature process that facilitates the timely development of organizations aligned with student needs.
- 1P16b O While Northcentral Technical College has a wide-variety of student organizations and an active Student Life department, the institution does

not have a central process of aligning co-curricular and curricular objectives. Establishing a process through which this alignment is documented may assist Northcentral Technical College in integrating students' experience in the institution's curricular and co-curricular offerings.

- 1P17 S Northcentral Technical College enacts a number of processes to ensure that students awarded degrees and certificates have met expectations for learning and development. From course-level performance to a number of summative measures including capstone projects, portfolios, internships, employer feedback, graduate feedback, graduation rates, and transfer information, the institution has the processes in place that illustrate students' attainment of degrees or certificates.
- 1P18a S Northcentral Technical College has processes to assess student learning at entry through placement tests, during the program of study through both formative and performance assessment, and at time of exit through summative assessments around program outcomes.
- 1P18b O It is clear how Northcentral Technical College assesses students, but it is not clear how these processes are designed.
- 1R1a S While Northcentral Technical College measures student learning and development by collecting employer satisfaction surveys, licensure/certificate exam pass rates/scores graduate follow-up surveys, graduation rates, course competency completion rates, and the WTCS Quality Review Process and scorecard.
- 1R1b OO Northcentral Technical College does not utilize any internal direct measures to measure and analyze student learning. Development of internal direct measures can create local buy-in to course and program outcomes and allow multivariable analysis of student learning that might provide a fuller picture of student learning.
- 1R2 S Employer Satisfaction Survey results show an increase in satisfaction in areas of technical work skills, people skills, and attitude and in many

common learning objectives, and Northcentral Technical College is well above the WTCS average in course completion.

- 1R2,1R3 OO Northcentral Technical College has utilized general education course completion rates as the only academic result for performance on common learning objectives. Technical course completion rates are one of only a small handful of data points provided as related to program learning objectives. While course completion rates are a valuable part of these questions, Northcentral Technical College should seek additional methods of ensuring that it has determined performance on common learning objectives and program learning outcomes and share those results as well.
- 1R3 O Although graduation rates, graduate satisfaction, and five-year follow-up placement data is important, many other measures of program learning objectives were mentioned in previous sections. Some of these measures, like licensure exam results or summative assessment results, could be more appropriate in this section.
- 1R4a S Northcentral Technical College performs well in measurements by third-party external licensure exams and in its Employer Satisfaction Survey. These indicate that Northcentral Technical College meets the needs of its external stakeholders.
- 1R4b O While a clear administrative body (ESS) provides an organizational framework for effective and efficient course delivery system, Northcentral Technical College's ability to measure the effectiveness of ESS could provide data to enhance this body's work.
- 1R4c O Northcentral Technical College has identified an appropriate set of items to review in order to determine that students to whom the institution awards degrees and certificates have met their learning and development expectations. It is unclear from the response provided how Northcentral Technical College utilizes this information in a systematic way to ensure that students are meeting expectations and where gaps exist that remediation to programs, courses, and activities is being made.

- 1R5a S Northcentral Technical College's performance results on the Noel-Levitz SSI and Northcentral Technical College Graduate Employment Placement survey demonstrate that Northcentral Technical College does well in comparison to WTCS and national competitors.
- 1R5b O The Northcentral Technical College graduate placement rates have fallen recently and have trailed the WTCS over the past 4 years. Northcentral Technical College attributes this to the economy but the data is comparative and may indicate other issues beyond the economy.
- 1R5c O Northcentral Technical College should seek to establish benchmarks in its Trio Performance Report, Northcentral Technical College course completion of courses targeted by Nursing Tutor Program report, and Northcentral Technical College Library and Database Usage report in order to measure its performance.
- 1R6 S With the exception of the performance of the Dental Hygiene National Board Dental Hygiene Examination, Northcentral Technical College performs at or above national higher education organizations in both external licensure exams and the Noel Levitz SSI. Additionally, Employer Satisfaction surveys indicate a high-level of satisfaction with Northcentral Technical College graduates.
- 111 S The arrival of Dr. Lori Weyers in 2006 assisted Northcentral Technical College in making improvements in Helping Students Learn much more systematic and collaborative through a variety of processes including the Curriculum Modification Process, the Quality Review Process, Instructional Vitality Process, Product Development Planning, and Curriculum Return on Investment. These processes, through collaborative methods, communicate the centrality of learning at Northcentral Technical College and assist it in measuring the effectiveness of its efforts. Northcentral Technical College has expanded its regional centers and is using initiatives like Weekend College, Learn Your Way, and other alternative delivery methods to aid in student learning. Northcentral Technical College is also using its enhanced

partnerships with business and education to enhance learning opportunities.

- 112 O While Northcentral Technical College states they have established a culture where learning is central and have reorganized its infrastructure to maximize efficiencies, it is unclear how this culture has been established and what evidence support this culture change. The reorganization is not fully explained. The overall focus appears to be on growth as defined by student headcount.

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses.

- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in 2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.
- OV6a Northcentral Technical College has no residence halls, but maintains a partnership with UW-Marathon County to provide students with residence rooms. The college maintains seven sites in the district, encompassing 549,533 square feet, and is currently expanding two of the sites by creating the Wood Technology Center of Excellence and the Agriculture Center of Excellence.
- OV6b Northcentral Technical College shows commitment to student services through acquisition and improvement of facilities, enhancement of equipment (such as PeopleSoft & Blackboard) as well as improving technology through a five-year technology plan. The college possesses a sophisticated ITV system and 96 smart classrooms in order to leverage technology to meet its large service area.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
2P1-2I	OO	While Northcentral Technical College has strong processes addressing K-16 relationships, Northcentral Technical College has failed to address other areas such as economic development, continuing education, athletics etc.---all key elements of its mission and are other distinctive objectives.

