The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

NCA

September 2, 2010

Rebecca Paneitz
President
NorthWest Arkansas Community College
One College Dr.
Bentonville, AR 72712-5091

Dear President Paneitz:

Enclosed is a copy of NorthWest Arkansas Community College's *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. It begins with a concise Executive Summary, intended for those general readers that do not require a high level of detail. Your Systems Appraisal Team of quality experts provided extensive detail in the full report by identifying nine distinct groups of what they view as your institution's *strengths* and *opportunities for improvement*, one group for each of the nine AQIP Categories. We are also emailing your institution's AQIP Liaison a copy of this full *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and enclosures.

To receive maximum benefit from your Systems Appraisal, you and your colleagues should plan to invest substantial time in discussing it, considering the team's observations and advice, and identifying which actions will best advance your institution. The enclosed *After Your Appraisal* details what lies ahead and how to use your Feedback Report most effectively, and explains when and how to register for your next Strategy Forum.

To comply with federal requirements, we need the CEO of the institution formally to acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and to provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Please read the enclosed *After Your Appraisal* suggestions *before* you decide how to respond. Limit your acknowledgement and comments to a maximum of two typewritten pages, and understand that your response will become part of your institution's permanent HLC file, to be shared with future peer reviewers who review your institution (including the next Systems Appraisal team, the next Quality Checkup visit team, and the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation panel). Email your response to AQIP@hlcommission.org; call me or Mary Green (at 800-621-7440 x130) if you have any questions about it.

We know you will gain real value from the Systems Appraisal Feedback and the activities it will stimulate within your institution, and we are proud to be working with you as you continue along the never-ending path to improvement.

Sincerely,

Stephen D. Spangehl
Vice President, Accreditation Relations

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
One College Drive
Bentonville, AR 72712-5091

Affiliation   Status: Candidate: 1991
Accreditation: (1995- .)
AQIP PARTICIPANT

Nature of Organization

Legal   Status: Public

Degrees   Awarded: A

Conditions of Affiliation:

Stipulations   on   Affiliation   Status: None.

Approval   of   New   Additional   Locations: Prior Commission approval required.

Approval   of   Distance   Education   Degrees: Prior Commission approval required to offer on-line degrees beyond the Associate of Arts and the AAS in Safety & Health, and Hazardous Materials Management.

Reports   Required: Progress Report: 10/01/2006; A report on assessment of student learning in on-line programs.

Other   Visits   Scheduled: AQIP Quality Checkup: 0;

Summary of Commission Review

Year of Admission to AQIP:	07/12/2006
Year of Last PEAQ Comprehensive Evaluation:	1999 - 2000
Year of Last Systems Appraisal:	2009 - 2010
Year of Next Systems Appraisal:	2013 - 2014
Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation:	None
Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation:	2013 - 2014
Date of Last Action:	12/01/2008

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

August 2010

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

In response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission NCA

September 1, 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

- **Category One:** NWACC is in the beginning stages of developing and implementing sustained and institutionalized processes and systems for helping students learn, establishing a Quality Council, and making effective use of an Action Project related to assessment. An opportunity remains to continue developing processes and to be more systematic about how to develop and assess the learning objectives and how to connect the specific data, including longitudinal data, to the specific learning objectives.

- **Category Two:** NWACC has experienced growth and development in their efforts to strengthen and improve accomplishing their other distinctive objectives through the leadership of a new president, reorganization of divisions, and adding key positions to support their enrollment and activity growth. There is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of these activities through more systematic assessment, development of more formalized processes, and identification of measures to identify results that can lead to improvement in this category.

- **Category Three:** NWACC is in the early stages of formalizing and centralizing processes and systems that will identify, track, assess, and improve understanding students' and other key stakeholders' needs. This development of processes and systems should enhance the college's efforts to continually improve services to and interactions with students and provide a culture of teaching and learning that supports student success and stakeholder satisfaction.

- **Category Four:** NWACC has experienced rapid growth and change but does not have processes in place to consistently identify personnel (employee) needs or monitor the impact this rapid growth is having on employees. Faculty and staff recognition programs are in place; however, it is unclear how these programs support the goal of valuing employees in an intentional effort to produce change or how progress against that goal is measured. This may be an area in which an Action Project could create the catalyst for change in this category.

- **Category Five:** While there are many processes in place to refine and improve institutional mission and to develop and communicate policy, as of yet, no centralized process is in place to measure the results of these processes. It is unclear how employee development programs support the goal of leading and communicating, or how progress against that goal is measured. NWACC has made changes in leadership structure and is working towards more inclusive planning and decision-making processes. While NWACC has several positive aspects noted in this category, the data review, results, and use are unclear.

- **Category Six:** The College is in the early stages of building and implementing processes and systems to effectively and efficiently support organizational operations. Processes for identifying support service needs tend to be departmental and somewhat inconsistent across the institution. Results tend to be anecdotal and therefore it may be difficult for the institution to evaluate the greatest needs for improvement. Formalizing and centralizing systems will assist the college to identify areas of need and improvement and to better utilize available data to promote continuous quality improvement.

- **Category Seven:** NWACC is in the early stages of setting up processes and systems to measure effectiveness. A data management system that is easy to access and provides the types of reports and data needed for institutional reporting and assessment could improve communication about the institution's performance results. The new enterprise reporting solution and the assessment plan for the OIR could soon begin to provide support for a data-driven culture and infrastructure.

- **Category Eight:** NWACC engages in regular strategic and master planning processes and they provide evidence that plans are revised to adjust for change. It is not clear, however, how these processes are coordinated, measured, or improved. While NWACC has taken some initial steps to plan for continuous improvement, it is important for an institution in a strong growth cycle to focus institutional resources and energy on developing and implementing formalized processes and systems that will strengthen the culture of continuous improvement. More effective development of specific performance targets and more comprehensive data analysis could further improve performance.

- **Category Nine:** The institution describes a number of important collaborative partnerships, recognizes the importance of building collaborative relationships with other organizations, and has developed multiple relationships that are aligned with their mission. However, the College is only in the early stages of formalizing processes and systems to identify, create, and build collaborative relationships with key internal and external groups or organizations. The institution has the opportunity to fully develop their processes for building such relationships and to collect and analyze data about the quality and effectiveness of these relationships.

