

# **SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**

**in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of**

## **SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE**

**August 23, 2013**



**Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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## ELEMENTS OF SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE'S FEEDBACK REPORT

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Welcome to the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. This report provides AQIP's official response to an institution's *Systems Portfolio* by a team of peer reviewers (the Systems Appraisal Team). After the team independently reviews the institution's portfolio, it reaches consensus on essential elements of the institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by AQIP Category, and any significant issues related to accreditation. These are then presented in three sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*: "Strategic Challenges Analysis," "AQIP Category Feedback," and "Accreditation Issues Analysis." These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating institutional performance, surfacing critical issues or accreditation concerns, and assessing institutional performance. Ahead of these three areas, the team provides a "Reflective Introduction" followed closely by an "Executive Summary." The appraisal concludes with commentary on the overall quality of the report and advice on using the report. Each of these areas is overviewed below.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team has only the institution's *Systems Portfolio* to guide its analysis of the institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently the team's report may omit important strengths, particularly if the institution were too modest to stress them or if discussion or documentation of these areas in the *Systems Portfolio* were presented minimally. Similarly the team may point out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving wide-spread institutional attention. Indeed it is possible that some areas recommended for potential improvement have since become strengths rather than opportunities through the institution's ongoing efforts. Recall that the overarching goal of the Systems Appraisal Team is to provide an institution with the best possible advice for ongoing improvement.

The various sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* can be described as follows:

**Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary:** In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: 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 each AQIP Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

**Strategic Challenges Analysis:** Strategic challenges are those most closely related to an institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Teams formulate judgments related to strategic challenges and accreditation issues (discussed below) through careful analysis of the Organizational Overview included in the institution's Systems Portfolio and through the team's own feedback provided for each AQIP Category. These collected findings offer a framework for future improvement of processes and systems.

**AQIP Category Feedback:** The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* addresses each AQIP Category by identifying (and also coding) 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. Through comments, which are keyed to the institution's Systems Portfolio, the team offers brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by AQIP Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is often considered the heart of the *Feedback Report*.

**Accreditation Issues Analysis:** Accreditation issues are areas where an institution may have not yet provided sufficient evidence that it meets the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. It is also possible that the evidence provided suggests to the team that the institution may have difficulties, whether at present or in the future, in satisfying the *Criteria*. As with strategic challenges, teams formulate judgments related to accreditation issues through close analysis of the entire Systems Portfolio with particular attention given to the evidence that the institution provides for satisfying the various core components of the *Criteria*. For purposes of consistency, AQIP instructs appraisal teams to identify any accreditation issue as a strategic challenge as well.

**Quality of Report & Its Use:** As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the organization by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution

to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

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## REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE

The following consensus statement is from the System Appraisal Team's review of the institution's *Systems Portfolio Overview* and its introductions to the nine AQIP Categories. The purpose of this reflective introduction is to highlight the team's broad understanding of the institution, its mission, and the constituents that it serves.

**Overall:** *SWIC is an established comprehensive community College within the Illinois Community College System that serves a sizeable population and geographic base with three campuses, two additional locations, extension sites, and a distance education program. The College provides programs and services for the community with an emphasis on the region's older citizens as well as fostering educational opportunities for U. S. military and veterans. The College is particularly noted for its strong commitment to underprepared students, and is Illinois' top College producer of GED graduates.*

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

- **Category One:** SWIC has provided evidence of a maturing student and stakeholder centered culture and achievement in the area of Helping Students Learn. Many formalized and standardized processes and systems exist to promote continual improvement and institutional reflection. Action Projects appear to be a vital part of that improvement cycle, and inclusiveness and collaboration is extensive both internally and externally. The College is poised to achieve greater results by expanding its assessment abilities and by collecting and analyzing data to inform continuous improvement in helping students learn.
- **Category Two:** SWIC has three major distinctive objectives for external stakeholders (Lifelong Learning, Partnerships, and Diversity & Accessibility), and it supports multiple programs and activities within each distinctive objective. These activities have seen increased participation and/or growth, additional programs have been added, and the College articulates concrete benefits for stakeholders. The College's opportunities in this category include providing evidence and examples of systematized processes and communicating results directly to key stakeholders.
- **Category Three:** SWIC provides many examples of processes and performance results and

builds a culture and infrastructure of continuous quality improvement. Opportunities in this category include further refinements of information-gathering systems so that targets and results can be more directly tied to identified goals and objectives. To move to a higher level of maturation in this category, SWIC is encouraged to triangulate data and employ both quantitative and qualitative measures to better understand the satisfaction of stakeholders and identify opportunities for improvement.

- **Category Four:** SWIC has developed good practices to support hiring, business procedure documentation, and the orientation of new employees. SWIC faces the challenge of determining how to better detect employee satisfaction and effective performance. The College has an opportunity to establish the routine and systematic collection of formal and informal data and to analyze those data in order to implement processes that reflect how it values people and to compare its measures of employee effectiveness, productivity, retention, and satisfaction to other institutions. Setting up processes to continually track and assess those measures may significantly support institutional maturation in *Valuing People*.
- **Category Five:** SWIC has defined a statement of Mission and Values and communicated the mission and values broadly and publically. Additionally, it has centralized and better defined the process for making important institutional decisions. However, the College is challenged to explain how it assesses institutional performance for *Leading and Communicating* and how it sets targets for improvement and implements improvement plans; thus, SWIC is encouraged to focus on developing and implementing formalized processes and systems to identify key improvement areas that are tied to strategic and tactical planning. These efforts in turn could help track and measure performance results that may assist the College in developing comparative data for internal and external examinations of performance. The College has an additional opportunity to strengthen and communicate its leadership succession process. Institutional processes and performance results in *Leading and Communicating* have not yet reached the level of systematic or comprehensive.
- **Category Six:** SWIC has many formalized and institutionalized processes and systems that promote Supporting Institutional Operations and is maturing in data collection and analysis. Although the College indicates that it does not yet have a comprehensive system for setting targets, there is abundant evidence that the culture and infrastructure supports improvement and that Action Projects are used effectively to develop and change processes. To move to a higher

level of measurement and tracking, SWIC has an opportunity to develop and use qualitative measures to gauge satisfaction and value added to stakeholders for some services, such as Counseling Center appointments, and to benchmark its other support services results – such as testing center performance, graduate placement rates, success and retention rates, etc. - with peer institutions, as it has done in other sections of the portfolio.

- **Category Seven:** SWIC provides strong evidence of a maturing culture and infrastructure in Measuring Effectiveness and has accomplished many noteworthy recent improvements in this area. Reliability, stability, security, and access are all vital components of a highly effective system for managing and using internal and external data to make sound decisions and drive improvement and change. An opportunity exists to develop or report on more systematic approaches to these activities and processes.
- **Category Eight:** SWIC provides evidence of a maturing culture and infrastructure that enhances planning, improvement, and collaboration. The College has many formalized processes and systems that promote continual improvements in using data to track performance results, and make data-based decisions. Employee development and performance evaluation prepares stakeholders to effectively participate in planning and Action Projects. Additionally, the College has an opportunity to gather feedback from employees who utilize these employee development opportunities to determine the extent to which they assist and support employees in helping SWIC achieve its goals. SWIC has an opportunity to develop evidence regarding the effectiveness of the continuous planning improvement processes.

While the College lists several improvements results from these processes, it has additional opportunities to strengthen and broaden the data collection endeavors (both qualitative and quantitative) behind its decision-making, target determination, and planning efforts. This evidence should go beyond the effectiveness of the resulting plan (currently reported in figure 8.8) to include metrics for evaluating the planning processes for continuous improvement.

- **Category Nine:** SWIC has established priorities to “Engage, Partner, and Collaborate with Communities and Educational Institutions” that have led to relationships with organizations and educational institutions in its region. These external collaborations are routinely evaluated using a variety of measures of success to assure that the relationships continue to benefit the College; however, there exists an opportunity to put these same efforts in place for internal collaborations and partnerships. SWIC also reports multiple recent improvements throughout its responses in

this Category and has been successful in procuring important external funding such as the TRIO Student Services, Title III, and TAACCT to support improved processes and performance results.

Note: Strategic challenges and accreditation issues are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.

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## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the Systems Appraisal Team attempted to identify the broader issues that would seem to present the greatest challenges and opportunities for the institution in the coming years. These areas are ones that the institution should address as it seeks to become the institution it wants to be. From these the institution may discover its immediate priorities as well as shaping strategies for long-term performance improvement. These items may also serve as the basis for future activities and projects that satisfy other AQIP requirements. The team also considered whether any of these challenges put the institution at risk of not meeting the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. That portion of the team's work is presented later in this report.

Knowing that SWIC will discuss these strategic challenges, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified the following:

- SWIC provides evidence of a commitment to continuous quality improvement throughout the nine categories in this Portfolio. In order to move to a higher level of maturation overall, SWIC is encouraged to broaden its data collection endeavors to improve decision-making, target determination, and planning and measurement efforts. Developing processes to triangulate data and employ both quantitative and qualitative measures may assist the College in better understanding satisfaction of stakeholders and identifying opportunities for improvement.
- In a number of Categories, SWIC provides examples of comparisons for its performance results with other higher education institutions; however there is an opportunity to develop processes to identify key performance measures that can be tracked, benchmarked, and analyzed over time. Building and implementing these processes will allow the College to identify best practices, enhance stakeholder relationships, and institutionalize continuous quality improvement.

