SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the Systems Portfolio of
NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

September 29, 2006
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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.

- Processes and procedures for program review and monitoring as well as new program development and curriculum development and ongoing evaluation seem to be excellent - well-articulated, thorough, and inclusive of various stakeholders. Course competencies, core abilities, and program outcomes are clearly articulated in the portfolio.

The actual comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning is only partially described. It is not clear who is defining program goals, carrying out assessment activities, or using the results to improve student learning. The relationship between these various elements of the process is not completely clear.

- Overall, NTC deploys approaches that are aligned and integrated with the institution's vision, mission, values, goals, and directions. Results show positive trend levels in most areas and exceed national norms in other areas. Improvement rates and comparative data are used to make fact-based decisions that result in better efficiencies and overall improved institutional performance. The Community Benefits Statements that have been established express what communities realize through NTC’s existence and define “learning of high value” in the NTC Mission. NTC has developed a comprehensive and systematic process for identifying and responding to the workforce needs in its local service area including multiple data sources, and it is commendable that data is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team four times each year. To the extent that NTC can review data, implement changes, and be able to measure results directly related to those changes within such a short time frame is commendable.

- NTC is to be commended for its efforts in gathering data and information to identify students’ and other stakeholders’ needs. NTC’s processes for understanding these needs are aligned with their mission, values, and objectives.

- NTC’s systems and processes with respect to Valuing People are characterized by operations that are aligned with the vision, mission, values and strategic objectives. There is evidence of success in these efforts and still some areas of challenge. The structures that are currently in place seem adequate to help the institution to continue effective monitoring and improvement. NTC shares results data across the institution and implements plans for improvements with efficiencies and innovation in mind.
The Monitoring Trees are effective tools for determining and communicating progress toward objectives. Analysis of regularly-collected data across the institution occurs, and decisions are made and communicated based on measuring key strategic and operational goals.

NTC’s systems and processes are aligned with the vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives of the institution. NTC regularly evaluates these integrated systems for improvement. It makes decisions about changes based on fact, and analyzes and shares data it collects in this area across units. NTC makes improvements with efficiencies and innovation in mind.

NTC’s processes and systems for Measuring Effectiveness are aligned with the institutional vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives. These processes are well integrated into the College’s operations and evaluated for improvement. Results data are collected, analyzed, compared to best practices, and then communicated across the institution so actions can be taken at the appropriate level to implement efficiencies and improvements.

Systems and processes for Planning Continuous Improvement are characterized by mature operations that align vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives with planning. NTC evaluates its Board-driven strategic planning process for change and improvement and uses benchmarks and comparative data throughout. It shares results across the institution and implements improvement plans to achieve efficiencies. NTC provides ample evidence that its efforts toward strategic planning and systematic goal-setting have paid off in some critical achievements.

Systems and processes for Building Collaborative Relationships are characterized by operations that align vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives. NTC shares results across the institution and provides evidence that indicates its efforts have paid off in positive and productive relationships with stakeholders.

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 based upon the institution’s achievements and challenges in regards to each of the nine AQIP Categories. Strategic challenges for the institution are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

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

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

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**STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES**

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

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

- The presentation of the processes as described in the portfolio was complex. In all categories, the focus is on a reiteration of processes and procedures. It is difficult to get a clear sense of what these processes actually accomplished and whether so much energy is being devoted to developing them that the work they represent is being lost. Some fully developed concrete examples of these processes at work would help clarify the issue.

  The decision-making systems are clearly defined and well articulated, but there is almost no mention of the individual human beings behind all the processes. This is supported by Figure 8R4 showing a low score for faculty and staff focus.

  Continuous improvement principles have been emphasized. What would be helpful are examples of improvements that have resulted from specific initiatives.

- NTC notes that its “quality journey transitioned the College from an instructional paradigm to the learning paradigm in 1997 and from a learning paradigm to a student-
centeredness paradigm in 2002.” (1P.6) The implications of this shift are unclear or how this shift grew out of the current strategic planning process. There was no direct evidence provided to indicate whether NTC programs are achieving their desired student learning outcomes or overall program goals.

**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**

O1a Northcentral Technical College (NTC) was established in 1912 and is one of 16 2-year post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). NTC serves a 10-county area in north central Wisconsin that comprises 5,900 square miles (roughly the size of Connecticut) and has a population of 228,024.

O1b The WTCS board is appointed by the governor and is responsible for distribution of federal and state aid, faculty certification, program approval, and tuition pricing. The nine-member NTC District Board of Trustees is appointed by a special committee of the ten county board chairpersons. The NTC Board makes budget approvals, establishes property tax levy, establishes local governing policy, and deliberates on personnel issues.

O1c NTC’s vision is to be “the college of choice, anticipating and exceeding customers’ expectations with excellence.” NTC’s mission is to facilitate “learning of high value for individuals, businesses, industries, and organizations, which builds a competitive workforce in a changing global society.”

O1d In 2004, NTC achieved Mastery Level in the Wisconsin Forward Award (WFA). WFA feedback has driven AQIP Key Quality Initiatives.

O1e “The Learning System” is the key system developed in 2002 to align NTC as a “learner-focused” organization. All other systems support “The Learning System” and each other.

O2a In 2004-05, NTC offered 28 associate degree programs, 13 technical diploma programs, 10 programs of less than one year, 5 shared programs, 14 apprenticeships, 39
certificates, a range of services to complete high school or to learn English, as well as continuing education and customized training for business and industry.