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

ELEMENTS OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FEEDBACK REPORT

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

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team had only your *Systems Portfolio* to guide their analysis of your institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, their report may omit important strengths — if you were too modest to stress them in your *Systems Portfolio*, or if your discussion and documentation of them was unconvincing. Similarly, the team may have pointed out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving the institution's attention. Again, the team used its best judgment in identifying improvement opportunities. If some of these areas of potential improvement are now strengths rather than opportunities because of your own focused efforts, that is all to your credit. If the team was unsure about an area, we urged it to err on the side of giving your institution the best

possible advice about where investing your efforts might pay off. If some of their advice comes after the fact, after you've already tackled an area, no harm is done.

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

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

Formalizing Processes and Strategic Planning

- NWACC is experiencing a period of rapid enrollment growth and is, therefore, transitioning from a smaller institution with informal processes and systems, to a larger and more complex college in need of more formal and centralized processes and systems that can support rapid growth.

- NWACC has many processes in place that may be assisting with the day-to-day operational working of departments but that may not be systematic, comprehensive, or adding value to a more strategic and aligned management and assessment of college-wide operations. Formal and intentional strategies to select targets and track progress and performance may be needed to promote a culture of continuous improvement in the college's rapidly evolving environment.

- NWACC does not yet have processes and systems for creating, implementing and regularly tracking and assessing performance results for valuing people or setting targets for improved performance. Developing these processes and systems and using performance results for decision making may help move the College to a culture that values employees and thus improves employee satisfaction.

- In order to improve and grow as a learning-centered institution, NWACC may need to expand the manner in which it identifies and prioritizes key goals and strategies through a comprehensive strategic planning process that involves key stakeholders.

Focused Strategic Issues

Use of Data

- As NWACC builds their processes and structures, it may need to give greater attention to the collection, analysis, and incorporation of data in decision making. The institution could be strengthened by fully implementing systematic processes that include closing the loop with continuous assessment and improvement.

- NWACC appears to be in the beginning stages of collecting and analyzing data for the purpose of tracking performance and comparing results with other institutions at the local, state, and national levels. Designing processes to fully utilize the available data could help with benchmarking and assessment, and may well provide the infrastructure to promote continuous quality improvement.

Relationship Building

- Throughout the Portfolio the college refers to a mission based leadership and culture. Although all the categories are relevant to the college's mission, Categories Three and Nine are particularly critical to the mission of a community college. Setting up processes and systems to assess the needs of stakeholders and developing a formalized system of creating, prioritizing, and building collaborative relationships is not yet in place. Without these processes and systems in place, it may be much more difficult for the institution to focus on a mission of serving and interacting with students, community members, and businesses.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community 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 [Institution] 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

OV1a   Shared learning outcomes are in line with the College's mission of "learning for living." NWACC offers a diverse curricula including18 degree programs for the Associate of Applied Science degree; 17 Technical Certificate programs; 19 Certificate of Proficiency programs; an Adult Basic Education program, and a variety of non-degree programs.

OV1b   The institution uses a variety of technological elements to enhance the educational programs provided including smart classrooms, computer labs, video projectors, electronic podiums, audio equipment, Skype video equipment, and distance learning elements. The College also provides learner support through information technology, the Library, the Academic Success Center, the Transfer Center, and the Career Center.

OV2   The Division of Corporate Learning and Workforce Development works with business and industry by providing training classes, educational programs for children, personal enrichment courses and activities, and conference planning.

OV4   NWACC has between 300-400 full-time employees and over 500 faculty, 73% of whom are adjunct.

OV5a   NWACC has a vision to be a nationally-recognized two-year comprehensive institution with a learning-centered environment. NWACC's mission focuses on learning through living and demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and workforce development and training.

OV5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

OV6   NWACC's annual strategic planning process aligns key administrative support goals with the mission, vision, and values of the college.

OV7   The Office of Institutional Research is committed to managing and distributing data while IT Services is primarily responsible for ensuring the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of information systems and related processes.

OV8a NWACC lists their advantages as: access for students, affordable costs, small classes, innovation, a good reputation, advanced technology, and faculty and staff retention.

OV8b Key constraints identified include state funding, managing record-high enrollments, under-represented and underprepared learners, operating costs, student retention, and degree attainment. The significant enrollment growth has put a strain on institutional efficiency and effectiveness, leading to short-term fixes.

OV9   NWACC engages in collaborative partnerships including business, government, private and non-profit organizations, and based on location, it has access to national and international partnerships. The Early College Experience Program partners with area and regional high schools while the North Arkansas Two-Year College Consortium allows NWACC to work with six other regional community colleges. The College has academic partnerships with trades unions, health care providers, community organizations and business/workforce organizations.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV1a   Shared learning outcomes are in line with the College's mission of "learning for living." NWACC offers a diverse curricula including18 degree programs for the Associate of Applied Science degree; 17 Technical certificate programs; 19 certificates of Proficiency programs; an adult basic education program, and a variety of non-degree programs.

OV1b   The institution uses a variety of technological elements to enhance the educational programs provided including smart classrooms, computer labs, video projectors, electronic podiums, audio equipment, Skype video equipment, and distance learning elements. The College also provides learner support through information technology, the Library, the Academic Success Center, the Transfer Center, and the Career Center.

0V5a   NWACC has a vision to be a nationally-recognized two-year comprehensive institution with a learning-centered environment. NWACC's mission focuses on learning through living and demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and workforce development and training. "Ends and Goals" are set on a two-year cycle.

OV5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following

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initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as NorthWest Arkansas Community 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	Through a faculty-driven process, NWACC has identified learning outcomes for general education, based on Learning College Principles.
1P1b	O	It is not clear that there is an ongoing process to review, assess, and improve general outcomes for learning and development. Having such a process could strengthen student learning.
1P2a	S	NWACC approves learning outcomes that follow applicable guidelines set by federal, state, accreditation and licensing agencies through a review and approval process that involves an assessment coordinator, the department chair, the division dean, and the chief academic officer.
1P2b	O	The process for developing the learning objectives is not fully described in the portfolio and does not appear to include student input. This kind of process, with student input, could enhance the development of learning objectives.
1P3	S	NWACC has a collaborative process to identify new programs or to make changes in course design. The process includes input from students, faculty, employers, focus groups, advisory boards, and legislative initiatives.
1P4	S	NWACC develops responsive academic programming by referencing national standards and benchmarking practices with other schools, engaging with employers, and conducting community needs surveys and focus groups.
1P5a	S	A variety of measures, including ACT, CLEP, COMPASS, adult literacy tests and placement tests, are used to identify how well students are

prepared for courses. In addition, a prior learning portfolio assessment process allows students to petition for course credit.

