

# **SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

## **NORTHEAST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**MARCH 17, 2011**



**Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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

**SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**  
In response to the *Systems Portfolio* of  
Northeast Iowa Community College



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

**March 17, 2011**

**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	1
Elements of the Feedback Report .....	3
Strategic and Accreditation Issues .....	5
Using the Feedback Report .....	8
Critical Characteristics Analysis .....	9
Category Feedback .....	10
<i>Helping Students Learn</i> .....	10
<i>Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives</i> .....	15
<i>Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs</i> .....	17
<i>Valuing People</i> .....	21
<i>Leading and Communicating</i> .....	24
<i>Supporting Institutional Operations</i> .....	26
<i>Measuring Effectiveness</i> .....	28
<i>Planning Continuous Improvement</i> .....	30
<i>Building Collaborative Relationships</i> .....	33

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTHEAST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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

### **Category 1: Helping Students Learn**

The portfolio describes a commitment to data-driven decision making but provides little actual data or results. Northeast Iowa Community College's (NICC's) use of the 12 Common Learning Objectives is commendable. However, the objectives are not listed in the portfolio, nor is there any discussion of how these outcomes are systematically assessed. The lack of data related to goals makes it difficult to assess the College's commitment to AQIP. Descriptions of a commitment to improvement mean very little without evidence. An opportunity exists to incorporate a systematic and comprehensive assessment process to measure the effectiveness of instructional processes as time progresses.

### **Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives**

Although the College describes an annual planning process, it does not list specific non-instructional objectives developed through it. It also provides no results, comparisons or areas of improvement for non-instructional processes. Identifying specific external non-instructional activities and the goals associated with them would provide a basis for pursuing, measuring, and assessing progress in this area.

### **Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs**

The College's approach to understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs appears to be ad hoc and lacks a systematic set of processes. As a result, NICC has not developed systems for collecting, analyzing, and reporting results, and is therefore unable to develop data-based priorities for improvement. On review, there are many activities on many levels, but because results are not presented, it is unclear how the information from these activities is carried forward. While NICC appears to be making progress in gathering assessment data, there are opportunities to analyze the data so that the information helps to make informed decisions.

### **Category 4 Valuing People**

NICC presents some limited data that implies strong employee satisfaction including longevity numbers and exit interview results. Although the College mentions its commitment to AQIP and

to valuing people, it does not provide evidence that it is systematically evaluating and improving its employment processes. An opportunity exists to develop a comprehensive employment improvement plan that looks at the process from initial anticipated needs through hiring and individual improvement. The Title III grant may provide an opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan.

### **Category 5: Leading and Communicating**

NICC describes its commitment to quality and the AQIP process; several processes are listed that have the potential to allow for continuous improvement. AQIP and continuous improvement require the use of data; the section on Criterion 5: Leading and Communicating lacks any actual data or results connected to the processes. An opportunity exists for the College to examine its processes, identify the key data needs, collect the data, and then implement improvements based upon the results.

### **Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations**

The College's approach to support services appears to be ad hoc and lacks a comprehensive and systematic plan. The College lists a set of measures of effectiveness in delivering support services but does not provide results for many of them. NICC might consider selecting a small number of key performance indicators and using those to carefully assess its results in delivering support services.

### **Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness**

Based on the information provided in the portfolio, it does not appear that the College has developed systems for determining its effectiveness. Although NICC has been an AQIP institution since 2002, it is clearly in the very beginning stages of measuring effectiveness. It has yet to solidify data needs, priorities, analyses, and communication as required of an AQIP institution. There does not appear to be processes in place to identify or prioritize the data to be used at the organizational level or among departments and units. The College has not developed measures of the effectiveness of its information systems and therefore provides no results, comparisons, or specific improvements related to that effectiveness.

### **Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement**

NICC has a great deal of work to do in order to become an organization with a culture of continuous improvement. Several processes are listed that have the potential to allow for

continuous improvement. However, this section lacks any definitive results connected to the processes of planning for continuous improvement. An opportunity exists for the College to evaluate its processes, identify key data needs, collect the data, and implement improvements based upon the results.

### **Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships**

It appears that NICC has focused its efforts on organizations in its educational pipeline rather than organizations that provide the College or its students with services. A broadening of this approach might help the College better relate to suppliers of goods and services. Development of systematic and comprehensive processes to identify, prioritize, and maintain useful relationships is needed.