O2b NTC delivers educational programs, offerings, and services through six regional sites and at community-based sites ranging from jails to high schools to company work-site locations. In addition to traditional face-to-face classroom experience, courses are offered utilizing an Interactive Television System (ITV), net-meetings, online- and web-enhanced methods.

O3a Eighty-two percent of NTC’s learners are from the College’s 10-county geographic area. The student body is 53.2% female, 93.4% white, and 95% attend part-time. The median student age is 32.

O3b NTC has larger numbers of economically and academically disadvantaged students than its competitors and other WTCS institutions, with 16.1% economically and 22.4% academically disadvantaged in 2005.

O4 NTC has built and strengthened collaborative relationships with key stakeholders identified as the general community and taxpayers; business, industry, and employers; K-12 schools; higher education; and partnerships, donors, friends, and legislators.

O5a In 2004-05, NTC employed 340 full-time and 67 part-time employees. It also employed 407 adjunct faculty. NTC’s employee workforce diversity mirrors and exceeds the community workforce diversity.

O5b Non-administrative employees are represented by four bargaining units. Adjunct faculty are not represented by a bargaining unit.

O6a NTC is a commuter college with no residence halls.

O6b In January 2005, NTC opened a Health Sciences Center on the Wausau Campus to meet workforce shortage needs in health care occupations. The HSC is the first and only higher education facility in Wisconsin to register for the LEED (Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design) certification.

O6c In 2004-05, NTC spent 5.52% of the College’s General Fund Revenue to maintain information systems (above the 1.9% of revenue benchmark for the educational sector).

O7a NTC’s major competitors include five adjacent WTCS colleges that offer products in a manner similar to NTC.

O7b NTC considers area 4-year colleges and universities its partners rather than competitors. NTC has 22 2+2 higher education articulation agreements with colleges/universities and most of these partner institutions offer courses on its campus or on the Internet.
O7c Only 61% of college graduates remain in Wisconsin after graduation compared with a national average of 71%.

O8a The key vulnerability for NTC is the state legislative climate with a budget deficit in which several legislators are advocating a constitutional amendment or a tax freeze bill to control local spending.

O8b Another vulnerability is the projected population growth within the NTC district of 15% which is a slower rate than the state average of 20%. However, the number of jobs in the region served by the College is expected to increase 13% between 2002 and 2012, intensifying the need for the college to keep its students in the local workforce.

**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**
--- | ---
O1c | NTC’s vision is to be “the college of choice, anticipating and exceeding customers’ expectations with excellence.” NTC’s mission is to facilitate “learning of high value for individuals, businesses, industries, and organizations, which builds a competitive workforce in a changing global society.”
O1e | The Learning System is the key system developed in 2002 to align NTC as a “learner-focused” organization. All other systems support “The Learning System” and each other.
O2a | In 2004-05, NTC offered 28 associate degree programs, 13 technical diploma programs, 10 programs of less than one year, 5 shared programs, 14 apprenticeships, 39 certificates, a range of services to complete high school or to learn English, as well as continuing education and customized training for business and industry.
O2b | NTC delivers educational programs, offerings, and services through six regional sites and at community-based sites ranging from jails to high schools to company work-site locations. In addition to traditional face-to-face classroom experience, courses are offered utilizing an Interactive Television System (ITV), net-meetings, online and web-enhanced methods.
O3b | NTC has larger numbers of economically and academically disadvantaged students than its competitors and other WTCS institutions, with 16.1% economically and 22.4% academically disadvantaged in 2005.

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.

**Item | S/O | Comment**
--- | --- | ---
1P1a | S | After a process of significant employer and stakeholder input, NTC determined “Core Abilities” outcomes for all of its graduates, which includes “soft skills” and which are important for students to have when they seek employment.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1P1b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC has a clearly articulated process (DACUM) for establishing course competencies and program outcomes for each of its occupational degrees, using occupational input and industry standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P1c</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>NTC uses a 4-year rotation cycle to enhance all programs including the course competencies, core abilities, and program outcomes. Since these seem to be relatively recent innovations, it is not clear whether these processes have been put in place and practiced for any length of time or whether they are models for future work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC has clearly articulated a framework for designing and evaluating new curriculum or modifying existing courses and programs. To facilitate the design and delivery of new courses, NTC uses an Educational Design and Delivery Major Process, which includes four Support Processes: Program Mix, Modes of Delivery, External Partnerships, and Curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P3a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Occupational advisory committees review and recommend admissions guidelines and course prerequisites that are approved by the Learning Team and the Vice President for Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P3b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC addresses the challenge of underprepared students through its Learning Center, from which prospective students can receive assistance at no cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P5a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The Student Retention Services Major Process assembles a retention team that strives to strengthen academic performance, especially during the critical third week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P5b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>As the only WTCS college awarded a TRIO grant, NTC assists students in grades 6-12 who are low income and first generation college students to assess their skills and career interests and supports them in making college an attainable goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P5c</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC provides a weekly online self-assessment Career Decisions Workshop as a first step to receiving benefits from Job Services; high school seniors are also encouraged to enroll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P6</td>
<td>OO</td>
<td>NTC presents a complex set of processes designed to assess student learning and institutional effectiveness. In some cases, it is not clear what is actually being evaluated and who is responsible for carrying out this work. For example, in Figure 1P.6-3, the concept of continuous feedback loop is clearly presented, but the portfolio (Category 1) does not</td>
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make it clear how change actually happens and who is involved/responsible.