1P5b	O	A more systematic process that explicitly identifies required preparation based on program goals and objectives could ensure that the curriculum will change to meet the needs that were not considered when the current assessment instruments were developed.
1P6	S	NWACC communicates with prospective and current students about academic expectations and requirements through a variety of media, including the catalog, personal visits, websites, and program brochures and flyers.
1P7	S	Academic advisors, the Virtual Career Center, and AdvisorTrac resources are in place to help students select programs of study.
1P8	S	NWACC has processes in place to assist students who are underprepared, including GED, ESL, ABE courses, ACT and COMPASS placement, intensive courses in English, math and sciences, a student success course, a Career Pathways program, and a learning lab.
1P9	O	NWACC recognizes that it has the opportunity to develop more formal and centralized processes for addressing differences in students' learning styles in order to provide a higher level of support for student learning.
1P10	S	NWACC provides multiple resources for the special needs of students, including services for students with disabilities, military veterans, low-income parents, and students who require assistance with transportation.
1P11	SS	NWACC initiated an AQIP Action Project to create a learning-centered institution through faculty development and evaluation, student learning assessment, academic program review, and the Learning College.
1P12	O	A clearly articulated set of goals and objectives related to course delivery has not been articulated. Without this, it will be difficult to assess whether the course delivery system is effective and efficient. It is not clear whether anything other than the traditional semester has been considered to address the various needs of students.

1P13	S	NWACC has a number of processes to ensure that programs and courses are current and effective, including course evaluations, advisory boards, and formal curriculum assessment.
1P14	S	NWACC has a systematic and inclusive process for changing or discontinuing courses and programs.
1P15a	S	NWACC provides learning support to students through advising, tutoring, the library, and career services.
1P15b	O	NWACC appears to lack a systematic plan for determining and addressing the learning needs of students or to determine faculty learning support needs. Student learning could be enhanced through a more systematic process and through faculty development, including the large number of adjunct faculty members.
1P16	O	Although a Director of Co-Curricular and Judicial Affairs was recently hired, NWACC has the opportunity to develop a college-wide process to align co-curricular and curricular goals, so that student can learn effectively both within and beyond the classroom.
1P17	O	Although some programs have indirect assessments of learning, NWACC does not currently have a college-wide process to determine whether students have met learning and development goals.
1P18a	S	NWACC has recently improved their processes for assessing student learning, including an assessment task force, an assessment coordinator, attending conferences on assessment, and exploring best practices.
1P18b	O	The process for assessing student learning in general education is being developed, which should enable the institution to engage in continuous improvement of the general education curriculum.
1R1	O	Although the portfolio lists several measures of student learning and development, the institution has the opportunity to show how the measures address all of the expected learning objectives and to demonstrate how the data are tied to strategic planning and budgeting.

1R2	O	The portfolio includes limited data about student learning assessment. Some of the data reflects indirect rather than direct measures of learning. Gathering, analyzing, and disseminating a wider variety of data could help NWACC to identify opportunities for curricular improvement.
1R3	O	Although sample performance results are provided—such as selected licensure exam results—a systematic process for data collection regarding specific program learning objectives and the improvements that are based on the data that is not presented. Analysis of such data, including longitudinal data, should help the institution to develop a richer system of assessment leading to continuous improvement.
1R4	O	NWACC recognizes the need that employers and four-year institutions have for more data about students' knowledge and skills as well as program completion. Developing a system to provide that information could strengthen articulation agreements and internship opportunities for students in the workforce.
1R5	O	Although one year's results were provided and help to set a baseline for assessment, multi-year data on assessment efforts may lead to an enhanced culture of continuous improvement.
1R6	O	NWACC has one of the lowest cumulative graduation rates among Arkansas colleges. It could be helpful for the institution to analyze the causes of this low graduation rate as the basis for improvements in student success.
1I1	S	NWACC has implemented numerous improvements related to helping students learn, providing evidence that the institution is committed to improving quality in student learning.
1I2	S	The creation of the Quality Council and the Assessment Task Force suggests that NWACC is taking the initial steps toward a culture and an infrastructure that enhances their ability to set targets for improved student learning.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV2   The Division of Corporate Learning and Workforce Development works with business and industry by providing training classes, educational programs for children, personal enrichment courses and activities, and conference planning.

OV9   NWACC engages in collaborative partnerships including business, government, private and non-profit organizations and based on location has access to national and international partnerships. The Early College Experience Program partners with area and regional high schools while the North Arkansas Two-Year College Consortium allows NWACC to work with six other regional community colleges. The College has academic partnerships with trades unions, health care providers, community organizations and business/workforce organizations.

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

Item   S/O   Comment

2P1   O   Although Goal Statements are derived from the Strategic Plan and statements are developed for each of the key stakeholder groups, it remains unclear as to how the processes are shaped by the goals. For

example, the Advancement and Workforce Development divisions operationalize the non-instructional processes such as community and high school relations, as well as grants and services to business and industry, but there is no corresponding information about the impact of these processes.

2P2   S   NWACC utilizes formal and informal processes for determining major non-instructional objectives for external stakeholders, including advisory committees, needs surveys, focus groups, and involvement in regional boards, services groups, and events. Division leaders then meet with teams to review feedback and set objectives. Those objectives requiring funding are forwarded to the College Cabinet.

2P3   S   NWACC has a process for communicating expectations of objectives that includes annual meetings (Fall Forum), department and college-wide meetings, weekly announcements, a monthly newsletter, and faculty and staff meetings. Expectations are also communicated to external stakeholders through press releases, published articles, and formal reports to pertinent stakeholders.

2P4   O   Although the Distinctive Objectives are assessed for alignment with the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan, no description of this alignment process is given nor is the criteria that the College Cabinet uses to review the objectives. Clearly communicating this process could help increase stakeholder understanding.

2P5   O   NWACC does not appear to have formal processes in place for valuing and prioritizing distinctive objectives. Without such processes, NWACC may be limited in their efforts to continually improve these objectives.