- SWIC could move to a higher level of assessment and related decision-making by including additional context and reflection on performance results to enable stakeholders to better understand whether the results are poor, satisfactory, excellent, expected, or on-target. Such reflection might aid the College as it decides which programs to support, given the current climate of fiscal constraints.
- The processes and systems in Helping Students Learn appear to be institutionalized and provide a structure that allows multiple divisions and stakeholders to collaborate on development and implementation of improvements that are regularly assessed and refined. SWIC has an opportunity to adopt the structure of formalized processes and systems in Category One as a model for other divisions and departments, and also in the Building Collaborative Relationships category.

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## **AQIP CATEGORY FEEDBACK**

In the following section, the Systems Appraisal Team delineates institutional strengths along with opportunities for improvement within the nine AQIP Categories. As explained above, the symbols used in this section are **SS** for outstanding strength, **S** for strength, **O** for opportunity for improvement, and **OO** for outstanding opportunity for improvement. The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the team members and deserves the institution's 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:*** This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 1.

*The Instructional Leadership Team, which incorporates a broad representation of instructional and student services offices, serves as the catalyst for improvement projects and facilitates collaboration with other stakeholder divisions. The Program Review process helps the institution routinely review degree and certification programs to assess student learning. The institution's maturity in Category One is shown through a number of ways, including ongoing faculty development opportunities in utilizing assessment tools, requiring training for faculty in advance of teaching online, and the practices of benchmarking learning data and tracking trends in the student body's learning over time.*

**1P1, S.** SWIC determines its common objectives for learning and development through a process led by the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator and the General Education Committee. The process is faculty-led and includes participation of instructional deans with feedback from employers, transfer institutions, recent graduates, and current students. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of what is expected of students in communication, reasoning, and citizenship.

**1P2, SS.** SWIC has formalized processes in which specific program learning objectives are determined by faculty with feedback from advisory boards, employers, and graduates. Guidelines for these processes are provided by the Outcomes Assessment (OA) Disciplines Committee, which also reviews program mission statements, educational goals, assessment cycle reports, curriculum maps, and student learning action projects. In the OA Forum, faculty present results from program reviews followed by discussion and an assessment of the program review. Online assessment training, faculty workshops, OA forum, and deans' assessments using common rubric facilitate a culture of inquiry regarding assessment of student learning and development objectives. The academic catalog, program requirements, prerequisites and textbook information is available in print or on the website. Support departments provide new student orientations, campus tours, and training regarding College technology and the student portal.

**1P3, S.** SWIC designs new programs and courses in a process that involves faculty, advisory committees, its curriculum committee, the vice president for instruction, and the Board of Trustees using data collected through the environmental scanning tools and in line with Board policy. Programs must also be approved by the Illinois Community College Board.

**1P4, S.** SWIC designs responsive academic programming that balances and integrates learning goals, student career needs, and the realities of the employment market via several well-

established processes. The College collects feedback and encourages participation from numerous key stakeholders during the development of programmatic and core learning objectives.

Additionally, the Program Review process provides a regular assessment of the quality, cost and need of each program, and integrates an analysis of market place needs, student performance, and identified learning goals.

**1P5a, S.** SWIC determines the preparation required of students for curricula, programs, courses, and learning through a number of processes that focus on particular student needs. The admissions process for many students, Mission Success, provides assessment, counseling, and general information. The Adult Basic Education (ABE) program uses regular objective and performance testing to determine student placement in courses and programs and also utilizes prior student experiences. The English as a Second Language program administers individual intake interviews that assess student receptive and productive English skills.

**1P5b, O.** Although SWIC uses such tools as Mission Success and COMPASS to evaluate the skills and competencies of students entering College, the College has an opportunity to provide specific information regarding how it determines requirements related to its curricula, individual programs, courses, and learning and to explain what skills/competencies are required of students prior to pursuing an education at SWIC.

**1P6, S.** SWIC communicates to current and prospective students concerning learning and development objectives for programs, courses, and degrees through multiple processes. The academic catalog is available in print or on the website, and information about specific requirements and prerequisites, and textbooks is available online. Also available are standardized syllabi, new student orientations, campus tours, and training for students on College technology and the student portal. Direct mail within the district announces semester course schedules.

**1P7, S.** SWIC helps students select appropriate programs of study through counseling services (academic, personal, career, multicultural, disability), faculty advising, assessment and course placement. The College is currently engaged in an AQIP Action Project that targets academic advising as part of a larger student service and retention model.

**1P8, S.** SWIC offers assistance to underprepared students via the Success Centers, Online Writing Lab, Project Success (Academic Alert system), academic workshops, Counseling Center, and the Adult Education and ESOL departments. Faculty development sessions are offered to align faculty interest in assisting underprepared students with the above processes and service.

**1P9, S.** SWIC addresses different learning styles through several means, including administering a learning styles assessment to students in several courses, training tutors in knowledge of learning styles, and conducting faculty development sessions on the topic.

**1P10, SS.** The College has established a new veterans' services area to meet the needs of veteran learners as the result of an AQIP Action Project. Substantial efforts are also evident for students with disabilities, students of color, and students of nontraditional age.

**1P11, SS.** SWIC has in place formalized, robust processes to define, document, and communicate expectations for effective teaching and learning. Faculty work with administrative support to define learning objectives in performance based terms. The Outcomes Assessment Coordinator faculty member utilizes multiple methods of communication and helps coordinate efforts related to student learning. The use of common rubrics to explain expectations for core competencies is also commendable.

**1P12, S.** SWIC has processes in place to assess and improve instructional delivery methods that include student feedback in the form of focus groups, surveys, and student evaluation forms, as well as using a range of best practices in higher education. It is noteworthy that the College has used feedback from students to improve technology in instruction by acquiring smart pens, mobile devices and social media. The College demonstrates agility and responsiveness to change, which is a key principle of high performance organizations.

**1P13, SS.** SWIC ensures curricular currency and effectiveness through regular, proactive assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels, the program review process, and the articulation process with other Colleges and universities. Assessment technique workshops are available regularly to all faculty. Feedback is also gathered from such external sources as employers, clinical sites, transfer institutions, and advisory committees. Budget considerations for assessment are also part of the process.

**1P14, S.** SWIC changes or updates programs and courses through state-mandated program reviews for occupational and transfer disciplines and by following campus procedures developed for curricular changes.

**1P15a, S.** SWIC determines the learning support needs of students and faculty through the use of nationally-normed and College surveys, focus groups, meeting with faculty and student leaders, usage tracking data, and its committee structure.

**1P15b, O.** While SWIC employs multiple forms of information gathering, it has an opportunity to provide documentation that these efforts are systematic, intentional, consistently integrated, or aligned processes.

**1P16a, S.** SWIC aligns co-curricular goals and learning objectives through its Outcomes Assessment Steering Committee, which includes support services representation; the activities of its Success Centers, which participate in the outcomes assessment process; and the input of the Student Leadership Team. Although not necessarily interrelated, these efforts appear to provide multiple points of interaction and alignment between learning objectives and co-curricular development goals.

**1P16b, O.** SWIC has an impressive list of co-curricular opportunities; however, an opportunity exists to systematize the process for identifying and aligning the co-curricular goals of its programs and activities with curricular learning objectives (Figure 1.1).

**1P17, S.** SWIC determines that students have met its learning and development objectives using multiple measures of comparison. The performance of transfer students attending public Colleges and universities in the state are tracked in comparison to native and other transfer students at these institutions; the general education program is assessed on campus. The state-mandated program review process provides data on performance in occupational programs, as do data from the Perkins grant, licensure examinations on an external basis, and feedback from clinics and internships on an internal basis.

**1P18, SS.** SWIC designs processes for assessing student learning through its Outcomes Assessment Steering Committee. The Committee, comprised of faculty and academic administrators, identifies goals and develops the process and directs other committees which select and pilot the instruments used to collect data. Outcome Assessment Leadership developed workshops to train faculty in developing targets and tools and meets with department chairs and program coordinators to assist in the self-assessment process. A timeline has been developed to assess general education core competencies College-wide on a regular basis.

**1R1, SS.** SWIC collects and analyzes data using institutional, program-specific, and classroom-level measures that incorporate such information as completions, grade distributions, graduate surveys, licensure pass rates, and developmental coursework performance. The General Education Outcomes Assessment Committee establishes and updates a five-year timeline to ensure the regular assessment of core competencies. Figure 1.2 depicts the General Education

Core Competencies Timeline for academic years 2009-10 to 2013-14, providing evidence of regular, intentional collection and evaluation of the data.

**1R2a, S.** SWIC provided evidence for some of its core competencies (oral communication, computer literacy, civic and social accountability, personal accountability, critical thinking, and quantitative literacy) and performance results for common student learning and development objectives that were evaluated multiple times in a five year period. These performance results included qualitative, quantitative, and longitudinal data. A number of recommendations have been developed and implemented as a result of this comprehensive process, as well.

**1R2b, O.** SWIC has an opportunity to provide systematic data related to civic and social accountability and to include performance results for writing and quantitative literacy assessments. Although the writing communication skills competency was institutionally assessed in 2010, the methods for this institutional assessment were not specified and the Systems Portfolio did not include performance results for writing. Given the importance of writing for all students, providing a thorough description of measures of writing and the performance results could demonstrate SWIC's commitment to assessment and evidence-based decision-making.