1P7a S NTC has invested in fiber-optic telecommunication systems to connect its six campus sites and area high schools so that students can access NTC courses through distance education.

1P7b S With the anticipated growth in online courses, NTC has established an Online Learning Committee and adopted the eTech College of Wisconsin standards for online course development and delivery.

1P7c O The only indication of effectiveness of the online delivery system is the number of students taking at least one course online. It is unclear if there is a process for assessing the learning in online or web-enhanced courses compared with face-to-face courses.

1P7d S Occupational advisory committees as well as business and community leaders offer input and feedback into course delivery needs and options.

1P8 S NTC has a viable, on-going process for program review to see that degree programs are current and effective. Within the past five years, it has implemented 10 new degree programs and suspended/discontinued 11.

1P9a S As online course delivery has increased, NTC has kept pace with the online delivery of student services so that it is equal to that provided to on-campus students (Figure 1P.9-5).

1P9b S NTC uses multiple listening/learning avenues to determine student/staff/stakeholder needs, expectations, and satisfaction. Repetitive and established survey delivery seems to be in place.

1P10 O It is not clear how the goals of co-curricular activities (clubs) are systematically aligned with the program outcomes of the 27 career programs (2004-05) with which these clubs are related.

1P13a S External employer evaluators use common scoring rubrics for the summative assessment of student achievement of program outcomes at the time of graduation; core abilities are assessed by the graduates’ employers six months after graduation.

1P13b S NTC faculty are required to be certified by WTCS and take the Educational Evaluation course so that they have the knowledge and skills
to develop and use formative classroom assessment techniques and authentic summative assessments.

1R1a  S  NTC appears to be performing on par with WTCS measures in the Summative Assessment of Core Abilities (Figure 1R.1-1).

1R1b  S  In all segments of NTC completion data, student course completion percentages exceed benchmarks (Figure 1R.1-4).

1R1c  S  An indication of positive results of student success services is the number of developmental students who complete subsequent credit courses (Figure 1R.1-10).

1R1d  OO  It is not clear in what ways competencies are mapped with assessments in the classroom. For the core abilities, only a mean rubric score for each ability for each academic year for all graduates is reported (Figure 1R.1-1). Since these scores are based on ratings by employers of graduates six months after graduation, detailed information is needed about participation rates of graduates and employers, completeness of scoring rubrics, inter-rater reliability across employers and occupational areas, etc. in order for the results to be meaningful. (Figure 1R.1-1) For both core abilities and program outcomes, program level data seems the most meaningful, with additional disaggregation based on other factors (student demographics, for instance).

1R1e  O  While the reported 79% retention rate (p. 1-25) seems quite positive given the relatively high rate of academically disadvantaged students, this is not a direct measure of student learning but a measure of persistence (a good thing). Assessment strategies could be put in place that would provide direct evidence of the learning of these identified students.

1R1f  SS  NTC exceeds almost all Wisconsin and national mean student performance ratings in its Adult Basic Education programs. NTC exceeds both State and national pass rates on the GED.

1R1g  SS  NTC was selected to participate in a best-practices study by Berkeley Policy Associates (funded by U.S. Department of Education) to study NTC’s success in leading a successful transition into enrollment for for-credit post-secondary education courses.

1R1h  S  NTC’s job placement rates exceed 90% six months after graduation (Figure 1R.2-1)
1R2a  S  NTC’s evidence of student academic success is reflected via multiple measures that are eventually shared with each program. These measures include job placement, employer feedback, alumni feedback, outside accreditation reviews, licensure exam pass rates, and graduation and transfer rates (Figure 1R.2-9).

1R2b  SS  NTC surpasses its competitors in graduate job placement within six months of graduation (Figure 1R2-1). NTC also provides data that indicate that employers are satisfied with NTC graduates (Figure 1R2-5); data that show that graduates are satisfied with their NTC education (Figure 1R2-6); and data that reveal that students achieve their goals above the national average (Figure 1R2-7). Persistence rates are above the state norm of 56% (Figure 1R2-10), and NTC graduation rates are twice the Perkins Performance Standard Cohorts and better than the state graduation rates (Figure 1R2-11).

1R3  S  Students report high levels of satisfaction with classes and with faculty (Figures 1R.3-2 and 3.3).

1I1  S  NTC actively engages external stakeholders in its continuous improvement processes for student learning and institutional effectiveness. It defines external feedback as key to that improvement.

1I2a  S  To set targets for improvement, NTC uses competitor, state, and national data for benchmarks.

1I2b  S  NTC has set a clear focus in its improvement priorities on optimizing learner success by targeting two specific areas in student learning: 1) Student-Centeredness; and 2) Implementation of the LAAA Plan (Figure 1P.6-4).

**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**

O1a NTC was established in 1912 and is one of 16 2-year post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). NTC serves a 10-county area in north central Wisconsin that comprises 5,900 square miles (roughly the size of Connecticut) and has a population of 228,024.

O1c NTC’s vision is to be “the college of choice, anticipating and exceeding customers’ expectations with excellence.” NTC’s mission is to facilitate “learning of high value for individuals, businesses, industries, and organizations, which builds a competitive workforce in a changing global society.”

O1e “The Learning System” is the key system developed in 2002 to align NTC as a “learner-focused” organization. All other systems support “The Learning System” and each other.