2P6   O   While input from faculty and staff is incorporated into the formulation of objectives and department leaders are empowered to respond by readjusting objectives, NWACC does not appear to have formal processes in place for determining other distinctive objectives for meeting faculty and staff needs and incorporating their feedback when readjusting these objectives. Without formal processes and systems for assessing

effectiveness the College may be unable to continually improve stakeholder satisfaction.

2R1	S	NWACC analyzes measures for accomplishing seven major non-instructional objectives including a cost analysis of profit and loss and a review of the objective's value to the institution.
2R2	O	Although NWACC provides some numerical performance results in accomplishing other distinctive objectives, such as the Adult Education department's strong GED pass rate, these results only give a "snapshot" of the effectiveness of activities and do not provide a long-term system of tracking and assessing performance results, thus evaluating their value added. Other services identified in Table 2.1 show few tangible results despite the numerous measurements listed. The lack of results is an opportunity to begin tracking for the future.
2R3	O	While NWACC participates in the National Community College Benchmarking Project and is able to compare some performance results of accomplishing other distinctive objectives with other community colleges nationally, there is an opportunity to further analyze results to provide additional means of benchmarking for improvement
2R4a	S	NWACC provides multiple examples of performance results from processes for accomplishing other distinctive objectives that have strengthened the institution and enhanced relationships with businesses, the community, and in the Arkansas legislature. NWACC provides some data that other distinctive objectives strengthen their school, including support of the NCPTC, new Adult Education partnerships, and increased ICP partnerships.
2R4b	O	Although the College points to the number of increased partnerships as a strength, it does not provide measurable evidence of success within most of these partnerships. For example, usage of the College facilities is not tracked and monitored and customer satisfaction is not ascertained at this time.

2I1   S   A concerted and sustained effort has been made to increase the visibility and collaboration with Fortune 500 companies in the area, such as the reorganization of the Workforce Development Division and expanding its mission to include corporate training. NWACC has moved aggressively in recent years to elevate the College's visibility and recognition in the region, by adding staff and leaders, reorganizing departments, and enhancing their reporting.

2I2   O   NWACC's culture and infrastructure are influenced by workforce development and business partnership successes; however, few measures are used to identify needs and results directly associated with determining and achieving other distinctive objectives. As NWACC collects and analyzes measures that assess how well the College is meeting other distinctive objectives, they will be well-positioned to design systematic processes for improvement and set targets for improved performance.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV1a   Shared learning outcomes are in line with their mission of "learning for living" NWACC offers a diverse curricula including18 degree programs for the Associate of Applied Science degree; 17 Technical certificate programs; 19 certificates of Proficiency programs, an adult basic education program, and a variety of non-degree programs.

OV8a   NWACC lists their advantages as: access for students, affordable costs, small classes, innovation, a good reputation, advanced technology, and faculty and staff retention.

OV9   NWACC engages in collaborative partnerships including business, government, private and non-profit organizations and based on location has access to national and international partnerships. The Early College Experience Program partners with area and regional high schools while the North Arkansas Two-Year College Consortium allows NWACC to work with six other regional community colleges. The College has academic partnerships with trades unions, health care providers, community organizations and business/workforce organizations.

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

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
3P1	O	While NWACC has a number of formal and informal means of encouraging relationship-building with students, it has no centralized, formal process or system to identify and analyze the changing needs of students groups or selecting courses of action regarding those needs. Developing and centralizing a formalized system could help the College to better understand and address the changing needs of student groups.
3P2	O	Although some relationship-building activities are listed, no systematic process for building relationships with prospective students and maintaining relationships with current students is presented here. Formalizing this process could help increase student retention.
3P3	O	The College lists a number of data points analyzed; however, no centralized, college-wide process is used to solicit stakeholder feedback

on a regular basis. NWACC could be well served to analyze data related to enrollment, population, labor force, competitors, and projections on a quarterly if not monthly basis.

3P4 S The College utilizes a number of strategies to build and maintain their relationship with key stakeholders appropriately driven by the demographic of the stakeholder and the uniqueness of the relationship.

3P5 O Although NWACC lists data sources for targeting new students and stakeholder needs, no process is described. It is unclear how these sources work within a system, such as Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle or a strategic enrollment management process to maximize recruitment, marketing, retention, graduation, employment, and transfer of students.

3P6 O NWACC has a process in place to deal with complaints from stakeholders and processes are in place to collect complaint information including grievances or appeals, student comments on instructor evaluations, online student comments, and staff and faculty complaints; however, a centralized process that is well publicized, easy to access, and provides a regular review of complaint trends may be needed to look for patterns and to ensure that appropriate action was taken.

3R1 S NWACC determines the satisfaction of students and other stakeholders by collecting and analyzing a variety of measures of satisfaction, such as surveys and instructor evaluations.

3R2 O NWACC provides performance results for student satisfaction including some longitudinal data for Career Pathways and Early College experience. The CCSSE data provided in Tables 1.6 and 1.7 is baseline data, suggesting this measurement is in their beginning stages, and in the future the College could benefit from trend data on student satisfaction over a broad range of services.

3R3 O NWACC recognizes that it has no centralized process to collect information for understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs and, therefore, provides limited results. Developing a system for

collecting and using data to inform decisions in this area may lead to stronger support from students and a better ability to meet their needs.

3R4 O Employer satisfaction data is given for only one program, Fire Science, and no narrative explains if there are similar data for other programs. Table 3.4 is not explained in the text, linked to any measurement in Table 3.3, and dates/frequency of information is not provided. Again, this suggests that this tool is new, but if continued, it could provide comparative data for improvement planning.

3R5 O NWACC recognizes that it does not have a process for collecting performance results for building relationships with key stakeholders. The results provided do not necessarily speak to relationship-building. Developing a process and collecting this data could help the College have better support from stakeholders. Because there is no process in place, there are no results.

3R6 O The College compared their student satisfaction to a peer group and found that NWACC performed better than the average for that group in student-faculty interaction, and slightly better than average for active and collaborative learning and student effort. However, the cohorts in this comparison are not identified and the areas of comparison are vague, particularly "student effort." Not all are measurements of satisfaction with the services NWACC provides their students. The College could benefit from a more rigorous benchmarking process and results that break down the general student service area (advising, tutoring, library) and include more services (security, financial aid, parking).

3I1a S NWACC lists some recent improvements in supporting students' and other stakeholders' needs such as expanding the number and scope of evening courses, adding key representatives to advisory boards, and creating an accelerated nursing program.