- 2P2a S Northcentral Technical College's K-16 initiatives are driven by the college's strategic directions and lead by senior leadership. Additionally, Northcentral Technical College utilizes a number of collaborative strategies in order to establish objectives for its K-16 initiatives. These include monthly School-To-Career Partnership meetings, an Annual Administrator Breakfast, ongoing regional administrator meetings, and triennial Listening Sessions.
- 2P2b O The response to the question is highly focused on listening to stakeholder feedback in the K-16 community and using that to develop programs of study and determine academic objectives. However, this category is focused on non-instructional objectives. The institution should evaluate this category and its response to ensure that it is developing processes to evaluate key non-instructional programs and services.
- 2P3 S Northcentral Technical College has developed a series of strong communication tools to ensure it is communicating effectively within the K-16 community as well as communicating about its programs and services in the K-16 continuum. For example, Northcentral Technical College's website contains clear information for its stakeholders concerning its K-16 initiatives and transfer out policies. Additionally, Career Coaches visit service-area high schools and program advisory meetings provide communication with faculty and business representatives.
- 2P4 O While there is clear feedback for Northcentral Technical College's transfer website through student commentary, it is unclear how other partners in the college's K-16 community generate feedback and allow Northcentral Technical College to assess its objectives. While a participation rate does give some glimpse of satisfaction, a survey to these partners may give a more complete assessment of Northcentral Technical College's K-16 initiatives.
- 2P5 O Since Northcentral Technical College has determined that it should focus on K-16 needs in this category it should consider reviewing its response

- to 2P5 to determine how it could better address faculty needs in responding to K-16 initiatives – for instance linking faculty with high school faculty or four-year institution faculty to promote better communication of goals and desires. Additionally, it is unclear how staff needs are identified to determine which types of trainings are appropriate. Without a formal process for identifying staff needs, Northcentral Technical College may miss opportunities to strengthen K-16 programs.
- 2P6 O Northcentral Technical College identifies resources as the sole reason for analyzing K-16 activities and job responsibilities; however, there appears to be no centralized proactive strategic planning concerning growth or decrease of participation in these initiatives. While there is on-going feedback from K-16 partners, environmental scanning or more deliberate surveying could allow the college to plan to use future resources more strategically.
- 2R1a S Northcentral Technical College has established numerous measures to determine progress towards achieving its performance goal of 4,000 FTE by 2014. In addition, Northcentral Technical College collects multivariable measures to analyze in relation to its K-16 initiatives, including the number of high school student enrollments, the number of matriculations from participation in K-12 activities, and the number of students transferring to other colleges after completing program completion.
- 2R1b O While Northcentral Technical College provides results for K-16 initiatives, there are no results for other distinctive objectives.
- 2R2 S Northcentral Technical College compares favorably with other technical colleges in the WTCS and is the leader in several key areas of results that it reports.
- 2R3 O While Northcentral Technical College performs ahead of other WTCS schools in a number of measures in their K-16 partnerships, there is no national comparative data with post-secondary institutions nor comparative results or metrics for outside of post-secondary institutions.

- Finding national comparative data could give Northcentral Technical College a more complete national picture of its performance.
- 2R4 S Northcentral Technical College's increased attention to K-16 initiatives, including establishing transfer agreements with area four-year institutions, increasing the activity of its Career Coach services, and developing partnerships with area K-12 schools, have increased the visibility of Northcentral Technical College in its service area. Additionally, all these activities clearly fit the mission of the institution and align with Northcentral Technical College's Core Beliefs.
- 2I1 S Northcentral Technical College has recently dedicated resources to improve K-16 initiatives through such areas as Career Coaches, the Transfer and Placement Office, and the formation of a K-16 team. The results of these initiatives have begun to show positive performance results and fully align with the college's mission.
- 2I2a S Northcentral Technical College has integrated its K-16 initiatives into the College goals, ELT Action Plan, and Team Action Plans. This has resulted from feedback from K-16 partners.
- 212b OO While Northcentral Technical College has clearly integrated K-16 initiative into a number of its operations, accomplishing other distinctive objectives through an area such as athletics have not been integrated

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses.
- OV1a Northcentral Technical College offers both credit and non-credit offerings that help support its mission to build a competitive workforce and meet its student learning goals of occupational skill attainment and mastery of core abilities. The college offers 33 associate degree programs, 24 technical diplomas, 114 certificates, and 9 apprenticeship programs through six academic divisions.
- OV1b Northcentral Technical College is building a culture of evidence of learning through early and frequent feedback to students (formative) and evaluation of levels of mastery (summative). While the primary instruction within Northcentral Technical College occurs on its physical campuses, the college serves a widely dispersed rural community using Interactive Television, web-conferencing, and electronic delivery.
- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in

2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.

- OV3 Northcentral Technical College faces a great deal of competition for students and training opportunities. While it identifies numerous competitors - including both public state institutions and for-profit institutions - which challenge the college to remain focused on its mission, the college acknowledges it is mutually beneficial to collaborate with these entities to benefit its students.
- OV5 The president of Northcentral Technical College holds triennial listening sessions with the community. Sessions are held with groups from the community, business and industry leaders, representatives from K-12, employees and students. These sessions provide the necessary feedback for the college Board and Executive Leadership Team to set strategic direction.
- OV6a Northcentral Technical College has no residence halls, but maintains a partnership with UW-Marathon County to provide students with residence rooms. The college maintains seven sites in the district, encompassing 549,533 square feet, and is currently expanding two of the sites by creating the Wood Technology Center of Excellence and the Agriculture Center of Excellence.
- OV6b Northcentral Technical College shows commitment to student services through acquisition and improvement of facilities, enhancement of equipment (such as PeopleSoft & Blackboard) as well as improving technology through a five-year technology plan. The college possesses a sophisticated ITV system and 96 smart classrooms in order to leverage technology to meet its large service area.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
3P1	S	Northcentral Technical College collects a wide variety of data sets to identify the changing needs of student groups and meet the demands of those changing needs. Strategies and courses of action are addressed in

- Team Action Plans at the individual team and Executive Leadership Team levels. Changes made as a result of analysis of this data are the addition of an Online Learning Support Specialist and the creation of the Transfer and Placement office.
- 3P2 SS Relationships with students begin while they are still prospects meeting with a career coach, and lead systematically through the “one stop shop” Student Services area and into the classroom. Northcentral Technical College has increased its efforts to build and enhance relationships with its minority students by training its faculty and staff to engage students and be intuitive regarding their needs. Northcentral Technical College also offers multiple opportunities for students to interact with faculty outside of the classroom. To maintain relationships with students Northcentral Technical College has enacted a number of initiatives including Workforce Learning Solutions and Student Government feedback sessions.
- 3P3 O Northcentral Technical College collects data on the changing needs of key stakeholder groups through Presidential Listening Sessions and advisory committees. The Presidential Listening Sessions only occur every three years, so it is unclear how data on the changing needs of community members, government, and other stakeholders not represented on advisory committees are collected in the interim. It is also unclear how Northcentral Technical College selects courses of action once the need is identified. Environmental scanning or a strategic plan to address future needs based on state demographic information could assist the institution in planning for both student and industry needs.
- 3P4 SS Northcentral Technical College identifies its key stakeholders as students, employees, community members, business and industry, government and other educational institutions. Northcentral Technical College has developed strong programs as a result of building and maintaining relationships with these key stakeholders. An example of this in the K-12 system is the SPARK program which allows students to earn college credit and schools to receive equipment. Northcentral Technical College

reaches out to stakeholders in a number of important ways including advisory committees, events that are open to the public, student community service activities, Private Sector Committees, and through participation on various boards and committees throughout the district.