O2a In 2004-05, NTC offered 28 associate degree programs, 13 technical diploma programs, 10 programs of less than one year, 5 shared programs, 14 apprenticeships, 39 certificates, a range of services to complete high school or to learn English, as well as continuing education and customized training for business and industry.

O2b NTC delivers educational programs, offerings, and services through six regional sites and at community–based sites ranging from jails to high schools to company work-site locations. In addition to traditional face-to-face classroom experience, courses are offered utilizing an Interactive Television System (ITV), net-meetings, online- and web-enhanced methods.

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.
<table>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2C1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The College has developed Community Benefits Statements (CBSs) as their distinctive objectives; these define what the college provides to individuals, businesses and the community served by the college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A thorough set of input solicitation and monitoring is described in which NTC leadership gathers information from stakeholders and from environmental scans that inform their strategic direction-setting and ongoing self-assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>There is no evidence regarding whether such key stakeholders as faculty, staff, and/or students are involved in shaping the Community Benefits Statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC applies a Program Tier Model, which is based on research of community needs and is strategically aligned to NTC’s Mission, Vision, and Community Benefits Statements to determine allocation of faculty and instructional resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P5</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC’s Board and senior leadership use a Monitoring Tree (Figure 2R.1-1) that monitors Key Quality Indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2R1-2R2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Results from the NTC Monitoring Tree indicate that most KQIs are at or above MOS targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2R1-2R2b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Several KQIs in the CBS Monitoring Tree are “Below MOS Target” or “Significantly Below MOS” indicating areas for continued improvement (Figure 2R.1-1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2R3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC’s economic impact on the region is well developed and recognized. NTC documents detail the socioeconomic impact of the results of the Community Benefits Statements in four major areas: community benefits, student benefits, taxpayer benefits, and return on investment (Figure 2I.2-1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2I1-2I2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC employs the continuous improvement cycle (Plan-Perform-Improve Trilogy (Figure O.1-8) to review KQI’s and indicators on the Monitoring Tree. Results of the CBS’s identify what needs improvement and are subsequently aligned with the institution’s strategic direction (Figure 2I.2-1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O1a</td>
<td>Northcentral Technical College (NTC) was established in 1912 and is one of 16 2-year post-secondary colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). NTC serves a 10-county area in north central Wisconsin that comprises 5,900 square miles (roughly the size of Connecticut) and has a population of 228,024. The college is ranked 11th in headcount served (17,196) of the 16 WTCS colleges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1b</td>
<td>The WTCS board is appointed by the governor and is responsible for distribution of federal and state aid, faculty certification, program approval, and tuition pricing. The nine-member NTC District Board of Trustees is appointed by a special committee of the ten county board chairpersons. The NTC Board makes budget approvals, establishes property tax levy, establishes local governing policy, and deliberates on personnel issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2b</td>
<td>NTC delivers educational programs, offerings, and services through six regional sites and at community –based sites ranging from jails to high schools to company work-site locations. In addition to traditional face-to-face classroom experience, courses are offered utilizing an Interactive Television System (ITV), net-meetings, online- and web-enhanced methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O3a</td>
<td>Eighty-two percent of NTC’s learners are from the College’s 10-county geographic area. The student body is 53.2% female, 93.4% white, and 95% attend part-time. The median student age is 32.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O3b  NTC has larger numbers of economically and academically disadvantaged students than its competitors and other WTCS institutions, with 16.1% economically and 22.4% academically disadvantaged in 2005.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3P1-3P3a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC identifies and analyzes information on student and other stakeholder needs in a variety of systematic ways to ensure program alignment in meeting stakeholder needs. Internally, this includes student feedback at multiple points during the students’ academic tenure, strategic conversations by the NTC Board and Advisory Committees of employers. Externally, this includes alumni from each program who meet twice a year and employees who meet regularly with business and industry. To validate these stakeholder needs, NTC utilizes secondary and market research, which is eventually incorporated into its strategic planning process and monitored by the KQI's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P1-3P3b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC uses an Event Assessment to improve or modify their offerings for students in their various support processes. Prior to graduation, a Senior Panel Forum provides an opportunity for students who have experienced NTC's “learning journey” to give evaluative feedback. This is followed by 6-month and 5-year Graduate Follow-Up Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC builds relationships with its Stakeholders via multiple avenues. This begins with high school students through a well-developed recruitment outreach effort that includes high school visits, campus tours, College Camps, Career Expo Event, Youth Apprenticeship, Health Academy, Educational Talent-Search, NTC Pre-college Experience Program, NTC Experience Days, and targeted publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P5</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC has incorporated information gleaned from its community services into its strategic planning process allowing it to respond more quickly to emerging issues within its geographic service area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3P6a    | SS  | NTC utilizes a Customer Complaint Management system, which tracks all stakeholder complaints. A decision-making model (Figure 3P6-3) assists
in determining the degree to which individual employees can help resolve complaints.

3P6b O NTC has indicated it has extensive policies and processes for gathering and responding to complaints. However, it is unclear from the portfolio whether these processes include a means for anonymous reporting and/or to what extent processes are in place to maintain the confidentiality of student complainants as may be appropriate to protect students. Such processes may increase the likelihood that sensitive information is reported.

3P7 S NTC utilizes multiple tools to measure and analyze student and stakeholder satisfaction. These include internal and nationally normed mechanisms such as in-class, mail, web-based, and telephone surveys, focus sessions, and behavioral data. NTC stratifies data into target student and stakeholder segments and by programs to differentiate the results among groups. As a result NTC is able to develop enhancement plans as part of its continuous improvement practices.