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

---

## **ELEMENTS OF Northeast Iowa 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 has identified gaps in the evidence Northeast Iowa Community College has presented to demonstrate that it complies with the Five *Criteria for Accreditation*. In the team's judgment, areas exist where you have *not yet* provided evidence that you meet one or more Core Components of the Commission's Five *Criteria for Accreditation*, or where the evidence you have presented suggests you might have difficulties, now or in the future, in meeting these expectations. The team is not suggesting that you currently fail to comply with the *Criteria*, but simply that you need to present additional evidence of compliance prior to the Commission's next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. AQIP will provide you with courses of action you can follow to provide this additional assurance. The issues regarding accreditation that the team identified are:

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching requires that "The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission." Although Northeast Iowa Community College describes its 12 Common Student Learning Objectives the team could not find evidence of a comprehensive process or plan to assess those outcomes. The portfolio did not provide any specific measurable outcomes of student learning. NICC mentions assessment by classroom performance and industry certification standards, through the development of a capstone course, and a student e-portfolio, but it is unclear if these will be realized and if they will be comprehensive assessments. The appraisal team encourages the College to work toward a comprehensive system to measure student attainment of its 12 Common Student Learning Objectives.

**Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies.** The Systems Appraisal Team identified the following strategic issues to assist Northeast Iowa 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 Northeast Iowa 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 the following:

- The team was concerned with the lack of results in determining how well the College's processes are accomplishing its objectives. In many cases, specific measures were not identified. When measures were identified there was often no data or results presented for those measures. Without such data and results, it is difficult for the College to benchmark its progress and to identify areas in need of improvement. This lack of results is particularly troubling since NICC has been an AQIP institution since 2002 and this is its second portfolio.
- In those instances when data and results were reported, there was very little analysis and use of that data for process improvement. Using data to drive improvements and then to assess the effectiveness of those improvements are basic expectations of AQIP institutions.
- Although the College has developed 12 Common Student Learning Objectives, there is no evidence that these objectives are assessed. Assessment of student learning outcomes is a key expectation of the Higher Learning Commission and should be a high priority for the College in the future.
- It is evident from the College's response to most of the "I2" questions, that it has not addressed the question of how its culture and infrastructure can support its efforts toward quality. This is a critical question that aims at the heart of an institution's ability to develop, implement, assess, and improve its processes. The team respectfully urges the College to examine how potential changes in culture and infrastructure might help it in its continuous improvement efforts.
- The team was concerned about the quality of the portfolio itself. In many cases, particularly in the critical characteristics section, NICC provides answers that do not address the questions. It appears that the portfolio may have been prepared by a single individual or a small group rather than by a broad representation of the College.

## 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 Northeast Iowa 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 Northeast Iowa Community College distinctive. Should you find some characteristics that you think are critical and missing from this list, you may want to clarify and highlight these items when you revise your *Systems Portfolio* and other literature explaining your institution to the public.

### Item Critical Characteristic

- OV1a Northwest Iowa Community College is a public non-profit institution in northeast Iowa. NICC has two main campuses located in cities 100 miles apart.
- OV1b In 2007 NICC was the beneficiary of a \$25 million bond referendum. These funds were used for infrastructure upgrades, renovation, and new buildings. At the time of this report NICC has remodeled a center for professional development and one campus' existing Industrial Technologies building. In April 2009 NICC broke ground on a new Industrial Trades building on the Peosta campus, and in September 2009 NICC began construction on a Student Center for the Calmar campus. Additional renovations include upgrades to NICC's computer technology infrastructure and improvements in the Health Sciences and Library of the main building on the Peosta campus.
- OV2a Northeast Iowa Community College demonstrates a strong commitment to the under-prepared student by providing three learning centers with certified instructors, computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, one-on-one tutoring, writing centers, Adult Literacy tutoring for GED and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, computer literacy skills, TRIO Student Support Services, and personal counseling.
- OV2b NICC offers credit and non-credit programs through Continuing Education and Economic Development. In FY 2010, 37,365 students enrolled in non-credit programs. NICC non-credit students accounted for 489,068 hours of training.

- OV4a NICC works to maintain a close match between employee and student demographics. There are currently more women than men in all employee groups. An anticipated shift in student diversity has created a need for additional cultural inclusion.
- OV4b NICC organizes Human Resources into district-wide positions rather than campus or center-based.
- OV5 NICC uses its V7 Strategic Plan to guide its communication processes to insure alignment with its mission and vision.
- OV7 One of NICC's AQIP action projects is the development of a *College Wide Assessment Plan* to measure the College's progress toward its strategic goals.
- OV9 NICC prioritizes internal and external partnerships by how well they match the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan. The use of Datatel continues to assist the institution to work toward better decision-making capabilities in this area.