- 3P5a S Through its Instructional Vitality Review process, Northcentral Technical College ensures its instructional offerings are aligned with District workforce needs. Northcentral Technical College appears to have a strong approach to targeting new populations both in short term situations – such as through its Rapid Response Team and in long-term situations through new program and course development which results from the Instructional Vitality and Quality Review processes
- 3P5b O It is unclear what types of data Northcentral Technical College uses to determine if they should target new student and stakeholder groups with their educational offerings and services. Collecting and analyzing future demographic and environmental trends for its service area could assist the college in planning for its future more strategically.
- 3P6a S Northcentral Technical College has clearly stated policies and processes for complaints. Northcentral Technical College provides online mechanisms for students, employees, and other stakeholders to register complaints and these systems allow the respondent to either remain anonymous or request follow-up.
- 3P6b O Although it is an internal expectation that all complaints are resolved in two weeks, no system is identified that ensures that they are. It is stated that complaints are tracked, but who is responsible for tracking them and ensuring they have been resolved satisfactorily? It is also unclear how the data are analyzed. An opportunity exists for Northcentral Technical College to develop processes to systematically analyze complaint information, both formative and summative, in order to move from a case-by-case focus to addressing underlying causes of concern and modes of resolution throughout the institution.

- 3R1 S Northcentral Technical College utilizes a variety of tools to measure student and stakeholder satisfaction including the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, graduate follow-up surveys, advisory committees, administrative breakfasts, and the Personal Assessment of the College Environment.
- 3R2a S Northcentral Technical College's results from Noel-Levitz and from comparison with WTCS institutions (results found in 1P3-5) indicate that Northcentral Technical College is performing at or above national and state averages.
- 3R2b O Completing the Noel-Levitz every three years means that entire cohorts of students could be missed. The Noel-Levitz could be alternated with a different instrument, like the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), on a two-year basis to ensure all students have a voice. Also, while Northcentral Technical College provides favorable Noel-Levitz data for student satisfaction, no results are provided for the other two measures included in Figure 3R1-1 (course and faculty evaluations and select College Initiative Surveys).
- 3R3a S Students attending Northcentral Technical College believe that they feel welcome on campus, the staff is caring and helpful, faculty are fair, and administrators are available to hear their concerns.
- 3R3b O Northcentral Technical College might wish to consider providing historical Noel-Levitz SSI data as well as other trending data in future portfolios or as links on its website to allow the reader to evaluate the results as trends over time. While Northcentral Technical College provides favorable Noel-Levitz data for student satisfaction, no results are provided for the other two measures included in Figure 3R1-1 (course and faculty evaluations and select College Initiative Surveys). Also, while the Noel-Levitz does show satisfaction, a different tool like the CCSSE that shows student engagement would be helpful for proving relationships.
- 3R4 S Northcentral Technical College has presented information which shows that it is seen as a key part of its community and that it is providing

valuable and needed services to non-student stakeholder groups.

Northcentral Technical College's other stakeholders are satisfied with the education of their graduates, were satisfied with the services provided, believe the college is heading in the right direction, believe the college presents a positive image to the public, and like Northcentral Technical College's increased offerings and flexible delivery options. These results were confirmed by a feasibility study done by the Northcentral Technical College Foundation in 2008 and by 11 Presidential Listening Sessions done in 2009.

- 3R5 S Northcentral Technical College has provided a wealth of data showing that it is building relationships both in academic partnerships and in community, business, and workforce partnerships and that it is achieving positive results due to these partnerships. Northcentral Technical College has increased its Transfer agreements from 113 in 2008-2009 to 140 in 2009-2010. Further, Northcentral Technical College has increased since 2006-2007 in WLS business's served and customized training enrollments with only a slight dip from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 in short-term continuing education enrollments. Additionally, Northcentral Technical College Regional sites have all shown FTE growth over the last two years. Lastly, Northcentral Technical College shows positive results from its collaborative efforts with governmental bodies and business communities.
- 3R6 O From the information provided it is unclear what Northcentral Technical College's results are for understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs. Northcentral Technical College only provides comparative data on understanding student's needs. No comparative data is provided for understanding stakeholder's needs.
- 3I1 S Northcentral Technical College has utilized data from its various sources to develop a large number of improvements which react positive to changing student and stakeholder needs. Northcentral Technical College is using new technologies to enhance its traditional and online course offerings. In response to data collected about student needs, Northcentral

Technical College has increased the safety of the campus and established intercollegiate athletics. Northcentral Technical College has also identified weaknesses in the financial aid and bookstore processes and has subjected both of these services to the Quality Review Process, although no results were provided.

- 312 S Northcentral Technical College employs multifaceted data and decentralized teams to accomplish its performance results in understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs. Individual teams' plans flow up through Northcentral Technical College's institutional structure in order to inform college-wide goals such as increasing FTE's to 3,000.

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVB Since its last portfolio, Northcentral Technical College has experienced a significant cultural shift resulting in re-focused mission and vision statements and a change from operating principles to core beliefs and new strategic directions. The college named a new president, Dr. Lori Weyers, in 2006.

- OV4b Northcentral Technical College is structured in a hierarchical system of teams, from the governing boards and the Executive Learning Teams to specific teams such as support services and learning; teams utilize action plans for strategic direction. Internally, Northcentral Technical College’s Executive Leadership Team (ELT), reporting directly to the President, is responsible for actions that fulfill the college’s mission, vision, and strategic directions. Most college employees are represented by one of four bargaining units.
- OV8 Northcentral Technical College operates on a three-year planning cycle that allows the institution to identify key commitments, constraints, challenges, and opportunities. The college’s key commitments include growth, innovation, strategic partnerships, organizational development, continuous quality improvement, fiscal strength, and sustainability. Constraints include reduced funding, increasing competition, increased calls for accountability, image, providing equal services in a large rural district, and increasing costs.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
4P1	S	Northcentral Technical College follows a delineated process of reviewing credentials and skills for faculty, staff, and administrators. The hiring supervisor, Certification Officer, and Human Resources work together to ensure that all legal and ethical responsibilities are met in hiring at Northcentral Technical College. In many instances the WTCS system specifies the education and training guidelines that Northcentral Technical College must follow.
4P1-P2	O	While this may be inherent in the WTCS certification process, Northcentral Technical College should expand on the methods it uses to ensure that faculty, staff, and administrators have the necessary credentials, skills and values to be successful. The response provided is very much focused on the actual hiring process rather than on the