**1R3a, S.** SWIC shared performance results for a sampling of specific programs, namely Web Design, Massage Therapy, and Network Design and Administration. The results incorporated direct and indirect measures of assessment and detailed areas of concerns and proposed program changes being considered as a result of the process of collecting and analyzing data.

**1R3b, O.** While SWIC has gathered important data regarding student achievement of program-specific learning outcomes, the College has an opportunity to predetermine goals and acceptable measures on these outcomes rather than accepting real data points as sufficient in and of themselves.

**1R4, O.** While SWIC employs multiple measures to determine whether or not students have acquired the knowledge and skills they need (ref: 1R6), the College has an opportunity to share the results of these measures to provide evidence that students possess the needed skills and knowledge.

**1R5, S.** Increased library use, expanded testing center services due to demand, increased Success Center utilization, positive response to new veterans services and increase use of and success with Project Success are a few of many indicators offered by the portfolio as performance results indicators for learning support services.

**1R6, S.** SWIC shared student performance result comparisons for its health occupations programs from 2010-2012 and for the FAA program from 2009-2011 which indicated, in general, higher institutional pass rates for the College as compared to national rates. The College's completion rates for degrees and certificates consistently rate third in the state, higher than average pass rates on licensure examinations, and initial National Community College Benchmarking Project results from 2012 compare favorably to those of participating institutions in composition, algebra, speech, developmental mathematics and reading indicate solid performance in Helping Students Learn as compared to other institutions.

**1I1a, S.** SWIC has made numerous improvements aimed at helping students learn, such as training requirements for faculty teaching online, new programs aimed at changing workforce and student needs, and improved collaboration with local high schools. The College demonstrates through these actions commitment to meeting its mission and values.

**1I1b, O.** SWIC has an opportunity to evaluate all processes in this category to determine which processes shall be closely studied in the future.

**1I2, SS.** SWIC provides abundant evidence of a culture and infrastructure that supports the selection of specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in Helping Students Learn. The processes and systems in this area appear to be institutionalized and provide a structure that allows multiple divisions and stakeholders to collaborate on development and implementation of improvements that are regularly assessed and refined.

***AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:*** This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the institution's character, it examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 2.

SWIC has grouped its distinctive objectives into three main areas: Lifelong learning, Partnerships, and Diversity/Accessibility and works to integrate processes within these areas. With regard to accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives, SWIC has made specific efforts since the 2009 portfolio with in the areas of inter-departmental coordination, external programming, and continuous assessment cycles while

maintaining a focus on its stated commitments to lifelong learning, partnerships, diversity and accessibility.

**2P1a, S.** Non-instructional processes are designed and operated through data collection from a variety of sources; data are reviewed and analyzed by the Strategic Planning Council, employee groups, and external stakeholders.

**2P1b, O.** The College has an opportunity to more clearly articulate the key non-instructional processes in place and how collected data is aligned with Other Distinctive Objectives in order for the institution to accomplish its distinctive objectives.

**2P2, S.** The College employs a formalized process for determining its major non-instructional objectives for external stakeholders through its Strategic Planning Council, employees, and other external stakeholders. Proposed objectives are aligned with the strategic plan, evaluated by the president's staff and, when approved, forwarded to the Board for approval.

**2P3, O.** The non-instructional objectives for SWIC's external stakeholders (i.e., 2P2) are communicated as part of the Strategic Plan; however, it is not clear how external stakeholders will learn about the Strategic Plan. External stakeholders would likely benefit by understanding the College's expectations and aspirations for these objectives; thus, the College has an opportunity to provide an outline of this process and to communicate expectations and results directly to key stakeholders.

**2P4, O.** While the Systems Portfolio states that the Strategic Planning Council (SPC) is tasked with assessing and reviewing the non-instructional objectives for SWIC's external stakeholders, the College has an opportunity to explain *how* this process occurs. For example, what measures does the SPC collect and analyze to determine the appropriateness and value of the objectives and how does it analyze these measures?

**2P5, O.** SWIC determines faculty and staff needs related to these objectives and operations through the involvement of the Human Resources Office, project groups, department staff, and faculty in the planning and budgeting phases using data from performance evaluations, legal compliance requirements, and specific training requests. Requests proceed through the President's staff and Board of Trustees for consideration for approval. The College has an opportunity to provide further detail regarding the processes by which faculty and staff needs are determined. Survey data may be valuable in this process.

**2P6a, S.** Information regarding faculty and staff needs in relation to Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives are communicated formally and informally and are evaluated and prioritized at the vice president level. If a need requires additional resources in order to be addressed, a request can be presented to the president's staff and the Board of Trustees.

**2P6b, O.** SWIC incorporates information on faculty and staff needs through formal evaluations and informal communications, which are shared with, evaluated, and prioritized by the appropriate vice president; however, the College has an opportunity to systematize existing processes and share information about them with internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, aside from considering feedback from the faculty evaluation process, the institution does not provide evidence of *intentional efforts* to determine employee needs relative to its processes for serving external stakeholders.

**2R1, S.** Figure 2.1 documents the use of multiple tools to measure its distinctive programs, including the results of surveys and evaluations, renewals of certifications, and enrollment data. Many of these measures are routinely collected and analyzed.

**2R2a, S.** The College provides performance results for Adult Basic Education, Community Education, Programs and Services for Older Persons (PSOP), Schmidt Art Center, Institutional Commitment to lifelong learning, Diversity and Accessibility, and other partnerships. The results include direct and indirect measures, and one-year, multi-year, and quantitative data.

**2R2b, O.** SWIC would benefit by including additional context and reflection on performance results to enable readers to better understand whether the results are poor, satisfactory, surprising, disappointing, excellent, expected, or on-target. How can the College assure that the programs are enhancing the College's distinctive objectives? Such reflection might aid the College as it decides which programs to support, given the current climate of fiscal constraints. Additionally, aside from instructionally-based and student support initiatives (such as ABE and veterans' services), the institution provides little evidence of measurable goals, assessment efforts, or measurements regarding the accomplishment of non-instructional objectives.

**2R3, O.** While the College provides data related to adult education and minority outreach, it has an opportunity to support conclusions of being a model in the state for lifelong learning and in service to veterans. The College has an additional opportunity to provide comparative data in all of these areas so that benchmarking efforts can be utilized to make improvements in this category.

**2R4, S.** The Systems Portfolio provides multiple examples of benefits gained through programs (or activities) related to SWIC's distinctive objectives, especially in the areas of lifelong education, diversity and accessibility.

**2I1a, S.** The Systems Portfolio provides evidence of recent improvements that are tied to strategic planning and the institution's mission and goals. Figure 2.4 provides an overview of improvements in lifelong learning, community outreach and partnerships, and diversity and accessibility.

**2I1b, O.** Strategic goal setting, planned assessment of outcomes, and use of assessment results to refine processes is key to success regarding non-instructional objectives; SWIC's portfolio does not evidence an understanding or commitment to the strategic, integrated planning for and assessment of its non-instructional efforts. While improvements in this category are noted, it is not clear that these improvements are the result of a systematic, comprehensive process.

**2I2, S.** The College supports an organizational structure and culture in this category that pursues annual planning, program/project design, implementation, and assessment. Through this, the College displays characteristics of continuous quality improvement.

***AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs:*** This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 3.

*The College displays an aligned to integrated level of maturity in understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs. This has been accomplished by linking the annual strategic planning and evaluation processes to cross-division planning and enhancing the technology infrastructure to support integration of student services and instructional services. The College identifies the continuing challenge of maintaining fully-integrated systems and processes in an environment of continually changing technology and budget constraints. One new AQIP Action Project in particular is focused on improving student retention through a focus on established systems and processes.*

**3P1, S.** Needs of degree-seeking, non-degree seeking, and prospective students are identified through a wide range of measures including surveys, forums, focus groups, and assessments. Data is analyzed at departmental and divisional levels as well as by campus-wide groups. The College's portfolio documented responses to established needs via task groups and at least one Action Project.

**3P2a, S.** The College uses multiple systems and processes to build and maintain relationships with its students. These include direct contact with faculty and staff, broad access to student support services, a large number of student clubs and organizations, increasing sustainability initiatives, the College website and social media, and Disability and Access Center services. Data and feedback is gathered from multiple surveys, focus groups, the complaint process, and instructor evaluations, and used to determine means of enhancing student success.

**3P2b, O.** The College has opportunities to explain how it incorporates and identifies student feedback as part of a systematic process, and to document how the increased use of technology enables the College to build and maintain relationships with students.

**3P3, S.** The College employs extensive means of identifying and studying the needs of a large list of external stakeholder groups, such as those identified in Figure 3.5 (advisory boards, collaborations with other organizations, meetings, regular communication, and an environmental scanning process). Improvements realized through these measures and processes include a new emergency notification system, training for faculty and staff, and new services for veterans.

**3P4, S.** The Systems Portfolio provides extensive examples of how the College builds and maintains relationships with its key stakeholders. Relationships with key stakeholders remain a strategic priority for the College, and the institutional importance of relationships is supported by a number of initiatives in this Category.

**3P5, S.** SWIC uses its environmental scanning process to generate data about opportunities associated with various stakeholder groups in terms of needs and interests, demographics, legislative requirements and initiatives, etc. The data is then utilized in College's strategic planning processes to target specific opportunities associated with its mission and priorities.

**3P6a, S.** The College's process for receiving and processing student complaints and grievances is clearly written and comprehensive. The policies are published widely and the College additionally maintains a "Contact Us" link on its website for stakeholders to submit feedback and complaints.