---

## 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 Northeast Iowa 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***

OV2a Northeast Iowa Community College demonstrates a strong commitment to the under-prepared student by providing three learning centers with certified instructors, computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, one-on-one tutoring, writing centers, Adult Literacy tutoring for GED and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, computer literacy skills, TRIO Student Support Services, and personal counseling.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1P1a	S	The College used its Institutional Effectiveness and Outcomes committee to develop its common student learning objectives and now uses its Teaching Excellence and Innovation subcommittee to oversee these objectives.
1P1b	O	The portfolio mentions 12 Common Learning Objectives overseen by the Teaching and Excellence and Innovation subcommittee, but it does not describe the process used to select and evaluate these objectives.
1P2	S	Program level outcomes are established using input from a variety of sources such as the Vice President of Academic Affairs, program deans, faculty, and advisory boards.

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| 1P3a | S | NICC uses a process that includes industry trends, student interest, industry input and review by the curriculum committee when developing new programs.   |
| 1P3b | O | It is unclear how new programs are competitive with other organizations. Including a step in the process to evaluate competitive programs would be appropriate so that duplication is lessened and student's choice of institution is not affected.            |
| 1P5  | O | Although the College describes its required placement tests, cutoff scores and prerequisite courses, it is unclear how these are determined. Clarifying, and perhaps reviewing this determination, would help ensure that these prerequisites are appropriate. |
| 1P6  | S | Communication of required preparation is provided both virtually and personally. Welcome Wednesdays and Orientation offer interaction with faculty and support services.   |
| 1P7a | S | NICC uses written materials, career interest surveys, and academic advising to ensure that students choose programs that meet their needs, abilities, and interests.   |
| 1P7b | O | The addition of skills inventories, beyond the required placement tests, might provide additional and valuable information for the proper placement of students.   |
| 1P8a | S | NICC has responded to increased numbers of underprepared students by developing a number of support services including: learning centers, peer tutoring, writing centers, ESOL, NCRC, TRIO student support services, transition coordinators, and counselors.  |
| 1P8b | O | An opportunity exists to develop assessment and improvement systems to ensure the services actually increase student performance, satisfaction, and/or retention.  |
| 1P9  | O | While NICC measures effective teaching in a number of ways, it is unclear how the information is provided to instructors, programs directors, etc. in a manner used to facilitate improvement. There is an opportunity to                                      |

strengthen this area by developing a process for individual faculty development plans, utilizing the data that has been gathered to improve teaching effectiveness.

- 1P10 O Although NICC has established processes to address special needs of disabled students, it is unclear what is available for other special needs students, i.e. commuters, seniors, etc. Having processes in place for these students increases their chances for success.
- 1P11 OO Although NICC measures and documents effective teaching in multiple ways, it is unclear how expectations of effective teaching are communicated to faculty. Providing clear communication will ensure that faculty understand what is considered successful.
- 1P12a SS NICC uses a process called precision scheduling to improve efficiency. This has resulted in a significant drop in the number of cancelled classes. The College has also used outside consultants to evaluate its technology infrastructure and recommend changes.
- 1P12b O It is unclear how the college determines modes of delivery. Consideration of modes of delivery can provide increased opportunity for student success.
- 1P13 S NICC employs a systematic program review process to ensure program and course currency and effectiveness.
- 1P14 S The NICC president's cabinet, in conjunction with its program review team, bases discontinuing courses on enrollment and graduation data, curricula content, feedback from students and employers, advisory board recommendations, labor trends, marketing strategies, and the financial status of the program. Viability studies are a part of this process.
- 1P15b O NICC has recently established processes by which student support service needs are determined. Solidifying these processes and moving beyond survey information will provide a clearer picture of what is desirable.

- 1P16      OO      The alignment of co-curricular development goals and curricular learning objectives is unclear. NICC has an opportunity to review the design of its assessment program to ensure that the College is gathering useful information that can be used to improve student learning.
- 1P17      OO      Although NICC uses a variety of tools to assess student learning, it is unclear how the process for determining these tools is designed. Having a clear process can ensure that methods of assessment appropriate for specific programs are utilized.
- 1P18      OO      NICC courses are expected to meet at least one of the 12 Common Learning Objectives. The portfolio describes a series of actions and activities that can be used to assess learning, but it is unclear how they are used to assess its 12 Common Student Learning Objectives. An opportunity exists to develop a comprehensive process to assess the 12 Common Student Learning Objectives.
- 1R1      S      Although Table 1.2 was not included the portfolio, reviewing it on the Web reveals entry, ongoing and exit measures of student performance.
- 1R2      OO      NICC does not report results for common student learning and development objectives. Establishing measures for these objectives is a starting point. Then, results can be compared over time to determine if objectives are being met and how success rates can be improved.
- 1R3      OO      The portfolio mentions the collection of some exit data from students but only provides one example of actual data without any discussion of how those results meet the College's expectations or compare with other institutions. There is also no mention of using the data to improve. The results listed show a modest decline over time. Additional data and results would help the College know if students are attaining program learning outcomes.
- 1R4      O      The College uses transfer student GPA's, employment data and employer satisfaction data as evidence that its students are meeting stakeholder expectations. An understanding of the relevance of results can provide a gauge for improvement.