3I1b O NWACC lists some recent improvements in supporting students' and other stakeholders' needs, developing a formalized, centralized system

should help promote a continuous quality improvement culture that may more fully identify and support students' and key stakeholders' needs.

| 3I2 | OO | While NWACC lists several means by which it selects processes, it does not reflect on the methods used for the decision-making process. Outlining this process may help the constituents within the College and community understand the rationale for decisions within the institution. |

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 4, Valuing People:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV4   NWACC has 375 full-time employees (44 administrators, 133 faculty, and 198 staff) and 376 part-time faculty. Approximately 73% of their 509 faculty members are part-time.

0V5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

OV8a   NWACC lists its advantages as: access for students, affordable costs, small classes, innovation, a good reputation, advanced technology, and faculty and staff retention.

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

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
4P1	O	NWACC may benefit from expanding beyond the use of their hiring managers and job rating software to determine the credentials required for faculty, staff, and administrator positions. Engaging with community partners and area employers as well as accreditation organizations may be a source of this expansion. The process for identifying credential, skills, and values is unclear. The ability to monitor and assess credentials, skills, and values will require consistent and accurate data.
4P3	S	NWACC utilizes standardized and systematic processes for recruitment, hiring, and retaining employees, including monitoring employee satisfaction and providing multiple professional development opportunities. An organizational development website facilitates access to development opportunities. Several initiatives help retain employees, such as tuition waivers, flexible work schedules, and adjusted compensation rates.
4P4	S	Several stages of orientation are in place including a one-day core orientation program, department orientations, a presidential luncheon, as well as developing understanding and skills in campus procedures and technology.
4P5a	S	NWACC identifies cross-training, succession planning, employee evaluations as well as mentoring, phased retirement, and "stretch" assignments as strategies for planning for personnel changes.
4P5b	O	It is not clear what processes are in place for personnel changes, other than a 60-day notice of non-renewal. A more fully developed talent management process could lead to more seamless transitions.
4P6	O	While NWACC attempts to automate and systematize where it can and uses divisional process improvement teams to work with front line staff to

identify and implement action items for improvements, it does not fully describe the process for doing so. Recognizing the process for doing so will help them continue to automate and systematize.

4P7	S	NWACC offers yearly ethics training, an opportunity to report ethics violations anonymously, and an investigation process for violations.
4P8	O	As noted in the portfolio, NWACC does not have a centralized process for determining training needs. The recently developed Talent Management department could be used to provide more systematic attention to training needs and alignment with short and long-range organizational plans.
4P9	O	The Organizational Development team uses a number of strategies to train and develop employees including brown bag lunch and learn sessions, webinars, book studies, and just in time online training and job aids, Celebrate Learning. However, the efforts are not consistent, measured, and are not linked to performance. Further, the link between this team's efforts and those of the Faculty Development Committee is not articulated. NWACC can strengthen the results of processes such as mini-conferences and the use of professional development transcripts, which they currently offer, with targeted trainings and offerings.
4P10	O	NWACC is currently changing and redesigning the personnel evaluation system and has the opportunity to align the new competency based performance system with objectives for both instructional and non-instructional programs and services.
4P11	O	While the College provides the benefits structure, notes that compensation levels are dictated by the state, and comments that merit pay is available for classified staff, it does not describe how these items align with objectives or the process used to revise the packages. No recognition or reward system is described. Clearly developed internal processes may help ensure that the alignment is taking place or provide a basis for change.

4P12	O	A more formalized process to identify elements that contribute to staff motivation, coupled with a process to measure those elements, could lead to more effective and focused motivation-enhancing efforts.
4P13	O	Numerous activities exist related to employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being such as a wireless emergency broadcast system and digital security cameras, and include employee awareness programs such as safety meetings. There does not, however, appear to be a process for overseeing the activities to look for trends or special areas needing improvement. Improvement in this area could be enhanced with clearly developed oversight processes, development of benchmarks, and a coordinated accountability structure.
4R1	OO	NWACC currently has no processes for measuring and analyzing valuing people. Developing processes and systems for regularly tracking and assessing performance results in this area may help move the College to a culture that values employees and thus improve employee satisfaction.
4R2	OO	NWACC currently has no performance results available for valuing people. Developing processes and systems for regularly tracking and assessing performance results in this area may help move the College to a culture that values employees and thus improve employee satisfaction.
4R3	O	NWACC does not provide evidence indicating the productivity and effectiveness of employees in achieving college goals. Designing a system that aligns employee effectiveness to achieving College goals could improve performance and motivate employees.
4R4	O	NWACC has no process in place to compare performance results for valuing people with other institutions. Developing a system to compare the College's progress in this area may promote continuous improvement and provide an opportunity to discover best practices in other institutions.
4I1a	S	NWACC presents a number of recent improvements in valuing people including implementation of a new administrative software, adding an online evaluation module, and purchase of a performance management module that will provide online evaluations and support.

4I1b   Although NWACC has made recent improvements in valuing people,
there is no formalized, comprehensive system for identifying, aligning,
and tracking performance results. Such a system could promote aligned
efforts to retain employees and improve performance based on data
based decision making.

4I2   OO   NWACC does not yet have processes and systems to improve and set
targets for improved performance results in valuing people. NWACC has
the opportunity to create, implement, and evaluate processes that will
assist in setting targets for improvement to establish performance results
for Valuing People.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that
were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of
its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:**

Item   Critical Characteristic

0V5a   NWACC has a vision to be a nationally-recognized two-year comprehensive institution
with a learning-centered environment. NWACC's mission focuses on learning through
living and demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and workforce development
and training.

0V5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

OV6   NWACC's annual strategic planning process aligns key administrative support goals with the mission, vision, and values of the College.

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

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
5P1	S	NWACC has a procedure in place to review, refine and approve its mission. This procedure includes both a long-range planning process and an annual review process.
5P2	S	NWACC initiated a master planning process in 2004 that includes a needs analysis. The master plan is in alignment with the College's mission, vision, and values and provides short- and long-term direction for the organization.
5P3	S	NWACC collects feedback from students and other key stakeholder groups to set directions for the College through student representation at the Board of Trustees' meetings, CCSSE and NWACC Graduate surveys, multiple advisory boards, and the Faculty Senate.
5P4	S	NWACC leadership guides the organization in seeking future opportunities for key stakeholders through multiple methods including the master planning process, seeking federal appropriations, grant applications, partnerships, and consortiums.
5P5	S	NWACC is making a conscious effort to develop broad involvement in decisions. Decision making includes stakeholder engagement, operationalized through a number of advisory and other committees. A formal process is followed for policy creation and modification.