- process utilized to develop the skill and credential requirements for the position.
- 4P2 S Northcentral Technical College hires by committee, and uses behavior based interviewing during the selection process.
- 4P3 SS Northcentral Technical College attempts to recruit diverse and strong performing personnel through advertising in a wide-range of higher-education and business community periodicals. The college places a strong emphasis on development from within to retain strong faculty and staff. Northcentral Technical College has a well-defined orientation program entitled New Employee Welcome (N.E.W.), mentoring program, and leadership-training program for employees. This leadership program has undergone revisions for 2010-11 based on recommendations for improvement.
- 4P4 S Northcentral Technical College combines its N.E.W. program with online modules that address its vision, mission, community statements, core beliefs, and strategic directions. Additionally, every new faculty member and instructional supervisor must complete a two-credit course entitled “Philosophy of Vocational, Technical, and Adult education.
- 4P5 S Northcentral Technical College has developed a clear vision and process for planning for changes in personnel. The college uses succession planning and cross-training to plan for personnel changes. Northcentral Technical College also has its own Leadership Institute for employees who desire a future role in administration.
- 4P6 O While Northcentral Technical College uses a cross-functional charter team approach to revamp processes or to implement new goals and objectives, it is unclear how these processes are designed to ensure employee satisfaction.
- 4P7 S Northcentral Technical College includes its “Culture of Professionalism” core belief in the performance evaluation system. Employees complete a self analysis and the supervisor provides a rating regarding the employee’s adherence to the principle. In addition, Northcentral Technical

College has clear policies established for ethical conduct; these are easily found in training material and in campus documents.

- 4P8 S Northcentral Technical College determines training needs by soliciting feedback from supervisors, union leaders, executive leadership, and individual employees. To align employee training with short and long-term plans Northcentral Technical College uses in-service days that provide training opportunities that align with the Northcentral Technical College's strategic direction. Feedback on the effectiveness of the training is solicited each time.
- 4P9 S Northcentral Technical College has a wide variety of methods including special pay provisions available to faculty and staff in the area of professional development and training. These include institution led events such as new employee orientation and mentoring as well as other face to face training and online learning modules in addition to outside professional development such as funds to continue education and attend conferences and seminars.
- 4P10 S Northcentral Technical College has aligned its personnel evaluation system with its mission and values for faculty and non-faculty. The evaluation system is competency-based and contains self-analysis, customer feedback and supervisory feedback components with a focus on improvement in the employee's position and the established core beliefs.
- 4P11 S Northcentral Technical College recognizes and rewards its employees through a variety of celebrations including the family picnic, employee recognition celebration, and the Exemplary Service Award.
- 4P11 O From the information provided, it is unclear how Northcentral Technical College aligns these systems with instructional and non-instructional objectives.
- 4P12 S In 2007, Northcentral Technical College created the Office of Organizational development to determine key motivational issues related to faculty, staff, and administrators. The Office was created on the

- recommendation of employees, and collects the data used to analyze issues and select courses of action.
- 4P13 S To provide for and evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being Northcentral Technical College participates in a state Risk Management Committee and has hired a Security Director.
- 4R1 S Northcentral Technical College has utilized the PACE survey as well as institutionally collected data such as employee turnover rates, diversity of new hires, and worker's compensation claims to determine its effectiveness in the area of valuing people.
- 4R2 S Northcentral Technical College's performance results for valuing people show that employee turnover is decreasing, gender and ethnic diversity in its workforce is greater than other employers in the area, and the results from the PACE survey are above average indicating that Northcentral Technical College is promoting a more healthy campus climate.
- 4R3 O Northcentral Technical College indicates that it demonstrate employee productivity and effectiveness through the dashboard (7P4-1) which is reviewed by the College Board of Trustees quarterly. However this dashboard is the only current means discussed even though the institution has a wide number of professional development and training events and resources. Using the Office of Organizational Development to develop goals and measures in the Dashboard for Valuing People could provide Northcentral Technical College with a more complete picture of their performance in this category.
- 4R4 S Northcentral Technical College compares well nationally in its performance on the PACE survey and the Noel-Levitz SSI.
- 4I1 S Northcentral Technical College has made a number of improvements in Valuing People. Improvements include providing over 400 learning modules for employees through a Learning Management System, opening a Wellness Center in 2010, increasing security and leveraging resources through use of student Criminal Justice majors, and assisting

employees in making wise healthcare decisions through a High Deductible Health Insurance Plan.

- 412 S Through a number of feedback mechanisms, Northcentral Technical College has integrated much of the new Valuing People processes into its culture and infrastructure.

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses.
- OVB Since its last portfolio, Northcentral Technical College has experienced a significant cultural shift resulting in re-focused mission and vision statements and a change from

- operating principles to core beliefs and new strategic directions. The college named a new president, Dr. Lori Weyers, in 2006.
- OV3 Northcentral Technical College faces a great deal of competition for students and training opportunities. While Northcentral Technical College identifies numerous competitors - including both public state institutions and for-profit institutions - which challenge the college to remain focused on its mission, Northcentral Technical College acknowledges it is mutually beneficial to collaborate with these entities to benefit its students.
- OV4a Northcentral Technical College operates under shared governance between the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board and the Northcentral Technical College Board of Trustees.
- OV4b Northcentral Technical College is structured in a hierarchical system of teams, from the governing boards and the Executive Learning Teams to specific teams such as support services and learning; teams utilize action plans for strategic direction. Internally, Northcentral Technical College's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), reporting directly to the President, is responsible for actions that fulfill the college's mission, vision, and strategic directions. Most college employees are represented by one of four bargaining units.
- OV5 The president of Northcentral Technical College holds triennial listening sessions with the community. Sessions are held with groups from the community, business and industry leaders, representatives from K-12, employees and students. These sessions provide the necessary feedback for the college Board and Executive Leadership Team to set strategic direction.
- OV8 Northcentral Technical College operates on a three-year planning cycle that allows the institution to identify key commitments, constraints, challenges, and opportunities. The college's key commitments include growth, innovation, strategic partnerships, organizational development, continuous quality improvement, fiscal strength, and sustainability. Constraints include reduced funding, increasing competition, increased calls for accountability, image, providing equal services in a large rural district, and increasing costs.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
5P1	S	During its annual retreat, the Northcentral Technical College Board reviews stakeholder feedback regarding the college's mission and values. Changes or revisions are communicated with the Executive Leadership Team and then shared with the college.
5P2	S	Northcentral Technical College's leadership sets direction in collaboration with key stakeholders via the Presidential Listening Sessions. Action Plans are based on the strategic directions set by the Northcentral Technical College Board.
5P3,5P4	S	In addition to the Presidential Listening Sessions, Northcentral Technical College solicits feedback from students, program advisory committees, accrediting organizations, community leaders, and employees across the college.
5P4	O	With a goal of 4000 FTE, it's important for Northcentral Technical College to ensure new opportunities do not detract from the present quality and future efforts in this area as it relates to student learning. New opportunities can be a drain on resources so mechanisms should exist to ensure new opportunities do not detract from present student learning.
5P5	S	Northcentral Technical College utilizes a collaborative model for decision-making. Individual teams, committees and charter groups provide the opportunity for all employees at Northcentral Technical College to participate in planning and share in the decision-making for the college on a variety of topics and process improvements.
5P6a	SS	Northcentral Technical College regularly reviews performance updates throughout the year. The Board reviews the College Dashboard of Indicators on a quarterly basis. Each quarter the ELT Action Plan is