3R1a O NTC’s student satisfaction with learning ratings appear to be in a slight downward trend (Figure 3R.1-1) affording it an opportunity to utilize the continuous improvement processes it has in place to analyze and respond to these issues. It is unclear whether this downward trend is a result of a new measurement or an actual decline in satisfaction.

3R1b O While “Strengthened” scores significantly above the MOS, “Inspired” and “Connected” fall just under or at the MOS. Scoring just at the MOS provides an opportunity for improvement (Figure 3R1-4).

3R2a S NTC’s 97% graduate rating of very satisfied/satisfied (1R.2-6) is consistent with its competitors and WTCS rates. NTC segments satisfaction data by program, and advisory committees use the data when discussing continuous improvement strategies. (Figure 1R.2-6, Figure 3R.2-7)

3R2b S NTC’s outreach to area high schools is evidenced in the number of advanced standing credits granted (Figure 3R.2-1). This is further demonstrated by its significant market share of area high school graduates, especially measured within three years of graduation.
NTC persistence rates (Figure 1R.2-10) meet the College’s MOS; graduation rates (Figure 1R.2-11) are above local, state and national benchmarks.

Survey data on satisfaction with customized training (Figure 3R.3-2) indicate that the level of reported satisfaction is high but that there is room for improvement in the actual outcomes achievement.

Overall employers listed in Figure 3R3-4 are satisfied with NTC graduates.

Areas for improvement include Arch/Residential Design and Electromechanical Tech, which report some dissatisfaction and EMT-Paramedic, which reports considerable dissatisfaction (Figure 3R.3-4).

NTC does not indicate whether faculty and support staff are considered stakeholders and whether they are satisfied with the College or the processes being described. Since faculty and staff serve as Answer Advocates and Experience Ambassadors, it would be useful to know whether they think these initiatives are effective.

Compared to nine other competitors in the WTCS, NTC is an area leader for providing professional development seminars (Figure 3R4-5).

Data on “NTC’s Connectivity with the Community” indicate improvement for the past three years (Figure 3R.4-7).

**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

O5a  In 2004-05, NTC employed 340 full-time and 67 part-time employees. It also employed 407 adjunct faculty. NTC’s employee workforce diversity mirrors and exceeds the community workforce diversity.

O5b  Non-administrative employees are represented by four bargaining units. Adjunct faculty are not represented.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC’s People Services S-Unit preapproves the applicant screening matrix prior to candidate interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>In recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees, NTC aligns its systematic hiring practices with its value of diversity. Practices such as advertisements in minority and women’s publications, “how to guides” in Hmong and Spanish, diverse composition of hiring teams, a mentoring program for new hires, and a statement of values regarding diversity have resulted in a workforce that mirrors and even exceeds the diversity of the community workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P2b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>With the exception of senior leadership, NTC does not indicate how the institution plans for personnel changes within its other administrative, staff, and faculty positions; an opportunity exists for NTC to develop a similar system or processes on a college-wide basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P3a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC promotes cooperative decision making by utilizing a formal structure of standing committees that involves employees from all classifications and all regional sites; approximately 35% of employees participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P3b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC has established an internal ethics committee that provides help to employees and makes policy recommendations to the institution. The Committee also investigates allegations of breaches of ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC aligns professional development for faculty and staff with learning requirements and key organizational values and needs such as diversity, technology, ethical practices, leadership, and AQIP, regulatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
requirements. A Professional Development Committee, the TLTC, and People Services provide a system of learning for all employees in the institution. Mandatory training is accomplished twice a year via ITV and new employees are connected to a mentor when hired.

**4P6**  S  In keeping with the institution’s core value of commitment to continuous improvement, NTC’s employee evaluation system is based on several performance competences. Self evaluation, observations, and supervisor evaluation are some of the assessment tools used for both faculty and staff. NTC aligns this system with Helping Students Learn.

**4P7**  S  NTC aligns its recognition, reward, and compensation packages with the institution’s core values and the NTC Experience. Numerous employee recognitions are offered (Figure 4P.7-1), among them a teaching excellence award. Benefits are in keeping with the diverse workforce.

**4P8a**  S  NTC provides informal mentoring for each new employee during the first year of employment to attain job and career development objectives; faculty have 13 Flexible Development/Planning Days each year to enhance their careers.

**4P8b**  S  The Exemplary Service Award recognizes teams for innovation/creativity. The award funds additional team professional development. Furthermore, NTC spends a greater percent of its payroll budget on professional development than the national average as reported by the American Society of Training and Development.

**4P9-4P10**  S  NTC has a systematic process for providing for and evaluating employee satisfaction, health, safety and well-being as indicated in the Employment Relations Major Process (Figure 4P.9-1) and by use of the People Services Support System KQI Monitoring Tree (Figure 4P.9-2). NTC has provided measures of success and associated results for key workplace factors in safety, security, ergonomics, and health and well-being. (Figure 4P.9-3). The NTC Motif: Inspired, Connected, Strengthened is also a measure of valuing people.

**4R1**  O  “Ethnic and cultural diversity are valued at NTC,” (Figure 4P.9-2) and the ethnic diversity of NTC’s employee body is greater than its service community. An employee opinion survey (Figure 4P.9-2) indicates that performance in this area is below the MOS target. An opportunity exists for NTC to foster greater integration of the diverse employees into the institution once they are hired.
4R1-4R2a  S  NTC has instituted safety training and established a Risk Management Committee to monitor employee well-being in a number of areas resulting in Worker Compensation Experience rating numbers going down (Figure 4R.1/2-15).