Department and program leaders are empowered to make decisions relevant to their units.

5P6	O	Although several kinds of data are collected at the institution, it is not clear how these data are used in the decision-making process nor how they connect to the strategic plan. Clarifying these linkages could enhance the effectiveness of the decision-making process.
5P7	S	NWACC provides an organized description in the form of a matrix of their communication process that shows the communication body, methods of communication, and recipients of the communication.
5P8	O	The mission, vision, and values are communicated in visible areas and forms, but how this communication deepens and reinforces the College's commitment to these shared values remains unclear. The connection between the institution's Ends and Goals aligned to the mission and vision with measurables does not seem to be described clearly in 5P6.
5P9	O	Although NWACC leadership encourages internal, local, and statewide leadership development for faculty and staff; it is unclear how this is communicated or how the learning from leadership development activities is shared throughout the organization. A Learning College culture could be enhanced by sharing knowledge, skills, and best practices.
5P10	S	The College has developed a plan to preserve the continuity of their mission, vision, values and commitment to high performance including a succession plan and involvement of several key executive members in understanding the issues of the College. Other processes identify top talent in the organization for training and development for succession to critical positions.
5R1	O	Although NWACC utilizes the Ends and Goals process to measure performance in leading and communicating through the CCSSE and NCCBS, the actual performance measures were not provided. Including these performance measures in College communications may help with transparency and enhance the Learning College environment.

5R2	OO	While the College has provided a link to the location of the minutes of the Board of Trustees, it does not show which results are specifically geared towards this category. By considering these results in a more focused manner, the College may be able to better inform its processes and systems.
5R3	O	NWACC referenced the AQIP Examiner's Survey to provide comparison to other institutions. These results showed the College lacking in all categories when compared to other organizations. NWACC did not provide other methods of comparison specifically. NWACC could improve in this category by increasing efforts in the areas of the AQIP Examiners Survey and by reviewing other comparison methods.
5I1a	S	NWACC has made recent comprehensive improvements in communication and overall leadership structure that, over time, should improve processes and performance results for leading and communicating.
5I1b	O	Although NWACC can point to a variety of individual improvements made in this leading and communicating, the processes for leading and communicating are not systematic and yield few measurable results at this time. The AQIP project "Improve Communication & Leadership Processes" demonstrates the College's commitment to improving this area.
5I2	O	NWACC recognizes there is much work to be done in this area. The commitment to transparency, open communication, and continuous quality improvement along with the commitment to develop measureable goals throughout the institution provide a good foundation for future improvement. As the College continues to become a more data-informed institution, it will be well-positioned to create a culture and infrastructure to implement improvements in 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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV1b   The institution uses a variety of technological elements to enhance the educational programs provided including smart classrooms, computer labs, video projectors, electronic podiums, audio equipment, Skype video equipment, and distance learning elements. The college also provides learner support through information technology, the Library, the Academic Success Center, the Transfer Center, and the Career Center.

OV5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

OV6   NWACC's annual strategic planning process aligns key administrative support goals with the mission, vision, and values of the college.

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

Item   S/O   Comment

6P1   S   NWACC has presented an extensive list of the methods used to identify the support service needs of students and other key stakeholders,

including surveys, visits, gathering feedback at events or on college
forms, focus groups, meetings, and requests.

6P2	O	While some processes are listed regarding the identification of administrative support service needs, the needs are not consistently identified across the institution. NWACC has the opportunity to formalize processes to identify the administrative support service needs for employees. Creating a system that documents these needs may allow the College to plan and budget in a consistent manner for all employees.
6P3	O	NWACC uses a variety of support processes to maintain physical safety and security on campus; however, how these processes are designed, communicated, and updated in a systematic way via their Business Continuity Emergency Plans remains unclear. Communicating the total process and how it is assessed and improved may enhance stakeholder buy-in and confidence.
6P4	O	The College provides examples of how it manages some of their day-to-day support service processes; however, it is not clear how these services are meeting the needs of the stakeholders on a day-to-day basis. No mention of data collection or analysis is provided for these support services. For example, staffing the Student Information Center is not managing a service to ensure it meets the needs of the students using that Center. Keeping a public safety log does not demonstrate how that daily log ensures that safety concerns are being addressed.
6P5	O	While the institution has some methods of knowledge sharing, such as storing minutes on the Internet; it does not have a centralized college-wide approach for documenting support processes. Should the College develop such a process, cross-departmental effectiveness and innovation could be improved, fostering empowerment and creating a means for the mapping of institutional efforts.
6R1	O	Although NWACC regularly collects and analyzes measures of student, administrative, and organizational support service processes to meet state reporting requirements and to use for planning and budgeting, very

few examples are provided. Formalizing processes and systems in this area could help track and assess organizational progress.

6R2	O	Although NWACC regularly collects and analyzes measures of student, administrative, and organizational support service processes to meet state reporting requirements and to use for planning and budgeting, no performance results are provided. Providing results would help illuminate the processes used for collection, analysis, and the resultant data-based decision making for improvement.
6R3	O	Although Table 6.1 suggests many tools for identifying needs for the college support services, NWACC does not appear to have a formalized system of tracking and reporting performance results for administrative support service processes. Developing and implementing these processes and systems may help the College identify areas of need and to make improvements that could increase efficiency.
6R4	O	While NWACC notes that departments are encouraged to use information and results to improve services, the lack of data provided in this section makes it difficult to assess data availability and use. A consistent, institution-wide, data collection process could improve evaluation and planning efforts and ensure that key support areas use results to improve services.
6R5	O	Although NWACC has comparative data documenting performance of processes for supporting organizational operations with other institutions; it is not clear how the College actually uses this data to track trends, to make improvements, or to prioritize areas for improvement beyond those originating from Arkansas Department of Higher Education reports.
6I1a	S	NWACC has pursued several opportunities to improve the support services for campus stakeholders such as proving monthly safety classes, centralizing Learner Support Services, and the development of interdepartmental training modules.
6I1b	O	While some departments have engaged in improvement efforts, NWACC acknowledges the lack of a systematize processes and reporting for

support services. Creating a more formal system that tracks and communicates improvement may strengthen the learning culture and highlight best practices.