**3P6b, O.** For complaints or issues that may have ramifications on existing processes, an opportunity exists to articulate information regarding institutional oversight (who is responsible), the College's planned and/or actual response to trends that emerge in its measures over time, and to refine systems so that such information can inform improvement efforts.

**3R1–3R2a, S.** SWIC uses surveys and other data sources to determine levels of satisfaction among its students and other stakeholders. The portfolio clearly indicates that the College regularly analyzes direct and indirect measures of satisfaction. The measures include results from CCSSE, internal surveys, focus groups, internal participation in events and service usage, and evaluations.

**3R1–3R2b, O.** Given that SWIC administers the CCSSE survey, the College has the opportunity to analyze, report, and act on student satisfaction data generated by the survey in order to gain insight about factors that contribute to student satisfaction, and to improve these measures over time. The College has an additional opportunity to more clearly articulate how it determines the satisfaction of stakeholders other than students.

**3R3a, S.** The Systems Portfolio shows substantial responses to data gleaned through relationship building processes with students, focusing on student engagement and success. Processes described in the Systems Portfolio and data shown in figures 3.9 and 3.10 suggest that the College has had strong success in enhancing its student relationships over time through the AQIP process.

**3R3b, O.** The College provides a variety of evidence to support the vitality of its relationships with students. There are opportunities to develop qualitative measures to more directly assess these relationships, such as focus groups or interviews with key student populations, and to analyze and report on data from the CCSSE to explore the College's effectiveness in building relationships with students.

**3R4-3R6a, S.** The systems portfolio provides results derived from multiple measures in stakeholder satisfaction and building relationships. Measures include some longitudinal data the annual ICCB Survey, data from a variety of campus areas including the Career Center, advisory committees, certification results, the Junior COMPASS Math Assessment, dual credit enrollment, workshops, CAP program, the Illinois College Exposition program, and the Veteran-to-Veteran tutoring program.

**3R4-3R6b, O.** Increased participation by high school students in programs for math, English, and science and increased participation by veterans in programs targeted at veterans suggests that

these two stakeholder groups are satisfied with SWIC's programs and services. To promote continuous improvement, the College has an opportunity to collect and analyze measures of satisfaction (such surveys or focus groups), in addition to participation in services, to measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the satisfaction of these and other key stakeholders.

**3I1-3I2a, S.** The College identifies a number of recent improvements in services, such as changes in the Financial Aid Office, Disability and Access Center, New Student Orientation, and Veterans Services. SWIC's annual process of planning successfully enables the College to use data regarding student needs to set annual objectives that can inform improvement efforts.

**3I1-3I2b, O.** While the College has made numerous improvements in this category, it has opportunities to more clearly show how noted improvements resulted from a systematic process and to further refine systems and processes that address performance results for stakeholders other than students.

***AQIP Category 4: Valuing People:*** This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 4.

*SWIC anticipates employee attrition due to retirements and resignations in the coming years, and thus recognizes the need to focus on employee care and the link between professional satisfaction and employees' feeling of value to the organization. Therefore, the institution is working to align its many efforts related to valuing people into full alignment with its mission and values.*

**4P1, S.** SWIC determines job credentials and skills for non-faculty through collaboration between supervisors, vice presidents, and the Human Resources Office and for faculty through interactions between a dean, the curriculum committee, vice president, and the SWIC Faculty Union. In a commendable effort to ensure that job descriptions remain relevant, specific credentials, skills, and values required for faculty, staff, and administrative positions are reviewed annually through a systematic, collaborative process.

**4P2, S.** SWIC has robust and multi-tiered processes for ensuring that employees possess the credentials, skills, and values required for each position. Notable processes include using hiring committees that are trained by the Director of Human Resources in proper screening protocols, using chairs or program coordinators to assist with checking credentials. Especially commendable is the College's requirement to ask faculty candidates questions about student learning assessment and require a demonstration of teaching skills.

**4P3a, S.** SWIC utilizes standard recruiting, hiring and retention processes; additionally, the College matches the processes discussed in 4P2 with Board policies and affirmative action requirements. For instance, the candidate pool is examined by the Human Resources Office to determine if the pool has achieved a diverse population prior to the commencement of the screening process. SWIC strives to retain employees by providing a positive work environment and opportunities for professional training, community building, and by providing fair compensation and benefits. To improve processes, voluntary exit interviews are conducted to garner feedback about strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

**4P3b, O.** While recruitment processes are robust and consistent with standard practice, the activities listed do not necessarily articulate established processes for improving faculty retention. An opportunity exists to develop systematic processes for identifying the root-causes for turn-over (e.g., starting with exit interviews and employees surveys as already noted in the portfolio), and to establish an underlying infrastructure to systematically address issues that influence to employee retention.

**4P4a, S.** SWIC used an AQIP Action Project to design an orientation program for new employees that includes information about the College's mission and values, safety training, information technology security, and the role of AQIP at the institution.

**4P4b, O.** While the College has processes for orienting new hires, it has an opportunity to solicit feedback from supervisors in areas where people have participated in the orientation to see if supervisors have suggestions for improvements to orientation programs.

**4P5, O.** The current and expected employee turnover, as described in the Systems Portfolio, will require a concerted effort to ensure that adequate processes are in place to plan for such change. While the College initiated a new business process documentation system, effective processes for managing changes in personnel also will include proactively identifying positions where change is expected and instituting proactive strategies to plan for the change, e.g., by determining likely

candidates, needed training, and training delivery.

**4P6, S.** Organizational productivity is enhanced by employee knowledge of the SWIC Mission and Values Statement, through strategic and tactical plans, and by annual employee evaluations. Employee satisfaction in work processes is enhanced through open communication, a cooperative and positive work environment, and business processes that aid employees in doing their jobs.

**4P7, S.** SWIC has a cultural expectation of ethical behavior that is publically guided by print and online documents such as the Mission and Values Statement, policies of the Board of Trustees, Illinois statutes, the Student Handbook, and course syllabi. The College's processes regarding ethical behavior follow accepted practices for public, non-profit institutions, and these processes include all facets of institutional activities and stakeholders.

**4P8, S.** SWIC uses the Employee Development Advisory Council (EDAC) to help the institution determine training needs and design programs for employee training. EDAC members come from a cross-section of employee groups and, therefore, can offer a broad range of perspectives. In addition, annual personnel evaluations are a tool through which employee development needs are identified and specific programming is requested by supervisors. SWIC invests in employee development through concrete means such as classes on skills enhancement, programming for new faculty, faculty development funds, and training for online instructors.

**4P9, O.** SWIC efforts at training and developing employees appear to be centered on staff, and it is not clear if these efforts are assessed. SWIC has an opportunity to develop a systematic, longitudinal assessment plan for professional development efforts targeted at faculty, administrators, *and* staff to ensure that these efforts are, in fact, enabling employees to make effective contributions to the institution throughout their careers.

**4P10, S.** SWIC employs standard employee evaluation processes that occur on established cycles for faculty, staff, and administrators. The College's system for evaluating personnel centers on the competencies necessary for each employee's successful job performance and includes identification of opportunities for improvement and planning to realize these improvements.

**4P11, S.** It is encouraging that SWIC continues to recognize and reward employees despite recent budget constraints.

**4P12, O.** SWIC has the opportunity to develop comprehensive processes that proactively and systematically explore employee motivation and changes in employee motivation over time;

identify key issues related to the motivation of its faculty, staff, and administrators; and address how such issues are mitigated.

**4P13, O.** The College has an opportunity to establish comprehensive, proactive efforts for the collection of data to evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being. SWIC is encouraged to develop systematic measures of employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being which, when analyzed, could inform continuous improvement initiatives.

**4R1, O.** SWIC collects several informal measures and one formal, quantitative measure (survey) to assess effectiveness in this category. However, these measures appear to be somewhat ad hoc as opposed to part of an integrated, comprehensive process or system for measuring the institution's overall effectiveness in Valuing People and assessing those results. The College has an opportunity to develop additional measures and a more comprehensive system for measuring effectiveness in this area.

**4R2, O.** SWIC indicates that it disseminates faculty, staff, and student accomplishments through print and on-line venues, and that these actions suggest that SWIC values its people. SWIC has the opportunity create a system of formal and informal measures that are tracked, benchmarked, and analyzed over time to assure that students, faculty, and staff *believe* they are valued by the institution. The College describes several processes in the 4P section of the portfolio that could inform the development of appropriate measures (such as rates of retention among categories of employees, survey data on employee or student satisfaction in training, support, and career development). Other tools for measuring performance suggested by the Higher Learning Commission might also be considered.

**4R3, O.** SWIC states it has numerous results for employee productivity and effectiveness; however, actual results were not provided in the Systems Portfolio. It appears SWIC has no formalized system to measure and track performance results regarding employee productivity and effectiveness. Developing a formalized system of measuring productivity and effectiveness is important in furthering a culture of continuous improvement. Metrics of productivity and effectiveness might include retention figures, average length of service with the College, employee satisfaction (both generally and specific to particular training or development opportunities), or aggregated data on faculty performance from student evaluations.

**4R4, O.** SWIC has an opportunity to compare itself to other similar institutions by considering specific performance measures such as employee retention rates, results from nationally-normed

surveys (either within or external to higher education), and/or other performance measures.

Benchmarking with comparable schools regarding measures of Valuing People may provide a valuable starting point for a longitudinal, systemic, intentional assessment process that may lead to increased employee satisfaction and improved overall employee performance.