- 1R5      OO      The College does not provide performance results for its learning support processes. Such results would help the College know if its learning support areas are meeting their goals.
- 1R6      OO      NICC reports comparative performance results in areas of agriculture, but does not address any other disciplines. Identifying benchmark institutions and comparing performance results can provide information for data driven decision making.
- 1I1      O      Although the College lists a variety of recent improvements in helping students learn and its processes and systems in this area appear to be comprehensive, it lacks comprehensive performance results. Without such results it is difficult to determine priorities for improvement.
- 1I2      O      Although NICC describes a culture and infrastructure used to identify target areas for improvement, it is unclear how targets to measure results are determined. Identification of a desired goal, benchmarks toward it, and the process by which it is to be achieved provides measures to ensure continuous improvement.

---

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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***

OV9 NICC prioritizes internal and external partnerships by how well they match the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan. The use of Datatel continues to assist the institution to work toward better decision-making capabilities in this area.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2P1	O	Although NICC discusses several non-instructional projects, it does not address how it designs and operates processes associated with athletics, research, community enrichment, economic development, alumni affairs, etc. as requested in the category question. Understanding and implementing processes in these areas can provide invaluable information for data-driven decision making.
2P2	S	NICC describes AQIP action projects, national community college trends, student and community needs assessment data, advisory board meetings, employer and alumni surveys, and student surveys as means for determining non-instructional objectives for external stakeholders. The advisory board, economic development, continuing education and program managers are listed as participants in this process.
2P3	S	NICC uses a variety of publications, as well as face-to-face meetings, to communicate expectations regarding its other non-instructional objectives.
2P4-2P5	O	While the assessment, review and determination of faculty and staff needs relative to its non-instructional objectives and processes are reported to be accomplished through the V7 process, the portfolio does not answer questions specific to external stakeholders. As assessment of issues related to those outside of the institution can be especially challenging, NICC may benefit from reviewing processes specific to external stakeholders.

- 2P6 S The College uses its Planning and Continuous Improvement Quality Committee (QC) subcommittee to readjust its non-instructional objectives and processes based in part on faculty and staff needs.
- 2R1 O The College does not appear to have measures of its non-instructional objectives. Developing such measures can identify areas in need of improvement and also provide results for data driven decision making.
- 2R2 OO NICC does not provide results for its non-instructional objectives. Without such results the College cannot determine if it has been successful in attaining these objectives.
- 2R3 OO While the College lists comparisons within the NCCBP, comparative data to aid in focusing continuous improvement efforts is not offered. Additionally, the measures presented are instructional rather than non-instructional. An opportunity exists to develop performance and comparative data which will assist in the continuous improvement efforts of the College.
- 2R4 OO With the exception of the CLARUS Market Scan results, the College does not list results for its non-instructional objectives and therefore cannot assess how its results strengthen the organization. Such results can serve to strengthen the overall organization and enhance relationships with communities and regions
- 2I1 OO The portfolio does not list any actual improvements made in accomplishing other distinctive objectives.
- 2I2 OO It is unclear how the College's culture and infrastructure help it to improve in this area.

---

### **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 Northeast Iowa 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***

- OV2a Northeast Iowa Community College demonstrates a strong commitment to the under-prepared student by providing three learning centers with certified instructors, computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, one-on-one tutoring, writing centers, Adult Literacy tutoring for GED and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, computer literacy skills, TRIO Student Support Services, and personal counseling.
- OV2b NICC offers credit and non-credit programs through Continuing Education and Economic Development. In FY 2010, 37,365 students enrolled in non-credit programs. NICC non-credit students accounted for 489,068 hours of training.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
3P1	S	NICC uses several methods to identify the changing needs of its students including placement testing, input from counselors and the learning centers, focus groups, and surveys. These results are analyzed by the Student Access and Success subcommittee and articulated to the rest of the College.
3P2	O	Although the College lists several methods by which it builds and maintains relationships with students, CCSSE data indicate a need for

improvement in this area. The College has an opportunity to use this data to develop a specific plan of improvement.