4R1-4R2b  O  The Employee Experience measures (Inspired, Connected, Strengthened) have shown significant improvement since 2003, yet still fall below the target MOS (Figure 4R.2-1).

4R1-4R2c  S  Even though NTC has not yet, (and hopefully never) experienced violent crime on campus, the institution voluntarily works with the Wausau police department on a crisis management/disaster recovery plan – with the command and control center on campus.

**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**

O1b  The WTCS board is appointed by the governor and is responsible for distribution of federal and state aid, faculty certification, program approval, and tuition pricing. The nine-member NTC District Board of Trustees is appointed by a special committee of the ten county board chairpersons. The NTC Board makes budget approvals, establishes property tax levy, establishes local governing policy, and deliberates on personnel issues.

O1c  NTC’s vision is to be “the college of choice, anticipating and exceeding customers’ expectations with excellence.” NTC’s mission is to facilitate “learning of high value for
individuals, businesses, industries, and organizations, which builds a competitive workforce in a changing global society.”

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC Board members set direction through the Benefits Statements (Figure O.1-2), which are aligned with the mission, vision, and core values. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the subunits engage in strategic planning and deploy actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P1b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The NTC Experience is another medium that aligns the directions of the NTC Board and senior leaders, in addition to creating an organizational focus and understanding for faculty and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Forward thinking is one of NTC’s values and through numerous means, NTC seeks out opportunities to improve. This philosophy is evidenced by NTC’s receipt of the Wisconsin’s Forward Award (WFA), a quality award based on Baldrige principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P2b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Several times each year the NTC Board conducts listening sessions at various locations throughout the geographic service area to obtain feedback and solicit ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC uses a variety of committees (e.g., the ELT &amp; SLT leadership teams &amp; NTC Forward committee) and the AQIP Guidance and Planning team to ensure broad and active college-wide participation in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P4</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>NTC systematically collects data from internal sources, from regional competitors, state competitors, and national competitors to make decisions (Figure 5P.4-1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5P5-5P6</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Communication about decisions and two-way communication at NTC in general are possible through multiple means, as described in Category Two and Three (Figure 2P2-1). Electronic communication and use of ITV and live webcast are vehicles used to ensure communication occurs throughout the district.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5P7  S  The institution promotes best practices and sharing of knowledge and skills through the use of cross-functional teams, by providing professional development monies to staff and faculty. NTC’s Leadership institute and Leadership Wausau are available to all employees.

5P8  S  NTC has been thoughtful and proactive about setting in place processes to ensure that the Community Benefits Statements and the Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Operating Principles are passed on during leadership succession.

5R1a  O  Because no scale or MOS are provided for Figure 5R1-2 it is unclear whether these are positive results.

5R1b  O  The results provided within the portfolio indicating employee satisfaction (Figure 3R.2-4 and Figure 4R.1/2-1) indicate NTC has an opportunity to improve in these critical areas.

5R1-5R2  S  Results for leading and communicating at NTC are documented in the Strategic Key Quality Indicators (Community Benefits Statements) where 16 of the 33 indicators exceed MOS and 10 meet target.

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**AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS**

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of 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**

O1d  In 2004, NTC achieved Mastery Level in the Wisconsin Forward Award (WFA). WFA feedback has driven AQIP Key Quality Initiatives.
O1e “The Learning System” is the key system developed in 2002 to align NTC as a “learner-focused” organization. All other systems support “The Learning System” and each other.

O6b In January 2005, NTC opened a Health Sciences Center on the Wausau Campus to meet workforce shortage needs in health care occupations. The HSC is the first and only higher education facility in Wisconsin to register for the LEED (Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design) certification.

O6c In 2004-05, NTC spent 5.52% of the College’s General Fund Revenue to maintain information systems (above the 1.9% of revenue benchmark for the educational sector).

O8a The key vulnerability for NTC is the state legislative climate with a budget deficit in which several legislators are advocating a constitutional amendment or a tax freeze bill to control local spending.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6P1-6P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Student support and administrative support service needs are identified, considered, and prioritized via an annual planning and budget development process by the Learning Team, Operations Team, SLT, and/or Capital Expenditure Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6P3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC’s support processes are managed by the sub-units, and KQIs are identified for each process as a way of tracking for success. Systems Champions and the owners of processes, monitor the KQI’s. The Support System Quality Index (SQI) documents five categories for monitoring and four elements within each category (Figure 6P.4-2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6P4a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The AQIP action project that shifted evaluation of individual institutional services to evaluation of related student support services is a good example of “systems thinking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6P4b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>It is unclear from the documentation provided in this Category whether or not the Elements pertaining to each Category in the SQI (Figure 6P4-2) have their own defined metrics or if they are (at least in some cases) statements of philosophy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6P4c  S  NTC has established an integrated performance evaluation process, the Support System Quality Model (SQM), rather than a stand-alone audit to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional services (Figure 6P.4-1). For example, Financial Aid is fully integrated with other student support systems such as the Enrollment Management Major Process, recognizing that the work of offices like Financial Aid do not exist in isolation, at least as far as the student is concerned.

6P4d  S  Using a three-year rotational cycle, the evaluation of support processes focuses on five areas, including customer requirements, learner and stakeholder satisfaction, knowledge management, responsibility-based communication, and continuous improvement (Figure 6P.4-3).