**4I1a, S.** SWIC has made concrete improvements in Valuing People through several initiatives including the business documentation process, training for new employees, and wellness programs.

**4I1b, O.** SWIC discusses the implementation of initiatives related to Valuing People, however these do not appear to arise from a systematic process of data collection and analysis.

Developing formalized processes and a system focused on valuing people and improving satisfaction, performance, and institutional effectiveness could assist with retaining a highly skilled workforce and a culture of effectiveness.

**4I2, O.** SWIC has the opportunity to describe how its culture and infrastructure help the institution to identify processes to improve and goals to achieve for Valuing People. By developing and implementing a continuous quality improvement plan and cycle focused on valuing people and improving satisfaction, performance, and institutional effectiveness, the College will begin to see the benefits of its important work in this category.

***AQIP Category 5: Leading and Communicating:*** This category addresses how the institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide planning, decision-making, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction-setting, use of data, analysis of results, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for SWIC for Category 5.

*Leading and Communicating processes and systems are supported with teamwork, communication, and transparency strategies that help align decision making with the College's mission and values and its oversight policies and requirements. The College endeavors to appropriately articulate important issues and align institutional decisions with appropriate standards for its constituents.*

**5P1, S.** The Strategic Planning Council defines and reviews the College mission and values

statement annually. The Council is cross-representational and utilizes environmental scanning tools to conduct its review.

**5P2, S.** College leaders set directions in alignment with the College's mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance through the annual strategic planning process that includes internal and external environmental scans. Integrated into this process is the administrative performance evaluation system that keys employee objectives to the strategic and tactical plans. SWIC provides a strong example of processes used by institutional leaders, specifically the Board of Trustees and College administrator responses to the 2010 economic challenges, to enable the institution to perform at a high level that is aligned with the College's mission, vision, and values.

**5P3a, S.** The needs and expectations of students are taken into account through a variety of methods, including student representation on key committees and data collected on student surveys. The initiation of an AQIP Action Project regarding communication with current/prospective students and external stakeholders is further testimony to the College's interest in further enhancing its underlying processes.

**5P3b, O.** Although SWIC accounts for the needs and expectations of students through a number of mechanisms, the College has the opportunity to articulate how this is done for employee stakeholders, as well.

**5P4, S.** SWIC continues to excel in its effort to seek future opportunities and build a strong learning environment. Leaders guide the College to seek new opportunities while focusing on students and learning through the Environmental Scanning Committee (ESC), which represents the various campus divisions and produces an annual report to guide the selection of action items. The College also identifies future opportunities by working with external individuals or firms on long-range planning projects such as a master site plan, capital improvement projects, or disaster recovery. Action items are assigned to the appropriate College agent/body for further investigation and possible implementation.

**5P5a, S.** SWIC proactively responded to the 2009 System Appraisal Feedback Report by institutionalizing and centralizing its decision-making processes. Departmental/program consensus is sought at the dean/director level, with recommendations forwarded to the President's staff for review by the respective vice presidents. Recommendations are reviewed by Trustee subcommittees and by the full Board of Trustees. Once action plan recommendations are endorsed and approved, the administration is charged with implementing them.

**5P5b, O.** While the portfolio describes efforts to improve its decision-making processes and it cites centralization efforts, it fails to address a key question posed in 5P5. SWIC has an opportunity to describe how it uses organizational entities (such as task forces, committees, or departments) to carry out approved institutional decisions in order to clarify how such decisions are implemented.

**5P6, O.** The Systems Portfolio does not clearly explain what processes are in place to ensure that data and information gathered by the College are used to inform decision-making processes. SWIC has an opportunity to explain how it uses data, information, and its own performance results in its decision-making processes.

**5P7a, S.** SWIC has a complex and extensive suite of communication tools that operate between and among the levels and divisions of the College. Additionally, SWIC is pursuing an AQIP Action Plan that examines communication for employees, students, and stakeholders with the aim of improving trust, support, and knowledge for these groups. This Action Plan is scheduled to result in a report in 2014.

**5P7b, O.** As part of its AQIP Action Plan, the College might benefit by considering how to systematically analyze the information needs of each of their stakeholders, the characteristics of various communications venues, and match the communication venues to the stakeholders' needs. If done in a manner that captures what is being communicated, why (the purpose of communicating), how (appropriate media), and who (originator, and recipient), the Action Plan might generate long-lasting improvements.

**5P8, S.** The leadership at SWIC communicates a shared mission, vision, and values primarily through the Mission and Values Statement which appears in multiple formats, such as in College publications, the College website, marketing material, and posters displayed across the campus in a comprehensive effort to share this information with employees, current and future students, stakeholders, and the public. Reinforcement occurs as the Mission and Values are used during strategic and tactical planning and as they inform institutional participation in community, state, and national organizations.

**5P9a, S.** The Systems Portfolio states that SWIC provides access to external leadership development programs for key administrators and for faculty who are in administrative positions, such as department chairs and program coordinators. Additionally, the annual personnel evaluation system is utilized as a tool to promote leadership, ideas, improvements, and to track

employee feedback on current systems. Action Projects also provide opportunities for leadership experiences and these projects develop best practices at the institution.

**5P9b, O.** While SWIC has a number of professional development and training opportunities in place, it is not clear the extent to which such training is aimed at developing and nurturing leadership abilities. Processes that explicitly support the development of leadership abilities and that explain how the College communicates and shares leadership knowledge, skills, and best practices will be instrumental for SWIC, particularly in addressing staff retention and succession issues as noted in Category 4.

**5P10, O.** The College has an opportunity to develop and implement a formalized process for planning leadership succession that includes a strategic examination of key leadership positions and functions along with consideration of the current and future needs of the College and its stakeholders. SWIC has an opportunity to look beyond promotions and salary increases, which are somewhat constrained by state and union policies, to endeavors such as formalized employee mentorship and preparation for leadership advancement in order to preserve its mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance during leadership succession.

**5R1, O.** The Systems Portfolio does not describe a formalized process used by SWIC to regularly collect and analyze performance measures for Leading and Communicating. Developing this type of process may assist the College with strategic and tactical planning and help identify other important targets for improvement to Leading and Communicating.

**5R2, S.** SWIC collected data from an SIS assessment tool and learned how employees view the effectiveness of “Mission” and “Leadership”, with results suggesting strong performance in some areas of Leading and Communicating. From the SIS tool the College also learned about arenas within Leading and Communicating for which employees would like to see improvements, and follow through on those arenas will be an important next step.

**5R3, O.** SWIC continues to be challenged to find assessment tools that it can use, and that are also used by other organizations for comparison; thus, an opportunity exists to creatively explore alternative ways to find comparison data for Leading and Communicating. An opportunity also exists to develop a process of multiple measures and instruments that would provide the institution with multiple years of performance results that could be trended, benchmarked, and potentially compared to other institutions’ results. For example, the community colleges are structured within a centralized statewide system that may provide future opportunities to compare

processes, systems, and performance results. Utilizing this network may involve choosing one or more community colleges within the State that share some similarities with SWIC. Additionally, other states within the NCA have formed AQIP groups in which data and experiences are shared that might provide the framework for a practice of realistic comparative performance results. Finally, Baldrige Award winning (non-educational) organizations in the state might provide a promising comparison group to explore.

**5I1a, S.** SWIC has taken steps to centralize and better define the process for making decisions; it has used surveys to identify improvement areas and generate College-wide discussions, and has used AQIP processes to develop Action Projects related to Leading and Communicating.

**5I1b, O.** The College has an opportunity to clarify and strengthen its processes and subsequent results to provide a clearer picture of improvements made and to assure that these improvements are assessed in a systematic manner in the spirit of continuous process improvement. Developing and implementing formalized processes and systems to identify key improvement areas that are tied to strategic and tactical planning, budgeting, and the mission, vision, and values of the institution may promote further maturation and alignment of overall efforts toward continuous improvement.

**5I2, S.** The organizational structure at SWIC, beginning at the functional/departmental level and progressing through the divisional structure to the president and Board, functions to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved results in Leading and Communicating. Additionally, SWIC provides evidence of recent improvements in Leading and Communicating that are important to the institution and its key stakeholders.

***AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations:*** This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for SWIC for Category 6.

*SWIC supports organizational operations through strategic planning and annual tactical planning that is focused on student instruction, student support, and institutional operations. Due to this alignment, SWIC reports improvements in services, equipment, and facilities.*

**6P1-6P2, S.** SWIC identifies the support service needs of its students, employees, and other key stakeholder groups using point-of-service communications, surveys and evaluations, departmental and College-wide committees, the tactical planning and AQIP processes, Program Review, and College Discussion Days.

**6P3, SS.** SWIC employs a highly participative Campus safety program that is designed, coordinated, and communicated by the Department of Physical Safety and Physical Plant in collaboration with other departments. The portfolio demonstrates an institutional commitment to safety and security through its engagement, diligence in communication, and several resulting improvements such as lighting, security access controls, and emergency call boxes.

**6P4a, S.** The College has processes in place to support institutional operations that include bi-directional communication between units, supervisors and direct reports. In addition, a policy and procedures manual guides general operations.

**6P4b, O.** Two examples offered in the portfolio suggest that Physical Plant has systematic efforts in place (work order review and Automated Records Management System reports); however, the portfolio did not articulate specific, systematic processes employed by the institution to ensure that its student support and administrative support services are directly meeting the needs they are intended to meet.