- 3P3           O     Although NICC identifies various meetings that involve internal and external stakeholders which can produce expressions of needs, it does not identify how courses of action are selected regarding these needs. Developing a process to analyze and act upon the information collected will provide NICC with evidence to support future success.
- 3P4           O     Although the College lists several activities and events that it uses to build and maintain stakeholder relationships, these events appear to be ad hoc and independent from a comprehensive plan of action. Such a plan would help the College identify effective and efficient strategies.
- 3P5           O     While NICC uses a variety of processes, including demographic changes, environmental scanning, and surveys to determine what new stakeholder groups should be targeted, the College does not have a systematic set of processes that it uses to identify new stakeholder groups. The Partnership and Collaboration QC Subcommittee could play a key role in this effort.
- 3P6           O     Although NICC has established processes to address complaints from students and other stakeholders, it is unclear how the data collected is analyzed, acted upon, and how actions are communicated to students and stakeholders. Closing the loop on the cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) can establish a process for continuous quality improvement.
- 3R1           O     Although Table 3.5 lists several formal and informal collection methods of student and stakeholder satisfaction, it is unclear what data is actually collected and what measures have been established. Developing a process that identifies specific data to be collected and targets to be worked toward can provide quantitative information concerning the satisfaction of students and other stakeholders that can be analyzed to determine future needed actions.
- 3R2           O     Although the College reports some CCSSE data it does not provide results for any of the other measures listed in Table 3.5. Such data would

- provide more comprehensive information on how satisfied students are with its programs and services.
- 3R3 S NICC reports improved results for building student relationships in the areas of high school yield rates, growth in new student orientation, credit and non-credit enrollment, and increased student engagement in non-classroom activities.
- 3R4 OO NICC identifies two external stakeholders – the three Iowa Regent institutions and employers. The portfolio does not provide results of satisfaction for these two or any other stakeholders. Results of collected data can provide the basis for determining future actions.
- 3R5 OO The College provides no results for building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. Analyzing results over time can provide verification of success.
- 3R6 O NICC provides the results of the NCCBP 2010 peer report without explanation of how these results reflect a comparative understanding of student and other stakeholder needs. The measures do not appear to reflect processes. Identifying and comparing results of processes can better assist in establishing NICC’s position related to other educational institutions.
- 3I1 O Although a variety of improvements have been implemented, it is unclear how systematic and comprehensive the processes that prompted these improvements are. Actively identifying, focusing on and addressing the issue of understanding student and other stakeholder needs can provide a clearer perspective on what requires attention.
- 3I2 O While NICC includes planning for quality improvement in conjunction with its general annual planning process, it is unclear how the College’s culture and infrastructure help it to identify areas in need of improvement. The infrastructure of improved data collection and the culture of participation in the planning process provide a basis for data-driven decision making. Setting targets for improved performance results will complete the process.

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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***

- OV1a Northwest Iowa Community College is a public non-profit institution in northeast Iowa. NICC has two main campuses located in cities 100 miles apart.
- OV4a NICC works to maintain a close match between employee and student demographics. There are currently more women than men in all employee groups. An anticipated shift in student diversity has created a need for additional cultural inclusion.
- OV4b NICC organizes Human Resources into district-wide positions rather than campus or center-based.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
4P2	O	While NICC has identified a critical need to diversify its faculty and staff, there is no mention in the portfolio of processes designed to improve the applicant pool to ensure more diversity.

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| 4P3  | O | Although it is clear in Table 4.2 that employees are retained, it is unclear how this is accomplished. Having specific retention processes in place can validate success and provide repeatable performance.   |
| 4P4  | S | NICC provides an orientation for all new employees that includes an introduction to the mission and vision of the College plus information on the V7 Strategic Plan.   |
| 4P5  | O | The portfolio describes a concern for an aging faculty and staff and a need to diversity, but other than an early retirement incentive, there is no description of processes to address these concerns.  |
| 4P6  | O | Although implementation of Datatel has resulted in improved productivity, it is unclear what activities and/or processes are in place that contribute to employee satisfaction. Having specific processes for retention in place can validate success and provide repeatable performance.            |
| 4P7  | S | NICC has processes in place for ensuring the ethical practices of employees.   |
| 4P8  | O | While NICC describes how it determines and aligns training needs, it does not describe how these processes contribute to strengthening instructional and non-instructional programs and services.  |
| 4P9  | O | Although processes and practices are in place to develop faculty during their careers, it is unclear how staff and administrators are developed. Providing training opportunities for upward mobility of staff and administrators, as well as faculty, can result in increase employee satisfaction. |
| 4P10 | S | NICC has a detailed arrangement in place for the design and use of a personnel evaluation system. NICC reports the alignment of this system to instructional and non-instructional programs and services is provided via its V7 planning and AQIP action projects.                                   |
| 4P11 | S | NICC utilizes its V7 planning as a foundation tool for the design and alignment of employee recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits.   |