6I2   O   Although NWACC is in the process of growth and change and their current culture and infrastructure support rapid response to identified needs, building more formalized and centralized processes and systems to set targets for improved performance results in supporting organizational operations may assist with planning and resource allocation.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV7   The Office of Institutional Research is committed to managing and distributing data while IT Services is primarily responsible for ensuring the timeliness, accuracy, reliability and security of information systems and related processes.

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

Item   S/O   Comment

7P1a	S	Data and performance information are selected, managed, and distributed through the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in partnership with other departments throughout the College. OIR provides an online data request process and gives priority to student needs.
7P1b	O	NWACC recognizes that some divisions and departments are not yet using data in decision-making processes. A campus-wide commitment to data-driven decision making, and a clear articulation of the processes used, may increase institutional effectiveness.
7P2	O	Although OIR provides data to the college community; it is unclear how that information supports planning and improvement efforts in a systematic way. A clear articulation of the processes used may provide the foundation for an effective assessment system. Aligning strategic planning and improvement efforts with data management and communication could assist data-based decision making and enhance a culture of continuous improvement.
7P3	O	Although OIR responds to state reporting requests and data requests from departments, formalized processes to determine the needs of departments related to the collection, storage, and accessibility of data and performance information may promote more buy-in for a culture of assessment. NWCAA's assessment systems may be strengthened by ensuring that the assessments are grounded in the mission of the institution.
7P4	O	Although institutional data are collected and analyzed by the OIR and then shared with the cabinet and the Board of Trustees, the College has an opportunity to promote both the distribution and utilization of the data regarding overall performance to all departments. Moving to a more data-driven assessment model may promote continuous improvement efforts at the departmental level and throughout the institution.
7P5	S	NWACC determines the needs and priorities for comparative data through the Ends and Goals, state initiatives, and the current institutional focus of the cabinet and Board of Trustees. The College has developed a

Report Card for comparisons of key measures with peer colleges using IPEDS and other institutional data.

7P6a	S	NWACC has developed a Common Data Set for the institution to use to begin the identification of a system of what data is collected when and by whom and for what purpose.
7P6b	O	Although the institution identifies several strategies to report data, it is not clear how the data analysis is aligned with organizational goals. Such alignment is important in fulfilling the institutional mission. It is not clear how the Common Data Set allows departments to know more about internal reporting, as the CDS only presents a set of standards and definitions of data items in order to determine a specific cohort relevant to each item. Developing a system to increase the knowledge and use of internal reporting may create departmental buy-in for data-based decision making.
7P7	S	The timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of the College's information systems is the responsibility of the IT department which monitors systems uptime, resource utilization, resource capacity, security, data redundancy and data integrity. The IT management team meets regularly to review problems, projects, and needs.
7R1	O	NWACC has recently established an assessment plan that includes customer satisfaction surveys and tracking of data requests, and OIR will be working with individual departments in the future to develop more tools and measurements. A comprehensive list of measures collected could allow for evaluation of the adequacy of the measures being currently used.
7R2	O	NWACC does not provide evidence that their system for measuring effectiveness meets the organization's needs in accomplishing their mission and goals. Without alignment of the two, a culture of continuous improvement and learning is difficult to sustain.
7R3	O	Although NWACC participates in national surveys and has developed the NWACC Report Card, the relevance of comparison results in support of

institutional goals should be examined. Using the comparison data institutionally to make improvements and highlight best practices could help support a focus on continuous improvement and effectiveness.

7I1a   S   NWACC has made recent improvements in measuring effectiveness with the OIR assessment plan and an enterprise reporting solution, and has an implementation plan in place to improve reporting and access to the College's data management system.

7I1b   O   Although recent improvements have been made in this area, such as the implementation of the OIR assessment plan, the overall processes, measurements, and results in this area are scattered and not yet systematically tied to their planning processes.

7I2   O   NWACC recognizes the opportunity to gather, analyze, and report more comprehensive data about institutional effectiveness. The College has made progress in promoting a culture and infrastructure that regularly measures effectiveness; however, more formalized processes and systems in this area could assist in accurately setting targets for improved performance results.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement:

Item	Critical Characteristic

Item   ***Critical Characteristic***

0V5a   NWACC has a vision to be a nationally-recognized two-year comprehensive institution with a learning-centered environment. NWACC's mission focuses on learning through living and demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and workforce development and training.

OV5b   NWACC engages in an annual strategic planning process and is currently at the beginning of their NWACC 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the following initiatives: providing a premiere education, the success of underprepared learners, innovative workforce training, regional economic growth, valuing employees, sustainable growth, sustainable infrastructure, and continuous process improvement.

OV6   NWACC's annual strategic planning process aligns key administrative support goals with the mission, vision, and values of the College.

OV8a   NWACC lists their advantages as: access for students, affordable costs, small classes, innovation, a good reputation, advanced technology, and faculty and staff retention.

OV8b   Key constraints identified include state funding, managing record-high enrollments, under-represented and underprepared learners, operating costs, student retention, and degree attainment. The significant enrollment growth has put a strain on institutional efficiency and effectiveness, leading to short-term fixes.

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

Item	S/O	Comment
8P1	S	NWACC engages in regular planning processes, including strategic planning, facilities and land use master planning, and the Ends and Goals. A schedule has been established to review and adjust the plans.
8P2	S	Short-term strategies for planning continuous improvement are selected operationally at the departmental or divisional level. Long-term strategies are selected through the strategic and master planning process. The two-year strategic goal planning cycle has benchmarks and annual measurables for stakeholders.

8P3   O   NWACC recognizes that it does not have a college-wide process for developing action plans to support organizational strategies. It has several separate planning processes that could be a foundation for a more systematic approach to continuous improvement. Adding a centralized system for developing key actions plans to the current benchmarks and annual measurables could improve the short- and long-term planning process.

8P4   O   NWACC has an opportunity to further build on the current budget and division planning cycle by fully coordinating and aligning planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans across the organizational levels. This alignment of planning and action may enhance the culture of continuous improvement and facilitate communication of key institutional goals.

8P5   O   NWACC recognizes that there is no centralized, college-wide process to define objectives, select measures, and set performance targets at this time. The "common elements" described could be the foundation for a college-wide process that may strengthen and promote continuous improvement throughout the institution.