**6P5, S.** SWIC provided ample examples of its efforts to document its processes (including support processes) to encourage knowledge sharing, innovation and empowerment. Most notably, the institution should be commended for its 2012 College-wide business process documentation (BPD) project in which departments from all the campuses were involved in identifying mission critical processes, documenting the workflows and storing the relevant data in the appropriate department site in InfoShare.

**6R1, S.** SWIC collects and analyzes multiple measures of student, administrative, and institutional opportunities and best practices, as displayed in Figure 6.2. This chart includes key processes and measures for business operations, information technology, campus support operations, student and academic support, student life, and career services and employment.

**6R2, S.** SWIC provided short- term and long-term performance results for student support service processes and included evidence of recent improvements identified by multi-year data collection and analyses.

**6R3, S.** Despite tough economic times, SWIC was able to maintain and improve on key administrative support services. Most notable are information technology, physical infrastructure, record management, and public safety. The College was also able to pursue environmental sustainability goals through its recycling committee and the President's Sustainability Leadership Team.

**6R4a, S.** SWIC uses both immediate and annual feedback/review processes, as well as peer benchmarks when possible, to gather information and examine service results in order to generate future improvements to student, administrative, and institutional support services.

**6R4b, O.** The portfolio suggests an overall commitment to using measurements and outcomes to improve support services; however, an intentional, continuous assessment plan was not evident. By setting goals, selecting measures of those goals and using resulting data to inform and refine its support services, the institution will be able to document improvements and shifting priorities over time.

**6R5a, S.** SWIC's tuition and fees rank favorably among Illinois's community Colleges (slightly lower than the average). Financial aid comparisons with similarly-sized or neighboring community College reveals the College is below the mean for loans issued and above the mean for the percentage of aid received. Cleary Report data compared crime statistics between SWIC and similarly-sized community Colleges in Illinois.

**6R5b, O.** The College has an important opportunity to benchmark its other support services results (such as testing center performance, graduate placement rates, success and retention rates, etc.) with other institutions.

**6I1a, S.** SWIC highlights several recent improvements for Supporting Institutional Operations, many of them linked to improved use of technology that arose from tactical planning and AQIP planning processes.

**6I1b, O.** An opportunity exists to explicitly relate improvement initiatives and accomplishments to process assessment and evaluation. In essence, improvement of current process and systems will need to include explicit feedback loops. In these feedback loops, extensive analysis of results

informs the design and re-engineering of current processes.

**6I2, S.** The College's established Strategic/Tactical planning process and its underlying Program Review and AQIP processes are the impetus and foundation for improving support operations. Environmental scans and program reviews also yield important data to inform these efforts.

***AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness:*** This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 7.

*Reports generated by Institutional Research and Information Technology have been largely ad-hoc on an as-requested basis for its many constituents. Planning goals and strategies exist; however SWIC has not always identified quantitative strategic indicators of performance for measuring progress toward or effectiveness of those plans, goals, and strategies. SWIC is making improvements in this category and states that processes are moving from systematic to aligned.*

**7P1-7P2 a, S.** Southwestern's senior leadership and the Strategic Planning Council select data to measure performance information for supporting and improving instructional and non-instructional programs and services. These measures are in alignment with the annual strategic plan and comply with state, federal and accreditation reporting requirements. Specific tools that support planning and improvement efforts and provide tailored reports include PeopleSoft Report Manager and add-on applications such as nVision and Crystal Reports.

**7P1-2 b, O.** While SWIC has a robust infrastructure for collecting and distributing data across the institution, an opportunity exists to strengthen the *processes* for selecting and determining the need for the collection of data in a manner that better aligns with institutional and departmental needs. Assessment of needs will inevitably involve organizational entities beyond IR.

**7P3a, S.** SWIC determines the need for the collection, storage, and accessibility of data in several ways including annual and tactical planning, regular IT recommendations for

improvements in application systems, and an IR assessment of internal and external data.

**7P3b, O.** SWIC states that departments and units annually meet with the CIO to request needed data and performance information and that these requests contribute to the annual IT tactical plan. However, SWIC has the opportunity to describe how this data/information is collected, stored, and made accessible to the units that need data and performance information.

**7P4, S.** SWIC analyzes data and information related to overall performance at multiple levels that funnel to the President's staff, strategic planning process, and Board of Trustees; vice presidents engage their respective departments in the analysis process, as well. Performance data is embedded in the strategic planning process, reported to the President's staff and Trustees, and then shared with departments for posting on intranet sites and dashboards.

**7P5a, S.** SWIC requires that comparative data be used in the Program Review, annual performance report, AQIP Action Plan research, and a variety of internal reports and tasks that involve both institutional and departmental/curricular self-study. IPEDS, Campus Crime Surveys and the NCCBP are some tools that provide broad results comparisons. Additional sources are suggested by members of the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, or staff based on information obtained at conferences or meetings.

**7P5b, O.** The College has an opportunity to establish clear *a priori* criteria and methods for selecting sources of comparative data and information within and outside the higher education community.

**7P6, O.** SWIC emphasizes awareness of strategic goals and operational plans at the department and unit level, information is available in various formats, and the state requires a rigorous review of academic and support programs every five years. Nonetheless, the College has an opportunity to provide information on the formal framework and processes involved in the alignment of department and unit goals with organizational goals.

**7P7, S.** SWIC presents several processes for ensuring the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of information systems, including internal as well as external audits and mechanisms. The College is engaged in an AQIP Action Project infrastructure project to make recommendations for data management; security access levels are in place; external audits examine needs for improvements in information technology capabilities and security.

**7R1a, S.** SWIC identifies multiple measures of the performance and effectiveness of its system

for information and knowledge management that are collected and analyzed regularly. Figure 7.4 depicts the institution's key institutional measures for tracking effectiveness

**7R1b, O.** Monthly IT performance reports and other measures for tracking performance and effectiveness are in place; however, 7R1 requests specific information regarding the *regularity* with which measures are tracked. The portfolio's specificity in this regard, while strong for IT, was not specific with regard to other areas of the institution.

**7R2, O.** SWIC maintains a comprehensive list of the performance and effectiveness of its operations; however, a significant opportunity exists to ensure that the system for Measuring Effectiveness meets the institution's needs in accomplishing its mission and goals. Starting with process for identifying information needs (as noted under 7P1-3 and 7P6), this effort will need to align the data collection, storage, analysis, and distribution with informational needs across the College. Of particular importance is ensuring that the data collected also supports the feedback loops inherent in a culture of continuous improvement. Moreover, given the lengthy list of key institutional measures for tracking effectiveness shown in Figure 7.4, SWIC has an opportunity to share an extensive, related set of results on Measuring Effectiveness.

**7R3, S.**

**7I1, S.** SWIC reports a number of notable improvements in its effort to support and improve processes for measuring effectiveness. Examples include the implementation of a data warehousing and BI platform, the review of data collection strategies recommended by Complete College America, Achieving the Dream, and the addition of a second researcher to the IR staff.

**7I2, S.** SWIC provides ample evidence of a culture and infrastructure that supports the selection of specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in Measuring Effectiveness. The recent improvements in the identification of priorities for the IT division have provided a big step towards integration and alignment with strategic priorities and overall maturation of a continuous quality environment.

***AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement:*** This category examines the institution's planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping to achieve the institution's mission and vision. It examines coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; analysis of

performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **SWIC** for Category 8.

*The College has many maturing processes and systems and is a long-term AQIP institution. SWIC was a pilot institution for the NCA's Vital Focus program in 2002 and 2011 and has become proficient in large-group processes and developing Action Projects. The College indicates that its planning process is robust and fully integrates its strategic vision, priorities, and goals with tactical objectives and Action Projects. The College has a set of six strategic priorities and underlying strategic goals that are articulated into objectives that serve as the starting point for its Tactical Plan.*

**8P1, SS.** The College has an iterative process for planning which includes input from internal and external stakeholders, an environmental scanning process, and a timeline which takes into account the budget and accreditation cycles. Its Strategic Planning Council (SPC) is comprised of trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and the president and uses a formal scanning process and advice from constituent groups to develop and evaluate the strategic planning process and create a tactical plan for implementation in line with the College's mission and values. Figure 8.3 provides an overview of the College's integrated strategic planning and AQIP timelines.

**8P2, S.** SWIC selects short- and long-term strategies through the strategic planning process, which is clearly described in the portfolio. The strategic plan consists of six priorities that evolve into goals and objectives. Strategic plans (5 years) are considered long-term and tactical plans are shorter-term (1-3 years). Figure 8.5 displays current strategic priorities and strategic objectives. Strategies for achieving the goals are determined through work of the strategic planning committee, while constructing the tactical plans is done by the vice presidents in concert with their administrative staff. The strategic plan is subject to a comprehensive review every five years based on an intensive environmental scan.

**8P3a, S.** Responding to feedback from a prior portfolio, SWIC used a modified Vital Focus process during its 2011 College Discussion Day to identify key priorities, strengths, and opportunities that might support its organizational strategies. The process developed planning artifacts, several of which evolved into tangible improvements, tactical plans, and AQIP Action Plans to drive continuous process improvement.

**8P3b, O.** While the 2011 College Discussion Day clearly was beneficial to SWIC, the portfolio is not clear regarding whether the College intends to routinely use this Discussion Day process as its only means of developing key action plans, or if there are other process the College uses or

plans to use to develop key action plans in the future.