- updated and adjustments are made if necessary. Twice per year individual Team Action Plans are reviewed and updated.
- 5P6b O The dashboard appears to have been developed solely by the board and ELT, without broad input and with no mention of the role of faculty.
- 5P7 S The institution has a variety of communication methods which allow it to facilitate communication between and among institutional levels. These include monthly presidential briefings, the Target newsletter, and bi-monthly meetings with the union. Various team meetings are also used to further ensure effective communication at all levels.
- 5P8 S Northcentral Technical College's leaders communicate a shared vision by creating team action plans designed around the institution's strategic direction. These plans are then sent to upper administration for review. Capital expenditures and performance reviews are tied to these plans.
- 5P9 SS Northcentral Technical College promotes leadership abilities of all staff through the completion of a professional development plan in alignment with the strategic directions of the college. Leadership is developed and strengthened at Northcentral Technical College through the annual Leadership Institute, Leadership Wausau, the WLDI, and other professional development activities. Communication is accomplished through Target, presidential meetings, and other team meetings.
- 5P10 S Northcentral Technical College has developed a system of identifying a back-up position for each key position. The back-up position can take responsibility for the primary position during an absence.
- 5R1 O Northcentral Technical College states that it collects and analyzes multiple measures of leading and communicating including the PACE survey and in-service surveys. However, Northcentral Technical College does not include such measures in its dashboard to indicate to the Board performance in Leading and Communicating. In addition, PACE is offered only once every three years. The institution may wish to supplement this use of PACE with additional tools in the intervening years.

- 5R2a S PACE survey results indicate that employees feel Northcentral Technical College is meeting its core belief as an institution that strives for consultative/collaborative decision-making.
- 5R2b OO While not incorrect to describe and use the PACE data as a means of measuring effectiveness in this category, the in-depth analysis provided in response to this question would seem more appropriate as a response to question 4R2 which simply referred the reader to this later question. This process of forward referring which the institution has used frequently has made the portfolio somewhat difficult to navigate and cumbersome to evaluate. While some of the PACE data presented here is relevant to this question, not all of it is relevant which also makes it difficult to determine how the institution is specifically measuring itself in this area since specific questions or areas of the PACE survey being utilized to evaluate this specific category have not been identified. Northcentral Technical College has emphasized the data gathered from internal surveys and Presidential Listening sessions (5R1 and 5P3), yet no data appears from these measures. Incorporating this data in your Dashboard may allow the college to understand its performance in Leading and Communicating.
- 5R3 S The results from the PACE survey show a high degree of satisfaction with the institution's mission, leadership, and communication.
- 5I1 S Northcentral Technical College utilized employee feedback to determine a need to better communicate within the institution. A Communication Charter Team was formed and made six recommendations. Four of these recommendations have been completed and two are in progress. Comparative data from the PACE survey indicates significant improvement in open and ethical communication and communication sharing since the 2000 survey.
- 5I2 S The change in leadership at Northcentral Technical College has resulted in significant improvements in communication which has created a culture of collaboration as evidenced by the new infrastructure which emphasizes continuous quality improvement. As a member of CQIN, the institution's

leadership has communicated a commitment to improved quality. Cross functional teams also help to institutionalize systems of leading and communicating.

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in 2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.
- OV6a Northcentral Technical College has no residence halls, but maintains a partnership with UW-Marathon County to provide students with residence rooms. The college maintains seven sites in the district, encompassing 549,533 square feet, and is currently

expanding two of the sites by creating the Wood Technology Center of Excellence and the Agriculture Center of Excellence.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
6P1a	S	Northcentral Technical College has identified several methods of informal and formal gathering of input which has allowed them to align identified student needs with institutional support services. The range of input, which includes such things as direct customer service feedback, advisory boards, informal feedback focus groups and surveys, graduate and five-year follow-up surveys, Noel Levitz SSI, and Presidential Listening sessions, is comprehensive.
6P1b	O	The information presented in 6P1-1 is not pertinent to the question being asked.
6P2	S	Northcentral Technical College identifies the administrative support service needs of faculty, staff, and administrators through ELT Action Plans, PACE, personal communication, and Presidential Listening Sessions.
6P3	S	Northcentral Technical College has added, since its last portfolio, a Campus Security Team, led by a full-time security director – a position also added since the last portfolio. The team provides a variety of communication strategies for information related to physical safety and security including Quick Reference Guides to Emergency Response, online training as part of the “Think Tank” sessions, and a College Incident Management Plan. Physical safety issues are provided for through a three-year facilities plan.
6P4a	S	Northcentral Technical College manages key student, administrative, and organizational support processes on a day-to-day basis through

- leadership and informal practices that inform the more formal Team Action Plans.
- 6P4b O It is unclear how Northcentral Technical College manages its key support services to ensure they are effective. The information provided does indicate how they operate and track goals, but no indication is given as to the actual process.
- 6P5 O Northcentral Technical College uses multiple tools to communicate support services to students and staff. It is unclear how Northcentral Technical College actually documents the support service process to encourage innovation. Northcentral Technical College might consider the use of Wikis, Blogs, or other social media to support knowledge sharing and innovation. These methodologies could be used as interactive vehicles for all Northcentral Technical College staff to have a “voice”.
- 6R1a S Northcentral Technical College collects and analyzes student, administrative, and organizational support service results throughout the year and are reported to the Board through the quarterly dashboard report.
- 6R1b O It is unclear what information is contained in the Board Dashboard that indicates Northcentral Technical College’s measures in Supporting Institutional Operations. (The team was simply referred to the dashboard with no discussion of which measures are used for this category.) Delineating clear measures of the process may help the college understand its performance and communicate its performance to its Board.
- 6R2a S Northcentral Technical College used the Noel-Levitz SSI results to identify student support needs. Northcentral Technical College rated higher than the national average on 5 of the 8 categories. Additionally, Northcentral Technical College’s Graduate Follow-up and five-year follow-up surveys indicate a high level of placement and satisfaction with the college.