- 4P12 O The College plans to administer an employee satisfaction/climate survey in 2011. The data from this survey, if collected and analyzed, could provide important information on the motivation of and areas of concern of its employees.
- 4P13 O The portfolio lists several actions designed to improve employee health and wellness. An opportunity exists to tie these activities to a comprehensive employee wellness plan that includes measureable outcomes.
- 4R1 S The College provides a set of measures of valuing people that it collects and analyzes regularly.
- 4R2 O The College has identified a need to collect more data on employee satisfaction and growth. Initial data are presented that show strong employee satisfaction. An opportunity exists to identify what factors contributed to these results and how the College can reinforce and enhance these factors.
- 4R3 OO The brief description in the portfolio of this section does not address evidence of employee productivity and effectiveness. An opportunity exists to develop a process to measure and improve employee productivity and effectiveness.
- 4R4 OO The portfolio does not provide sufficient information to address this question.
- 4I1 O Although NICC lists several working groups that are involved with Valuing People, it is unclear what systematic and comprehensive processes are in place or what improvements have been made. Identifying areas in need of improvement and implementing improvement processes can provide demonstrable enhancements of results.
- 4I2 OO The portfolio does not provide sufficient information to address the question.

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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***

- OV5    NICC uses its V7Strategic Plan to guide its communication processes to insure alignment with its mission and vision.
- OV7    One of NICC's AQIP action projects is the development of a *College Wide Assessment Plan* to measure the College's progress toward its strategic goals.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
5P1	S	The College's mission and values statements were written by a College team in 2004. The Quality Committee (QC) is charged with oversight and the Board planned to review the statements at a facilitated retreat in January 2011.
5P2	S	The QC follows an annual planning cycle that begins in August with a review of the outcomes from IDE program reviews in addition to the previous year's projects. NICC's Cabinet, College Senate and Board of Trustees are involved in subsequent steps.

- 5P3 O Although employee participation and current student survey information are included in decision making processes, it is unclear how potential student and key stakeholder needs and expectations are incorporated in determining institutional direction. Understanding all stakeholder needs and expectations can provide a solid foundation for strategic planning.
- 5P5 O Although management processes are clearly defined at Cabinet and departmental levels, it is unclear how global institutional decisions are made and/or carried out. Identifying the difference between problem solving and decision making can provide a more cogent look at institutional directions that result in continuous quality improvement.
- 5P7 S When NICC faced an unexpected 10% budget cut, a committee was set up that included broad representation. The committee was given a clear mission and their recommendations were adopted by the Board.
- 5P8 O Although NICC describes the role of its administrators with respect to communicating a shared vision, mission, and values, it does not offer information as to how its other leaders communicate these principles internally and externally.
- 5P10 OO NICC has an opportunity to develop a succession plan to help ensure the preservation of mission, vision and values during times of transition.
- 5R1 OO The portfolio lists the types of methods used to collect information on employee satisfaction but not actual data. An opportunity exists to list the data and show how it ties into a comprehensive improvement plan.
- 5R2 OO The portfolio describes the use of the 2002 AQIP constellation survey, but there is no mention of anything more recent. Regular review of measures and targets can provide needed data to improve methods of leading and communicating.
- 5R3 OO NICC does not currently collect comparative data related to leading and communicating.
- 5I1 OO Although discussions have resulted from investigation of leadership and communication processes, improvements are not reported. There is an

opportunity to develop measurable targets that will enable the College to make data-driven decisions in an environment of continuous quality improvement.

- 512            O        The portfolio expresses a commitment to AQIP and some initial activities, but no real improvements based on data. It is unclear how the College's culture and infrastructure help it to select specific processes to improve or to set targets for that improvement.

---

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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    In 2007 NICC was the beneficiary of a \$25 million bond referendum. These funds were used for infrastructure upgrades, renovation, and new buildings. At the time of this report NICC has remodeled a center for professional development and one campus' existing Industrial Technologies building. In April 2009, NICC broke ground on a new Industrial Trades building on the Peosta campus, and in September 2009, NICC began construction on a Student Center for the Calmar campus. Additional renovations include upgrades to NICC's computer technology infrastructure and improvements in the Health Sciences and Library of the main building on the Peosta campus.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
6P1	S	The College lists a variety of methods by which it identifies the support service needs of its stakeholders.
6P2	OO	The portfolio lists a number of methods for collecting information but describes no real comprehensive process tied to measurable outcomes. A proactive rather than reactive approach can expedite implementation of solutions to support service needs.
6P4	O	Although Table 6.1 demonstrates day-to-day support service processes, it is unclear how these processes are managed to ensure they are functioning as intended. Development of a review process can provide evidence that support services are operating smoothly, efficiently and effectively.
6P5	O	The College uses policy and procedure manuals to provide consistent services across units. However, it is unclear how the College uses information to encourage knowledge sharing, innovation and empowerment. A valuable expansion would come from the sharing of best practices and successes during the revision of these manuals.
6R1	S	Table 6.2 documents measures designed to provide data concerning organizational support services.
6R2	OO	There does not appear to be a one-to-one correlation between the listed measures of student support services and the reported results. The College might consider focusing on a smaller number of measures and collecting, analyzing, and reporting the results more thoroughly. An opportunity exists to use the collected data to show gaps, target activities, and see if improvement is based upon interventions.
6R3	OO	The portfolio describes several activities in this area but very few results; there does not appear to be a correlation between the listed measures of