**8P4, S.** SWIC's hierarchical organizational structure tasks its divisional vice presidents with carrying out annual tactical plans, including coordination and alignment of planning, projects, and initiatives.

**8P5a, S.** Through the oversight of SPC and collaboration of the Board of Trustees, the College monitors its performance at strategic and tactical levels semi-annually, often through evaluation of quantitative measures that, as appropriate, are compared longitudinally with peer institutions.

**8P5b, O.** The College has an opportunity to more clearly delineate *processes* that lead to specific measures and performance targets. Improvements to the process can ensure that SPC obtains feedback from various College constituencies regarding the appropriateness of these measures and performance projections.

**8P6, S.** SWIC carefully monitors its current resources and anticipates future needs. This information is utilized in SWIC's planning process, which has three common mechanisms for recommending and approving strategic programs, initiatives, and Action Plans: special Board of Trustee consideration; reallocation of existing divisional funding; and the Funding for Results Program that establishes a set-aside fund for specific projects, although budget shortfalls have brought about the suspension of this approach. The College has managed resources strategically to avoid layoffs and develop a substantial fund balance.

**8P7, S.** At SWIC, risk assessment occurs through routine environmental scanning processes which are coupled to its strategic and tactical planning.

**8P8, S.** The College has an annual schedule of employee development opportunities derived from strategic, tactical initiatives, needs analysis, and AQIP projects to develop a cycle of development opportunities. The College also communicates plans, goals, and results widely.

**8R1, O.** SWIC collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative assessments contained in the annual tactical plan and in 2010 administered the Strategic Improvement Survey; however, the portfolio does not clearly describe the measures of effectiveness for planning processes that it regularly collects and analyzes. The College has an opportunity to broaden its data collection and develop benchmarks for longitudinal analysis. SWIC also has an opportunity to elaborate on who within the institution assists programs and units with analyzing data regarding project and initiative goals; this may demonstrate SWIC's commitment to supporting programs and units as

they pursue action plans, initiatives, and projects, and increase the likelihood of project success.

**8R2, S.** The College reported on three of the six strategic priorities: development of a diverse culture that embraces assessment; increase enrollment and retention; and development of collaborative practices and implement sustainability. A focus on diversity and assessment revealed positive changes in non-white ethnic student enrollment, communication skills mapping, degree and discipline mapping, and assessment cycle reports. Enrollment relative to other Illinois community Colleges is higher and growing; the retention rate is also up over 2008. Sustainability efforts have resulted in energy savings, a certificate program in energy, and “green literacy” instruction in student and employee training. Results presented indicate the College is making progress on achieving its goals.

**8R3, O.** SWIC recognizes an opportunity to develop and implement a formalized process to set projections or targets for performance of its strategies and action plans over the next 1-3 years. At this time the College has joined the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) and is building a database and peer group to allow for establishing the measurement and comparison of standardized targets; as SWIC is a new participant in the NCCBP (2012), it has an important opportunity to develop and implement a plan for using future results to grow and improve in this category.

**8R4, O.** SWIC is encouraged to continue its new endeavor to participate in and use data from the National Community College Benchmark Project to identify useful performance measures and to develop reasonable comparison groups so that the College can analyze its performance relative to other community colleges for Planning Continuous Improvement.

**8R5a, S.** SWIC provides evidence throughout the Portfolio of a robust system for Planning Continuous Improvement College-wide with the strategic use of identifying and implementing successful Action Projects as a part of the strategic and tactical planning processes. Action Project and planning effectiveness is assessed annually via summary progress reports and monthly project reports.

**8R5b, O.** SWIC has an opportunity to develop evidence regarding the effectiveness of its continuous planning improvement processes. Evidence should go beyond the effectiveness of the resulting plan (currently reported in figure 8.8), to include metrics for evaluating the planning processes for continuous improvement.

**8I1, S.** SWIC reported several improvements arising from its efforts to plan for an examine

continuous improvement, including the replacement of an external member on the Strategic Planning Council with two trustees, commitment to large group processes, alignment of assessing student learning outcomes to the budget planning process, and incorporation of planning for information technology with the strategic and tactical planning processes.

**8I2a, S.** SWIC provides evidence of a culture and infrastructure that supports the selection of specific processes to improve and set targets for improved performance results in Planning Continuous Improvement. This evidence includes both internal and external processes and initiatives that support an environment of inclusiveness, collaboration, assessment, and strategic planning that is tied to the College's mission and goals.

**8I2b, O.** It is evident that SWIC has made significant progress in creating a culture of continuous process improvement, which has helped identify specific processes for improvement. Results indicate that SWIC is measuring and, in most cases, making progress on its strategic priorities and action projects; however, to better evaluate planning effectiveness, results need to be provided within the context of predetermined targets. Analysis of gaps between targets and results can improve the planning processes by helping the institution to identify areas for improvement.

***AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships:*** This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for SWIC for Category 9.

*SWIC has stable, consciously managed processes to build relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Its primary objectives include adult education, dual credit and enrollment, veterans' services, and disability and access center. The longevity and stability of several of these relationships is evidence of the importance and value they have for both the College and the community.*

**9P1a, S.** SWIC creates, prioritizes, and builds relationships with educational and other organizations from which it receives students in alignment with its institutional priorities to increase enrollment and collaborate with communities and educational institutions. Relationship priorities have led to collaborations with the military, adult basic education, high schools,

workforce agencies, and municipalities. The Police Academic and Fire Science programs on campus are evidence of distinctive relationships with municipalities, counties, and the state.

**9P1b, O.** It is evident that SWIC invested heavily in cultivating relationships through a variety of means; however, an important opportunity exists to further define the processes for creating and prioritizing these relationships.

**9P2, S.** SWIC uses multiple processes to create, prioritize, and build relationships with educational institutions and employers that depend on its students and graduates. Relationships are prioritized based on feedback from partners, and identified through the strategic planning process. The College maintains open communication with other Colleges and universities via articulation agreements and hosts both a Transfer Fair and a Baccalaureate Fair. Relationships with businesses are enhanced through advisory committees, job fairs, and internships for students.

**9P3a, S.** SWIC employs multiple processes for creating, prioritizing, and building relationships with organizations that provide services to its students. Relationships that provide services to serve a broad range of students, serve a need identified by external mandates, or enhance the mission and values of the College are given priority. Relationships are often built or maintained through College employees' membership in service organizations, and collaborations with community partners.

**9P3b, O.** The College has an opportunity to improve *processes* by which it creates, builds, and maintains relationships with organizations that serve students by clearly articulating who is responsible for prioritizing these relationships and explaining *how* the relationships were created.

**9P4, S.** SWIC develops and prioritizes relationships with external organizations supplying materials and services by complying with state and federal purchasing requirements and reviewing its professional services contracts on a regular basis. Southwestern's Board of Trustees and Business Office created Board policies and procedures that identify purchasing procedures and provide standard bidding processes.

**9P5a, S.** SWIC creates, prioritizes, and builds relationships with education associations, external agencies, consortia partners, and the general community using formal and informal processes. Partnerships are evaluated according to goals in the College's Strategic Plan along with its benefit to the institution. The College's relationship building efforts are maintained via public information and marketing efforts throughout the district. Examples of these relationships include advisory committees, regional leadership organizations, professional organizations, and the

state's Green Economic Network.

**9P5b, O.** An opportunity exists to further define the *processes* for creating and prioritizing relationships with external stakeholders, defining processes will allow SWIC to strategically focus its efforts related to cultivating relationships.

**9P6, S.** The College ensures that partnership relationships are meeting the varying needs of those involved through setting clear expectations, ongoing feedback and assessment, and the annual environmental scanning process and systematic review of all programs and services. [S:5, O:2]

**9P7, O.** The portfolio provided several examples of efforts to build relationships among and between units internally; however, many of these activities were orchestrated in a top-down fashion and appear to be designed to share information, rather than to build relationships and support collaboration. SWIC has the opportunity to describe the processes by which units and departments develop collaborative relationships and how they communicate across units/departments to achieve important goals.

**9R1-2, S.** The College has several measures of collaborative relationships that it collects, and offered several data points to support the assertion that its relationships are beneficial. The Systems Portfolio provides a list of relationships, measures, and results of external collaborative relationships through tables in Figures 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5. The list is extensive and shows that the College purposefully continues to maintain and cultivate these relationships. The purpose and measures of success are identified and a number of results have been detailed in these sections.

**9R1, O.** For *internal* collaborations, SWIC has an opportunity to report results for measures of the program/activity quality in order to determine the success of those relationships and provide institutional leaders with information on which to base informed decisions about supporting and sustaining these internal relationships. The College has additional opportunities to set clear, measurable criteria by which it can systematically assess the effectiveness of its partner relationships, the degree to which they are meeting the varying needs of those involved, and to provide documentation related to its processes for doing so.

**9R3a, S.** The College acknowledges difficulties in obtaining relevant comparative evidence due to the unique nature of many of its collaborations. It has made an effort to develop some comparative measures in some areas, such as enrollment in transfer, services to veterans, dual credit enrollment, gifts and scholarships. SWIC performed well in comparison with peer institutions and in comparison to its historical performance (e.g., achieving 8.7% growth in dual

credit students).

**9R3b, O.** SWIC provides some examples of comparisons for its performance results with other higher education institutions; however, there is an opportunity to develop *processes* for identifying key performance measures that can be tracked, benchmarked, and analyzed over time. Building and implementing these processes will allow the College to identify best practices, enhance collaborative relationships, and institutionalize continuous quality improvement in this area.