- 6R2b O Northcentral Technical College has provided a large number of results related to its student support services, however only the placement success rate and data reported in the Perkins IV Report Card seem to be outcomes focused rather than satisfaction or growth focused. It is also unclear of the actual areas of success that Northcentral Technical College is seeking to measure or if Northcentral Technical College simply provided data it felt fit the question without a cohesive process for determining which outcomes to measure in this area.
- 6R3 S Northcentral Technical College's performance results for administrative support services show an increase in resources, even as the economy has recessed.
- 6R3 OO While Northcentral Technical College provided a wealth of data on Administrative Support Processes these were primarily only focused on the area of finance, of which measures were not well presented/analyzed. For example, cost per FTE has increased as a direct result of the increased enrollment. There were no results provided for any other administrative support service areas and little discussion of what Northcentral Technical College is doing to lower this increase while maintaining quality and improving the student experience.
- 6R4 S While a formalized process for utilizing information and results was not directly presented, Northcentral Technical College provided two examples of how it had utilized gap data – one to identify the need for consulting assistance in financial aid and the other to create a strategic enrollment management plan. This is evidence of a valid process of looking at results and having a developed system for continuous improvement.
- 6R5 O While Northcentral Technical College performed well in the Noel Levitz SSI in comparison to other community colleges, Northcentral Technical College has provided a minimal number of results comparisons with other institutions and where it did provide such an example, Northcentral Technical College ranked 12th out of 15 colleges in cost per FTE. While it appears that this is not a focus of Northcentral Technical College's

measurement standards within the institution, Northcentral Technical College might wish to identify peer group institutions to benchmark against, participate in studies such as the National Community College Benchmarking Project, or review other tools which would allow it to determine its success in comparison to other similar institutions. Specialized field comparisons such as security, information technology and financial aid might also be an added benefit at some time in the future.

6I1 SS Northcentral Technical College has provided a wealth of examples of how it has utilized data to lead process improvements such as those in financial aid and course registration, identify the need for additional positions such as the Director of Security and the Online Learning Specialist, and reconfigure campus spaces to better meet the needs of stakeholder groups.

6I2 SS Northcentral Technical College is committed to continuous quality improvement and has imbedded this into its culture. Northcentral Technical College uses a variety of processes and data to create a culture that select specific processes to improve its institutional operations. These include the Service Quality Review Process, the Team Action Plan, Noel Levitz SSI, and PACE.

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OV1b Northcentral Technical College is building a culture of evidence of learning through early and frequent feedback to students (formative) and evaluation of levels of mastery (summative). While the primary instruction within Northcentral Technical College occurs on its physical campuses, the college serves a widely dispersed rural community using Interactive Television, web-conferencing, and electronic delivery.

- OV7 As part of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), Northcentral Technical College’s data collection and reporting is driven by state requirements. The college follows all federal data requirements, and operates under nine aligned data systems within the WTCS.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
7P1-7P2a	S	The selection of data that supports instructional and non-instructional programs and services is driven by strategic initiatives set by the Board of Trustees and ELT. The data for academic programs is distributed through Quality Review Process Scorecards that contain WTCS thresholds and Northcentral Technical College targets and performance. Non-instructional teams also participate in the Quality Review Process that allows customer service information to be reviewed. Overall, Northcentral Technical College collects and analyzes numerous data to support instructional and non-instructional programs and services including Instructional Vitality, Regional Dashboards, Enrollment Management and Quality Review Process Scorecards.
7P1-7P2b	O	It is clear that the Quality Review Process gives academic departments key information needed to monitor ongoing quality and progress.

However, it is unclear how the institution monitors other strategic areas using the Quality Review Process. Also, there is contradictory information in the portfolio as to how often Quality Review Processes are completed. In one location it is clearly stated that 25% of the curriculum is reviewed per year meaning that there is a four year cycle. However, in this section it is noted that this may be a four to five year cycle.

- 7P3a S Data and performance information needs are assessed through institutional and WTCS needs. Requests are submitted through individual meetings or through the IT Help Desk. Additionally, Northcentral Technical College is working on a data warehouse in conjunction with Peoplesoft.
- 7P3b O It is stated that the storage and accessibility of information is determined based on the type of information and its value, but it is not clear who makes this determination or what the criteria are.
- 7P4a S Northcentral Technical College has created a Board Dashboard that seeks to maximize reporting institutional data to the Board; this Dashboard is shared with the entire college through a college shared drive. Further, Northcentral Technical College sends weekly enrollment reports college wide to let faculty and department heads know the performance of their programs in terms of enrollment.
- 7P4b O Northcentral Technical College has placed great emphasis on what data is shared in the organization. However it has failed to provide a clear picture as to how these various dashboards are utilized to answer the question of how this data is analyzed and used to determine overall performance. In addition, there is no discussion of how these analyses are shared throughout the organization. With monthly, quarterly, and yearly dashboards the reader is given the impression that ongoing data review is taking place but not that a focused analysis is being conducted and shared. The process may be a bit burdensome and so the institution may wish to review for potential streamlining.

- 7P5 S Northcentral Technical College, through its functioning within the WTCS system, compares itself with other colleges in the state. As a member of WTCS, Northcentral Technical College must measure itself against other institutions within the system. The selection of Noel Levitz and PACE allows the college to compare itself with other WTCS institutions and with other national two-year schools. Additionally, Northcentral Technical College utilizes IPEDS data to compare itself to other schools.
- 7P6a S Northcentral Technical College aligns departmental goals and Team Action Plans to the college's strategic directions which support the Board of Trustees Annual Goals and Board Dashboard. Goals are reviewed throughout the year to monitor progress and to determine if plans need to be updated or revised.
- 7P6b O At Northcentral Technical College teams develop goals that are aligned to the strategic direction of the institution. It is unclear from the description provided how Northcentral Technical College ensures the department and unit analysis of the information aligns with the organizational goals.
- 7P7 S Northcentral Technical College uses numerous methods to ensure the accuracy, confidentiality, integrity, reliability, security, and timeliness of its data.
- 7R1 S The college has a number of target goals such as computer replacement, data-back up, IT infrastructure uptime, and smart classroom replacement that are used to measure performance and effectiveness for information and knowledge management. In addition, the college uses Noel-Levitz SSI, PACE, and the Service Team Quality Review Process to measure performance in this area.
- 7R2 O The measures indicated in 7R1, other than PACE, were not the measures reported in 7R2. Paralleling the description of the measures with the reporting of results could assist the college in understanding its performance in Measuring Effectiveness.