8P6   OO   The College recognizes a need for linking and aligning their processes for budgeting and resource allocation with other planning processes, including processing the feedback from their stakeholders, reviewing annual short-term strategies, and integrating actions, as well as action plans. The development of a formalized system could increase efficiency and effectiveness of planning for continuous improvement.

8P7   O   While some mechanisms are in place to identify and mitigate risk in some areas of the institution including financial risk, risk that result from grants, insurance liability, and newly developed business continuity and emergency management, centralized risk identification and review process appears to be missing. Being more systematic in this area and extending risk identification and review to other areas could ensure that all types of risk are considered.

8P8	O	The College does not appear to have a centralized, formal system to ensure the development of employee capabilities to address changing requirements related to organizational strategies and action plans. Developing this type of system could support and align needed professional development and training efforts.
8R1	O	While the overall process for analyzing effectiveness is well conceived, no clear measures of the effectiveness of planning are presented. Collecting and analyzing key measures of effectiveness for planning processes and systems could strengthen the strategic planning process.
8R2	OO	The portfolio does not provide performance results for strategic planning and action projects. Collecting and analyzing performance results could ensure that the strategic plan is producing the intended outcomes for its stakeholders.
8R3	OO	NWACC has identified only general performance targets at this point. Further development of the NWACC report card may allow for increased effectiveness of performance monitoring.
8R4	O	NWACC does not provide results for performance of processes for planning continuous improvement that compare to other institutions' results. Fully utilizing data from the NCCB and CCSSE could allow the College to benchmark performance and identify best practices.
8R5	OO	Currently, NWACC does not have a process in place to evaluate planning processes. The development of a process could allow the College to enhance data-based decision making and promote effective planning that is focused on key goals of the institution.
8I1a	S	The new Ends and Goals process, the NWACC Report Card, and the leadership development program are important first steps to establishing the foundation necessary for improving systematic processes related to planning for continuous improvement.
8I1b	O	NWACC does not provide a discussion regarding the systematic and comprehensive nature of processes and performance for this category.

The development of systematic and comprehensive processes and performance results for continuous improvement could assist the institution in being more efficient and effective throughout the institution.

8I2   O   NWACC does not provide information on how the culture and infrastructure help to select improvement processes and targets for this category. A culture of continuous improvement could help ensure efficient and effective processes and systems while regular measuring of results and assessment could help create a culture of quality college-wide.

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 NorthWest Arkansas Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

Item   Critical Characteristic

OV9   NWACC engages in collaborative partnerships including business, government, private and non-profit organizations, and based on location, it has access to national and international partnerships. The Early College Experience Program partners them with area and regional high schools while the North Arkansas Two-Year College Consortium allows NWACC to work with six other regional community colleges. The College has academic partnerships with trades unions, health care providers, community organizations and business/workforce organizations.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as NorthWest Arkansas Community College's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.

Item	*S/O*	*Comment*
9P1	O	NWACC shows the key partners that serve their students but fails to present any process for creating, prioritizing, or building these important relationships. Developing processes and systems in this area could help the College move to a more effective relationship-building.
9P2	O	While the portfolio describes several kinds of partnerships that are valuable in fulfilling the college's mission to educate students and to serve the region, it is not clear how the College creates, prioritizes, and builds relationships with the educational organizations and employers. Developing processes and systems that set standards and assess results could improve the College's efforts for building collaborative relationships.
9P3	O	Although a number of ways by which the institution identifies students' needs is provided here, no list of the organizations that actually fulfill these needs is offered nor is any process for building relationships with those organizations given. Developing formal processes and systems may provide a mechanism to identify, maintain, and strengthen key collaborative relationships.
9P4	O	While the policy and law of the State of Arkansas influences the manner in which NWACC relates to organizations supplying materials and services, the College does not appear to have an internal process or system for creating, prioritizing, and building relationships with these organizations and those not covered by Arkansas policy and law. An internal system could help avoid errors and provide a mechanism for assessing these relationships.
9P5a	S	Table 9.5 provides an overview of the relationships with education associations, workforce groups, and community based organizations.

9P5b   O   While NWACC list the types of relationships it has and methods of communication, it does not discuss how it creates, prioritizes, and builds them. Designing a process to address this area could help streamline future relationship management endeavors.

9P6   O   NWACC recognizes the opportunity to demonstrate more clearly how their partner relationships meet the needs of students and other stakeholders. No systematic processes seem to be in place to evaluate these partnerships to determine if they are meeting the needs of the various stakeholders. A systematic process could help formalize these relationships and document the value of the relationship for assessment and possible improvement.

9P7   O   NWACC provides a list of the ways that departments interact and create relationships and relies upon a general practice to encourage relationships between departments. However, there appears to be a lack of an intentional plan for creating and building these internal relationships. Formalizing this system may help ensure integration and communication across these relationships.

9R1   O   NWACC recognizes that it has developed a limited number of measures to assess their collaborative relationships. Having a more comprehensive list of measures could enhance the institution's ability to evaluate these relationships.

9R2   OO   NWACC does not yet appear to have a systematic process for identifying and tracking performance results in building key collaborative external and internal relationships and, therefore, has only limited examples of performance results. Developing such a system and analyzing performance results may assist with assigning institutional resources to key partnerships.

9R3   OO   NWACC does not have performance results of processes for collaborative relationships that can be compared with other institutions. Designing a system to collect and analyze comparative data with other

institutions could allow the identification of best practices and opportunities for benchmarking results.

9I1a	S	NWACC provides recent improvement in building collaborative relationships such as the development of a contact database by the Department of Public Relations to manage communications with partners, a new High School Relations Department, and a new Director of Co-Curricular and Judicial Affairs for referral of students to community agencies.
9I1b	O	While NWACC has identified several recent departmental improvements in this building collaborative relationships, it recognizes that the improvements made in this area are done on a "case-by-case" basis. The College recognizes a significant need for the development of processes and performance results that are systematic and comprehensive. The development of such processes and performance results for collaborative relationships could assist the institution in identifying which partnerships are working effectively and which need attention.
9I2	O	NWACC recognizes the need to change its culture by not only improving collaborative relationships with others, but evaluating these relationships to ensure that they are serving the needs of their students. Strengthening and systematizing the way the College develops and maintains relationships with collaborative partners could improve alignment of the activities with the mission of the institution.