- administrative support services and the reported results. An opportunity exists to use the processes described to identify gaps in service. Focusing on a smaller number of measures and collecting, analyzing, and reporting the results more thoroughly will ensure that improvements are identified and put into practice.
- 6R4 OO The portfolio lists several activities or improvements but no actual results. Based on the information provided, it is difficult to assess these activities or to reveal whether or not these led to improvements.
- 6I1 O Although the College lists several activities, it does not provide specific examples of improvements in support services. Development of a systematic and comprehensive proactive approach can provide early identification of areas in need of improvement.
- 6I2 O It is unclear how the College's culture and infrastructure help it select support services to improve and set targets for that improvement. An opportunity exists to actualize the College's commitment to continuous improvement by assessing how culture and infrastructure changes might enhance its improvement efforts.

---

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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 One of NICC's AQIP action projects is the development of a *College Wide Assessment Plan* to measure the College's progress toward its strategic goals.
- OV9 NICC prioritizes internal and external partnerships by how well they match the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan. The use of Datatel continues to assist the institution to work toward better decision-making capabilities in this area.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
7P1	OO	The portfolio states that the College is still in the early stages of using data to drive decisions, yet it has been an AQIP institution since 2002. An opportunity exists for the College to use the many processes it has listed and its commitment to continuous improvement to identify, collect, and analyze data to drive improvement.
7P2	O	The College has an opportunity to link its data gathering processes to its V7 Strategic Plan. Once this linkage is made, it will be easier to focus on the specific data needed for planning and improvement purposes.
7P3	OO	It appears that NICC departments are asked to determine their own data needs from a collection of data provided by the institutional research department. Determination of, access to, and analysis of relevant data, and then collecting, storing, and making it available could facilitate the planning process.
7P4	O	While the College uses its director of institutional research, reporting directly to the Cabinet, to analyze data and information regarding overall performance, it is unclear how this data is analyzed and utilized to aid in continuous quality improvement. Data and its analysis is the third step in the PDCA cycle and leads to the action steps that generate results.
7P5	O	Although NICC appears to have processes in place to determine needs and priorities for comparative data and information, it is unclear how the

- need and priority of this information is determined. Identification, analysis, and prioritization of data needs can serve to avoid data overload.
- 7R1      OO      Although NICC has been an AQIP institution since 2002, it still does not regularly collect measures of performance and effectiveness of its data systems.
- 7R2      O      Although NICC provides an anecdotal example of one area where a goal was met, it is unclear if systems are meeting the needs of the organization. Defining and developing systems for measuring effectiveness can provide valid evidence needed to demonstrate improvements.
- 7R3      OO      Although the College lists data resources, it does not appear to collect or analyze comparative data on the effectiveness of its information systems. Collecting and analyzing this information would allow for comparison.
- 7I1      O      The portfolio describes a commitment to improve but no actual improvements are listed. An opportunity exists to actualize the College's commitment to continuous improvement by connecting the collected data to actual improvements.
- 7I2      O      The portfolio describes some improvements but does not show how these are linked to data and goals. It is unclear how the College's culture and infrastructure help it to determine areas for improvement or select targets for that improvement.

---

## **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 Northeast Iowa 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***

- OV5 NICC uses its V7 Strategic Plan to guide its communication processes to insure alignment with its mission and vision.
  