6P5  S  A Monitoring Tree (scorecard) for each support system is employed to track the effectiveness of the systems. Vice Presidents (owners of systems) select KQI’s from Major Processes that they review. The VP for Operations oversees all results for support processes and with the Operations Leadership Team, evaluates progress on the scorecard on a quarterly basis.

6R1a  O  Although the College reports Support Service results in other contexts, it would be useful to have the actual results reviewed here.

6R1b  O  Opportunities for improvement in the area of financials include the rise in cost per FTE beyond competitors (Figure 6R.2-9). The status of NTC’s ability to bring in grants is not clear (Figure 6R.2-10), and employee giving for scholarships shows an increase in six years, yet giving appears to be uneven during that time period. Without a plan in place to address these trends, it is not clear how the institution will address the challenge of the State’s budgeted deficit.

6R2a  S  All the evidence NTC presents demonstrates that the organization is financially sound and well run; NTC exceeds the minimum 16% reserve established by the Board and maintains an AA2 Moody Rating.

6R2b  SS  NTC meets its goal of being a low-cost institution to students; its cost is below its competitors and below the average for the system (Figure 6R.2-7, Figure 6R.2-8). The number of awards and scholarships increased 20% in 2004-05, exceeding the MOS (10%) and is above the national 4.3% change over ten years for 2-year colleges. Scholarship awards totaled $213,475 in 2004-05, which is an all-time high.
NTC provides results data for the six support processes: student success, people services, financial services, information systems and instructional technology, physical plant, and strategic leadership (Figure 6R.2-1). Measures of NTC’s financial success include a mill rate that has been below the statutory limit of 1.50 for eight years (Figure 6R2-4). In addition, NTC maintains a reserve balance of 25% that exceeds the national Moody Investor Services; the Moody rating is better than the city of Wausau, and is the same as the surrounding county (Figure 6R.2-6). In keeping with its vision to be “the college of choice,” NTC is more affordable than its competitors (Figure 6R.2-7). NTC’s cost per FTE falls within the WTCS 9% range. Business and Industry Services are comparable to competitors in WTCS. Annual audits have produced “zero” findings and the GFOA has recognized NTC for ten years for excellence in financial reporting.

NTC engages in “conversations of inquiry” resulting in action/enhancement plans regardless of whether comparative results demonstrate that NTC is performing above or below comparison institutions.

Using the Plan, Perform, and Improve trilogy of NTC’s continuous improvement model, NTC makes improvements by monitoring the outcomes and using the Systems Quality Model (Figure 6P.4-1), a model developed using an AQIP Key Quality Action Project. The NTC Forward Committee reviews the Action Projects twice a year. Targets are set based on review of the Monitoring Tree and feedback from AQIP’s Annual Update and the 2004 Wisconsin Forward Award application.

**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O1d</td>
<td>In 2004, NTC achieved Mastery Level in the Wisconsin Forward Award (WFA). WFA feedback has driven AQIP Key Quality Initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O6c</td>
<td>In 2004-05, NTC spent 5.52% of the College’s General Fund Revenue to maintain information systems (above the 1.9% of revenue benchmark for the educational sector).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC uses four types of comparative data: internal, competitor, state, and nationally normed data. NTC also participates in national initiatives such as the Continuous Quality Improvement Network and the League for Innovation. The Community Benefits Statements, the Strategic Directions, and KQI’s provide the framework for the strategic and operational data collection that supports NTC’s distinctive objectives, student learning, and continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P2</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>The upcoming Action Project, “using data to establish priorities and improve systems and processes,” provides NTC with an opportunity to refine its use of data and information; it is still unclear how NTC determines the needs of departments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7P3  | S   | NTC determines comparative data needs by using a minimum of three data points, although it strives for five data points, and plans to increase to 10 data points to be consistent with other institutional reports. NTC’s strategic measurements are aligned with local, state, and national measurements; it uses data from CQIN, Madison Area Quality Network, and the League for Innovation. To provide “fresh” or just-in-time data, NTC releases study results within 30 days. Additionally, NTC provides on-going Help Desk support and on-going training for employees.
NTC is clearly committed to using data in its decision making processes; it uses comparative data to establish its Measures of Success for improving its performance, striving for a minimum of three data points to determine trends. NTC establishes new databases as needed and keeps its focus on “just-in-time” or fresh data.

NTC employs a systematic, well-deployed process to analyze and share data about institutional effectiveness. By using a Board KQI Monitoring Report (Figure 2R.1-1), NTC calls attention to the primary goals and targets that drive performance and future planning at the institutional level. Individual “Monitoring Trees” provide results data about progress in specific areas, subunits, and processes. These Monitoring Trees include comparative data (state and national) and results for each KQI. NTC communicates results data in a number of ways, including intranet postings, the Weekly College Connection bulletin and public hearings. (Figure 2P.2-1),

In aligning student learning needs with its technology infrastructure, NTC uses best practice standards from regional accrediting commissions to provide services online. In addition, NTC has adopted the eTech College of Wisconsin standards to provide reliable services to students. NTC uses best practices criteria from Distance Education Best Practices (HLC). HLC has granted approval for 100% of NTC programs to be delivered online.