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 7R3 | OO | This question is designed to gauge the performance of the actual process for measuring effectiveness. It is unclear how cost per FTE results accomplish this. |
| 711 | S | Northcentral Technical College has created the board dashboard and begun to use the Noel-Levitz and PACE surveys. Northcentral Technical College has the opportunity to continue to use these instruments to gain trend data and ensure quality. Continued use will make the process more systematic. |
| 712 | S | Northcentral Technical College's culture and infrastructure attempts to use the data generated by processes such as the Board Dashboard, ELT Action Plans, Noel Levitz SSI, and Pace to set targets and strategies for improvement in Measuring Effectiveness. |

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVb Since its last portfolio, Northcentral Technical College has experienced a significant cultural shift resulting in re-focused mission and vision statements and a change from operating principles to core beliefs and new strategic directions. The college named a new president, Dr. Lori Weyers, in 2006.

- OV4a Northcentral Technical College operates under shared governance between the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board and the Northcentral Technical College Board of Trustees.
- OV4b Northcentral Technical College is structured in a hierarchical system of teams, from the governing boards and the Executive Learning Teams to specific teams such as support services and learning; teams utilize action plans for strategic direction. Internally, Northcentral Technical College's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), reporting directly to the President, is responsible for actions that fulfill the college's mission, vision, and strategic directions. Most college employees are represented by one of four bargaining units.
- OV5 The president of Northcentral Technical College holds triennial listening sessions with the community. Sessions are held with groups from the community, business and industry leaders, representatives from K-12, employees and students. These sessions provide the necessary feedback for the college Board and Executive Leadership Team to set strategic direction.
- OV7 As part of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), Northcentral Technical College's data collection and reporting is driven by state requirements. The college follows all federal data requirements, and operates under nine aligned data systems within the WTCS.
- OV8 Northcentral Technical College operates on a three-year planning cycle that allows the institution to identify key commitments, constraints, challenges, and opportunities. The college's key commitments include growth, innovation, strategic partnerships, organizational development, continuous quality improvement, fiscal strength, and sustainability. Constraints include reduced funding, increasing competition, increased calls for accountability, image, providing equal services in a large rural district, and increasing costs.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical 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>
-------------	------------	----------------

- 8P1 – 8P4 S Northcentral Technical College appears to have developed a process by which several high level planning activities such as a three-year Strategic plan, a three-year Budget Process, a Product Development Process, Team Action Plans, five-year Information Technology Plan, a three-year Facilities Plan, and a Human Resources Succession Plan are aligned with strategy development and then aligned with institutional and team level action plans.
- 8P2 O While Northcentral Technical College describes processes for developing both long- and short-term strategies, it is unclear if only the Board and ELT are involved in setting those strategies or if other key stakeholders are intricately involved. Involving other key stakeholders may contribute to a more collaborative decision-making model.
- 8P3,8P4 S Team Action Plans are aligned with ELT Action Plan which is aligned with the strategic directions developed and approved by the Board. Team Action Plans are reviewed and revised twice yearly.
- 8P5a O Northcentral Technical College states that the President sets a three-year single-focus performance target for institutional performance that can be met by fulfilling objectives of the ELT Action plan. However, it does not explain how these objectives are defined or the measures for these objectives are selected.
- 8P5b O The single focus performance targets set by the institution are a valuable measure in ensuring the institution continues to meet needs through increasing enrollment. However, having enrollment as the highest priority within the institution and aligning all evaluation metrics to this priority does not take into account all of the other priorities faced by an institution such as accountability, assessment, and service to the community through economic development.
- 8P5c O It is not clear how all elements of Northcentral Technical College’s Board Dashboard align with all organizational strategies and action plans. A Dashboard that reflects all the key strategies and action plans could

- assist the college in seeing a fuller picture of Northcentral Technical College.
- 8P6 O Northcentral Technical College appears to recognize the impact their growth initiative is having on available resources but does not consider this constraint in re-examining their numerical FTE goal.
- 8P7 O Northcentral Technical College's risk assessment in planning seems focused entirely on its resource base. While this is certainly a heavy area of risk across higher education there is no discussion of competitive forces, significant market shifts, human capital or other risk issues presented.
- 8P8 SS Northcentral Technical College has developed an office of organization development as a result of identification of a strategic direction to ensure professional development, employee training, and employee recognition and mentoring to allow for a flexible workforce that can meet changing needs. OD facilitates Faculty Development funds to support learning and technology initiatives as well as special projects related to the integration of technology.
- 8R1a O Northcentral Technical College utilizes multiple measures and objectives, however, the measures are quantitative measures of #/counts. There is a clear opportunity to incorporate a balanced scorecard approach and expand and utilize qualitative measures in addition to the current measures used.
- 8R1b O Northcentral Technical College utilizes the Board Dashboard to analyze its effectiveness in planning continuous improvement; however, it is not clear how these measures relate to the planning processes.
- 8R3 O While the Strategic Directions for the college are indicated in Figure OV1-1, no projections or targets are indicated for these directions. Setting measurable objectives for these Strategic Directions will allow Northcentral Technical College to ascertain its progress on these goals.