- OV7 One of NICC's AQIP action projects is the development of a *College Wide Assessment Plan* to measure the College's progress toward its strategic goals.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
8P1	S	NICC has developed an annual process to create a more systematic approach to planning. The Quality Council (QC) has oversight responsibility, and a timeline has been established.
8P2	S	NICC's long- and short- term strategies are defined by the V7 Strategic Plan, V7 planning processes, and AQIP action projects.
8P4	S	NICC's processes are coordinated and aligned via the development of action plans at the department level. They are coordinated by the Quality Committee (QC), which then reviews and makes recommendations to the College's Board of Trustees.
8P5	OO	Although NICC has been an AQIP institution since 2002, its current strategic plan does not include performance indicators. The College has an opportunity to use its College Wide Assessment Plan and related AQIP action projects to define objectives, select measures, and select performance targets for its strategies and action plans.
8P7	O	The portfolio describes a commitment to continuous improvement, but the only concrete activity mentioned was in 2005. It is unclear how it currently assesses and addresses risk in its planning process. The development

- of a method for the assessment and addressing of risks within the planning processes would allow the College to identify areas of concern and develop possible solutions for addressing those areas.
- 8P8 OO Although NICC includes all units and departments in its planning processes, it is unclear how faculty, staff, and administrators are supported so that they are prepared for the resulting institutional changes. The very nature of institutional change requires adjustments in workflow and job descriptions. Preparing employees for ensuing changes can facilitate transitions.
- 8R1 S NICC lists several methods for measuring the effectiveness of its planning processes with respect to planning continuous improvement.
- 8R2 OO NICC does not provide results on its measures of the effectiveness of its planning processes. Without such results the College cannot assess its effectiveness nor identify areas in need of improvement.
- 8R3 OO Although the College lists several general planning goals, they are not measurable and do not include projections or targets for performance. Developing measurable goals with targets will help the College assess the extent to which it has met its planning improvement goals.
- 8R4 O Although the College refers to several tables of NCCBP data, the results are not directly related to its planning processes. Obtaining comparison data specific to its planning processes will help the College assess its effectiveness in planning compared with other institutions.
- 8R5 OO Absent measurable results of the planning processes, NICC reports anecdotal and inferred evidence of effective planning. Developing and implementing concrete, repeatable measures and analyses would demonstrate a commitment to continuous quality improvement.
- 8I1 OO NICC describes improvements made in 2008 in its planning processes. Given the anecdotal evidence provided, it is unclear if progress has continued since that time. NICC has an opportunity to develop and incorporate continuous improvement processes based on measurable

results across the institution. Doing so will help create and reinforce a culture of continuous improvement.

- 8I2            OO    NICC does not implicitly define the ways in which culture and infrastructure processes assist with improving and setting targets for improved performance results in planning continuous improvement. An opportunity exists to clearly define how these processes are linked to the College's mission, vision and other processes.

---

### **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 Northeast Iowa 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    NICC prioritizes internal and external partnerships by how well they match the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan. The use of Datatel continues to assist the institution to work toward better decision-making capabilities in this area.

**Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northeast Iowa 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            S        The College describes a variety of ways it maintains relationships with organizations from which it receives students.

- 9P2 S NICC has defined processes to create, prioritize and build relationships with organizations and employers that depend upon a supply of its students. External partnerships are prioritized by how well they match the college mission and vision.
- 9P4 OO Although NICC addresses its relationships with several business partners, it does not address relationships with external service providers. A systematic approach to managing these relationships is likely to increase the effectiveness of the relationships.
- 9P5 O Although NICC reports identified improvement efforts in relationships with external agencies, education associations and the general community, it does not address how these relationships are created, prioritized and sustained. Its approach appears to involve traditional or convenient partnerships, rather than a systematic approach to develop those relationships which are best aligned with its goals. Attention to processes for identifying and developing relationships may help focus the institution on those partners who can help the College achieve its strategic objectives.
- 9P6 O NICC reports a variety of ways it meets the needs of its partners, but does not comment concerning how partnerships are meeting the needs of the College. Development of symbiotic relationships can provide an understanding of the working relationship between partners.
- 9P7 O NICC recognizes that there is an opportunity to develop a plan that better addresses cross-College relationships between the campuses.
- 9R1 S The College lists a variety of measures it uses to determine its success in building collaborative relationships.
- 9R2 O Based upon analysis of the results provided such as Table 1-8, it is unclear how these data demonstrate results of building relationships. A comprehensive plan for collecting and analyzing data for partnerships with educational institutions, employers, organizations that provide services, suppliers, external organizations, and internal departments and

units may assist the College in understanding its priorities for these partnerships and how to build them for long-term sustainability.

- 9R3      OO      The College does not compare its results in building collaborative relationships with those of other educational institutions. Such comparisons can provide benchmarks, identify areas for improvement and help to set targets.
- 9I1      OO      The portfolio describes a commitment to improvement; however the College does not provide recent specific improvements in its results for building collaborative relationships. There is an opportunity to analyze data, identify improvement opportunities, and assess the effects of those improvements.
- 9I2      O      NICC understands that it needs to assess and prioritize relationships so that they align with the mission and vision of the institution. While documenting existing processes is important, developing a systematic approach to process improvement selection and setting targets would be important work in moving the organization forward in its improvement efforts.