NTC employs quality indicators to ensure the effectiveness of its information systems (Figure 7P.6-1). The ISIT Support System Major/Support Processes KQI measurements focus on integrity (Figure 7P.6-2). The Information Systems and Instructional Technology Support System provides a one-stop shop for all administrative and instructional technology planning, support, and evaluation, and ensures that hardware and software are reliable, secure, and user friendly.

Because no benchmark or MOS indicators are provided in Figure 7R1-2 for the ISIT Support system, it is unclear just how successful NTC is on these measures.

Key Quality Indicators in this area include measures for technical services, information management, electronic delivery, and unified messaging. NTC determines targets for individual indicators; examples include: “90% timelines for completing work tickets closed within SLA,”
and "asynchronous learning infrastructure up & running time maintained 99%," It provides satisfaction data in ten areas; all of the means are above 3.50 on a 5.0 scale (5.0 for very satisfied).

7R1-7R2 O NTC refers to data available in the KQI Monitoring Trees; however, it does not provide that data. Thus the specific results of its efforts are unclear.

7I1-7I2 S NTC determines improvement priorities by measures such as consulting the Aurora Consortium, monitoring the ISIT Support System Monitoring Tree, and using the Plan, Perform, Improve Trilogy. Recent improvements include electronic postings of grades for students resulting in cost savings for the institution.

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

O1b The WTCS Board is appointed by the governor and is responsible for distribution of federal and state aid, faculty certification, program approval, and tuition pricing. The nine-member NTC District Board of Trustees is appointed by a special committee of the ten county board chairpersons. The NTC Board makes budget approvals, establishes property tax levy, establishes local governing policy, and deliberates on personnel issues.

01d In 2004, NTC achieved Mastery Level in the Wisconsin Forward Award (WFA). WFA feedback has driven AQIP Key Quality Initiatives.
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.

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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>8P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC employs an on-going systematic strategic planning process that includes key leaders, employees, and stakeholders (Figure 8P1-1, 1-2). The process involves gathering and evaluating information, setting direction and goals, aligning resources, implementing plans, and monitoring and adjusting activities and actions within certain timelines. The vision and mission statements and Community Benefits statement serve as the “umbrella” for the process. Based on the review of the vision/mission statements and information gathered, the Board sets the strategic direction for next three years.</td>
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<td>8P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC employs the strategic planning process as a systematic way to select short- and long-term goals. This process includes identifying critical issues/challenges, establishing strategic directions, and aligning the long-term implications of the directions with short-term strategies (Figure 8P2-2). Internal employees involved in the process include Board members, senior leaders, and work units; external data sources include local, state, and national economic and workforce trends, market, competition, and the political climate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8P4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC employed an AQIP Action Project to implement a process to align and coordinate the work of the college with its planning process and with setting the Mission, Vision, CBS’s and strategic directions. NTC involves all stakeholders in the planning process, and communication occurs via a feedback loop at all levels of the institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8P5</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC has a defined process for selecting measures and setting performance projections. Measures of success (MOS’s) are determined by scanning and by using scenario thinking. NTC uses three data points to indicate a trend, and four sources of comparable data to benchmark performance, including internal comparisons, state-wide comparisons, and national comparisons with both academic and non-academic institutions. Electronic documents are available on the Intranet to all employees for the purpose of monitoring the color-coded measures.</td>
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</table>
8P6  S  NTC aligns resource needs during the strategic planning process every year (Figure 8P.1-1, Figure 8P.1-2), keeping in mind external and internal parameters, such as levels of state funding and a desired 16% fund balance.

8P7  O  There does not appear to be a direct link between changing strategic directions and determining requirements of certain employee groups, such as administrators. Without such a process, the institution may not be able to respond quickly to significant regional needs and priorities.

8P8  S  NTC employs the Wisconsin Forward Award as a means for measuring its effectiveness of planning continuous improvement.

8R1  S  NTC’s goal attainment data (Figure 8R1-1 and Figure 8R 1-2) indicate that of 24 long- and short-term strategies tracked, 58.3% are attained, 29.2% are on track, and 12.5% are slow in progress. None fall in the unable to accomplish category.

8R4  SS  NTC’s evidence for indicating effectiveness within its planning process comes from external feedback from the Wisconsin Forward Award (improvement in two scoring bands), the institution’s advisory committee reports, Monitoring Tree results, and capital improvements such as the $20 Million Center for Health Sciences.

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**

O4  NTC has built and strengthened collaborative relationships with key stakeholders identified as the general community and taxpayers; business, industry, and employers; K-12 schools; higher education; and partnerships, donors, friends, and legislators.

07a  NTC’s major competitors include five adjacent WTCS colleges that offer products in a manner similar to NTC.

07b  NTC considers area 4-year colleges and universities its partners rather than competitors. NTC has 22 2+2 higher education articulation agreements with colleges/universities and most of these partner institutions offer courses on its campus or on the Internet.

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.

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<td>9P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC uses a systematic approach, the Community Benefits Statements (CBSs), to align collaborative initiatives with the institution’s mission and priorities, including future workforce needs and economic development. Key collaborative partnerships are indicated in Figure 9C.1-1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9R1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC’s results for building and maintaining collaborative relationships indicate that in a three-year period, 2003-05, stakeholder satisfaction involving connectivity with the community has steadily improved in five areas (Figure 3R.4-7).</td>
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<td>9I1-9I2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>NTC develops and sets targets for improvement during the strategic planning process. It identified two specific improvements, Strategic Direction #3, the shortage in healthcare workforce, and Strategic Direction #5, mandated public safety workforce training requirements.</td>
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