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| 8R4a | S | Northcentral Technical College sets in the top 3 of WTCS colleges in Total FTE, Total Unduplicated Headcount, Online Course FTEs, and Employees Served Through Contracts. |
| 8R4b | O | While Northcentral Technical College provides favorable comparison data results for Growth and Innovation and Continuous Quality Improvement, no comparison data is provided for Strategic Partnerships, Organizational Development and Fiscal Strength. |
| 8R5a | S | Northcentral Technical College is adding the strategic direction of sustainability. If this is applied to all institutional operations, especially as they apply to institutional growth, this will allow the organization to operate at an optimal size to best meet their student's and community's needs. |
| 8R5b | S | Both the quantitative data from the Board Dashboard and the qualitative data from Presidential Listening Sessions indicate that the college's planning for continuous improvement process is effective. |
| 8I1 | S | The changes implemented by the new President seem to have successfully engaged the community and created a culture of continuous quality improvement at Northcentral Technical College. Numerous improvements at the institution in this area including integration of the Team Action Plans with the greater goals of the college and the assignment of staff to monitor and evaluate progress on the Team Action Plans is noted as very positive. |
| 8I2 | SS | A new culture of collaboration and openness has resulted in improved communication, increased level of engagement of staff and a greater sense of ownership of College goals and objectives. |

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 Northcentral Technical 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

- OVa Northcentral Technical College is a public institution, one of sixteen post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the eighth largest institution in the WTCS system in terms of headcount, serving 22,100 students. The college serves a rural 5,900 square mile district with a main campus in Wausau and six regional sites with a penetration rate in the region of 7% - the second highest in the WTCS system. While its rural location and large district (ten counties and 5900 square miles) can be a challenge, the six regional sites allow for a 20 minute or less drive to one of the campuses. .
- OV2 Northcentral Technical College strives to partner with institutions across the K-16 continuum in order to provide students with opportunities to see the college as a first step in higher education. Through Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with area schools, seventeen K-12 schools have received equipment and/or office supplies and 2000 students have earned college credit while in high school. The college has developed unique programs and activities with district high schools including the Career Coach program to work with students on career exploration and post-secondary planning. Northcentral Technical College created a Transfer and Placement Office in 2008 and currently has articulation agreements with 23 four-year colleges including bringing four-year college instruction to the Wausau campus to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree.
- OV3 Northcentral Technical College faces a great deal of competition for students and training opportunities. While it identifies numerous competitors - including both public state institutions and for-profit institutions - which challenge the college to remain

focused on its mission, the college acknowledges it is mutually beneficial to collaborate with these entities to benefit its students.

- OV9 Northcentral Technical College has fostered many partnerships from the local to the national level to provide pertinent and cost-effective educational services to its communities. Northcentral Technical College collaborates with various institutions within business and industry (including unions), community organizations, governmental organizations (including tribal government), and other institutions of higher education (including Community Colleges for International Development, the Georgetown Center for Intercultural Education and Development, the Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education, and the Continuous Quality Improvement Network).

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northcentral Technical College'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>
9P1a	SS	Northcentral Technical College works extensively with local school districts, area employers, and four workforce development boards. Northcentral Technical College has developed strong partnerships with its K-12 partners and has established its K-16 team to further expand partnerships with other educational partners at all levels. Northcentral Technical College builds upon its relationships with educational and community organizations through triennial Presidential Listening Sessions, input from advisory committees the Workforce Learning Solutions team, and attendance at city, county and school board meetings.
9P1b	O	Given the importance that Northcentral Technical College has placed on creating and building relationships, there is no evidence to demonstrate how Northcentral Technical College prioritizes these relationships to meet College goals and strategic directions. Without formal processes, Northcentral Technical College may miss opportunities for providing necessary services. Northcentral Technical College has the goal of being

the preferred strategic partner for K-12 districts, area business and industries, but it is unclear how they measure this goal.

- 9P2 S Northcentral Technical College has a transfer and placement office that works with 4-year institutions to provide seamless transfer opportunities. Northcentral Technical College also works with local businesses to provide a trained workforce based on advisory committee input. Working with local businesses has allowed Northcentral Technical College to create strong partnerships that have resulted in the institution having additional classroom space to offer services at its north region campus and programs for high school students working in Waukesha Bearing's plant.
- 9P3a S Northcentral Technical College has not only identified support service organizations that it should partner with, but in many cases has co-located those on its campus to provide easier access for its students. Northcentral Technical College gives priority to organizations that provide services most closely linked to student success and achievement, including the YWCA, a dental clinic, and UWMC.
- 9P3b O Northcentral Technical College does not identify a centralized or lead office that is responsible for creating, prioritizing, and, building relationships with organizations that provide services to students.
- 9P4 S Northcentral Technical College has clear processes for being financially prudent and leverages its membership in the WTCS and its Team Action Plan process to create, build, and prioritize relationships with organizations that supply materials.
- 9P5 S Northcentral Technical College establishes relationships with external agencies through the direction of the Board and individual Team Action Plans. Northcentral Technical College utilizes a systematic approach to prioritize these relationships. Currently, Northcentral Technical College has relationships with Partners in Education, Centergy, Alliance of World Languages, and Rapid Response.

- | | | |
|------|----|--|
| 9P6 | S | Northcentral Technical College has developed clear accountability for its relationship building and coordination efforts with key partners of the institution. Northcentral Technical College uses Presidential Listening Sessions and participation in many different organizations to keep communication channels open. |
| 9P7 | S | Northcentral Technical College cultivates relationships among its units and departments through formal meeting structures that include numerous cross-departmental and cross-division teams, Team Action Plans, Presidential Briefing Sessions, and the charter team process. Northcentral Technical College also incorporates formal processes of communication across the college with its college-wide newsletter, electronic bulletin board, and various departmental newsletters. |
| 9R1 | O | While Northcentral Technical College monitors partnership strength through a variety of measures, it is unclear how often the measures are collected and analyzed. Without a formal review process, Northcentral Technical College may miss opportunities for building and/or enhancing relationships. |
| 9R2 | SS | Northcentral Technical College presents performance results that demonstrate the strengths of its partnerships including growth in transcribed credits, newly awarded grants and corporate donations, and positive gains in internal relationships documented through the PACE employee climate survey. Northcentral Technical College's partnerships with Case IH Agriculture and Service Motor Company have resulted in a 15 million dollar pledge of equipment over the next ten years. |
| 9R3a | S | Northcentral Technical College ranks third in business served, boasts a 22% increase in FTE, and received a DOL grant for \$1.98 million. |
| 9R3b | O | The data on the WTCS foundation is from 2008. More current data should have been supplied. |
| 9I1 | S | Northcentral Technical College has cited several improvements made in the area of partnerships including re-establishing a relationship with the College of Menominee Nation, and creation of a variety of departments as |

well as added positions to support initiatives in this area. Northcentral Technical College has also begun Presidential Listening Sessions, created a K-16 department, and created a Workforce Learning Solutions department.

- 912 S Northcentral Technical College's target of 30,000 learners with 3,000 FTEs within 3 years (3-3-3) has resulted in the creation of new partnerships and relationships to meet the needs of students and community. Northcentral Technical College has also fostered a collaborative structure that allows communication among the Board, the ELT, internal, and external stakeholders to continually examine the processes and results of Building Collaborative Relationships.