**9I1a, S.** SWIC provides evidence of multiple recent improvements throughout its responses in this category and also reports significant successes in procuring external funding such as TRIO Student Services, Title III, and TAACCT to support improved processes and performance results for Building Collaborative Relationships. The protocol for approval of submission of applications through the Grants Administration office provides a systematic process for achieving these results.

**9I1b, O.** The College has an important opportunity to articulate and adhere to clear, systematic and comprehensive processes and to assess the health of its relationships regularly. The College has made numerous improvements in this category while recognizing that its processes with external partners provide opportunities for further development.

**9I2, S.** Southwestern's institutional priorities to engage, partner, and collaborate with communities and educational organizations has encouraged development and maturation of a culture and infrastructure to select processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in Building Collaborative Relationships. Processes and systems are in place that provide for regular systemic evaluation of outcomes and continual improvement. The College has shown the ability to identify and pursue opportunities and recognizes where new opportunities exist.

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## ACCREDITATION ISSUES SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the core components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and core components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems

Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

No accreditation issues noted by the team.

Criterion 1: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	1A	1B	1C	1D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x	x	
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 2: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x	x	x
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 3: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x	x	x
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x		
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 5: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	x	x	x	x	
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					

### Team consensus Accreditation Evidence Statement Summaries

#### AQIP Category 1

**HLC Core Component 1.C. *The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P4,1P10):** The College presents evidence of understanding the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society through multiple processes that include the Program Review process and achieving proficiency credits for unique educational, work, and life experiences. Student academic requirements include human relations courses, courses with learning components with a

citizenship core competency, service learning components in courses, and multicultural programming.

The College provides support for diverse groups through extensive veterans' services, a Minority Transfer and Multicultural Student Services Center, the Disability and Access Center, and a Plus 50 Committee.

The College also participated in the Illinois Gender Outcomes Project to tailor strategies for CTE programs.

**HLC Core Component 2.B. *The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P6):** The College provides evidence that information is available for students and the public concerning its programs, requirements, employees, costs, control, and accreditation relationships. The institution utilizes a wide variety of methods to communicate this information including mail, email, a student portal, student orientations, high school visit days, posters, and the College's website. College materials are reviewed by the marketing staff to ensure that the most current academic requirements are offered in publications shared with students and communities. Faculty have developed a standard course syllabus designed to ensure the communication of course, program and institutional requirements.

**HLC Core Component 2.D *The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P11):** The College provides evidence of a commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning with expectations for effective learning that are defined, documented, and communicated by faculty; statements on academic freedom identified in Board Policy, faculty collective bargaining agreements, and the Instructional Guidelines Manual; and communication of academic honesty and integrity expectations in course syllabi, the student handbook, and the Instructional Guidelines Manual.

**HLC Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P11):** The College provides evidence it ensures that employees and students acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly through institutional, programmatic and classroom learning objectives defined in performance based terms; communication of institutional core competencies and program specific competencies; common rubrics; assessment findings that are broadly reported; and feedback from advisory committees and transfer institutions.

**HLC Core Component 3.A. *The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P4, 1P12):** The College provides evidence that its degree programs are appropriate to higher education through processes that provide feedback from employers, graduates, and transfer institutions in the development of the programmatic and core learning objectives, program review, program advisory committees, graduate surveys, and the development of educational pathways. Faculty and administrators annually review this feedback along with the effectiveness of the course delivery system. Student feedback is also reviewed and evaluated in order to make improvements in classroom technology.

**HLC Core Component 3.B. *The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P1, 1P2):** The College provides evidence that demonstrates the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs through extensive processes that provide oversight and broad involvement with the development, assessment, and communication of core competencies, program specific learning objectives and outcomes, educational goals, and programmatic mission statements.

**HLC Core Component 3.D. *The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P7, 1P15):** The College provides sufficient evidence that it provides support for student learning and effective teaching through the Counseling Center, Career Activities and Employment Center, Personal Advocate Linking Services, Minority Transfer and Multicultural Student Services Center, and the Disability and Access Center. Academic support includes tutoring, an early alert system, library services, and supportive technology. A faculty development program supports faculty needs and addresses faculty issues and concerns about teaching and learning.

**HLC Core Component 3.E. *The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P16):** The College provides evidence of an enriched educational environment by currently expanding its efforts to include student learning assessments that are linked to the College's core competencies and adding a representative from support services to the OA Steering Committee. The Success Centers provide tutoring, workshops, computer access and staff work with academic departments

and faculty to provide relevant assistance to students. Many courses offer service learning opportunities and the OA Coordinator meets with the Student Leadership Team to share information.

**HLC Core Component 4.A. *The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P4, 1P13):** The College provides evidence of responsibility for the quality of its educational programs through the Program Review process, program specific accreditation requirements, consistent and regular assessment at all levels, a review of transfer courses every five years and evaluation by the Illinois Articulation Initiative, the maintenance of articulation agreements, and training workshops for new and adjunct faculty on assessment tools.

**HLC Core Component 4.B. *The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.***

**Summary of Evidence (1P2, 1P18):** The College provides evidence of a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning through Advisory Committees, Assessment Cycle reports, Program Review, the OA Forum and Steering Committee, Outcomes Assessment Committee, Competency Skill and General Education Committees, the Disciplines Committee and the use of standardized College-wide assessment tools.

### **AQIP Category 3**

**HLC Core Component 1.D. *The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.***

**Summary of Evidence (3P3, 3P5):** The College provides evidence of its commitment to the public good through the utilization of advisory boards, collaborations, community outreach and involvement, assessment processes, the Strategic Planning and the environmental scanning process to identify the changing needs of stakeholders. The College also provides services and staffing to assist and educate specific subgroups such as veterans, minorities, those with special needs, and seniors.

**HLC Core Component 4.C. *The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.***

**Summary of Evidence (3P1):** The College provides evidence of a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and

certificate programs through collecting and analyzing data at all levels to develop strategies; addressing gaps identified via nationally normed surveys; College-wide forums held to identify specific student needs; program evaluation; and the establishment of the Campus Behavioral Intervention/Threat Assessment Team.

#### **AQIP Category 4**

**HLC Core Component 2.A** *The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.*

**Summary of Evidence (4P7):** The College provides evidence that it operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. The Board of Trustees' Policy Manual contains an ethics statement requiring ethical behavior; the College's Mission and Values Statement supports ethical practice; conflict of interest declarations are signed annually; an external ethics officer oversees all required policies; the Student Handbook includes guidelines for appropriate and ethical behavior; all senior faculty, department chairs, and senior administrators complete an annual Statement of Economic Interest with the county clerk; the College employees regular operational audits and inspections from external parties; and financial endeavors are monitored in accordance with best practices.

**HLC Core Component 2.E.** *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

**Summary of Evidence (4P7):** The College provides evidence that it ensures employees and students acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly through publishing academic honesty and integrity standards in the Student Handbook; College syllabi reinforcement of ethical practices; an Institutional Research Board; an annual IT security audit; and the employment of an external ethics officer.

**HLC Core Component 3.C.** *The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.*

**Summary of Evidence (4P2, 4P10):** The College has provided evidence that it has the employees needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services through the review of all vacancies; requirement that credentials must be job-related, appropriate to the position, and in alignment with similar jobs; supervisor requested training for employees; Success Strategies for New Faculty sessions; an established

tenure-track evaluation system; annual administrative evaluations; and multi-dimensional faculty performance reviews.

**AQIP Category 5:**

**HLC Core Component 1A. *The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.***

**Summary of Evidence (5P1, 5P2):** The College provides evidence that its mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations by institutional values corresponding to its academic programs, student support services and enrollment profile; the College's mission and values serve as core objectives to be met in the annual Strategic Plan; the Strategic Planning Council monitoring and proposing changes to the mission and values; educational purposes and goals that reflect the institution's mission; and an administrative performance evaluation system that requires annual employee objectives keyed to the strategic and tactical plans.

**HLC Core Component 1B. *The mission is articulated publicly.***

**Summary of Evidence (5P3, 5P8):** The College provides evidence that its mission is articulated publicly through listing the mission and values in the catalog, publications, online, on posters, and as core objectives in the annual strategic plan.

**HLC Core Component 2C. *The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.***

**Summary of Evidence (5P2):** The College provides indirect evidence that its governing board is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity through Board policy that applies to trustees and administrators that ensures the independence both individually and collectively and the Board of Trustees is constituted as a division of local government and is comprised of elected representatives.

**HLC Core Component 5B. *The Institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.***

**Summary of Evidence (5P5, 5P9):** The College provides evidence that the institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable mission fulfillment through a system of consensus-based decision making; AQIP Action Project teams

play a role in decision-making; the Board of Trustees uses a sub-committee process for meeting key stakeholders in advance of Board meetings; leadership development programs; and faculty members participating in institutional leadership roles.

**HLC Core Component 5 C. *The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.***

**Summary of Evidence (5P2, 5P6):** The College provides evidence that it engages in systematic and integrated planning through the alignment of employee annual objectives with strategic and tactical planning; a proactive strategic planning process that includes environmental scanning; routinely monitored key data elements; and a system of vice presidents accepting specific issues for action and follow-up.

**AQIP Category 7**

**HLC Core Component 5.D. *The institution works systematically to improve its performance.***

**Summary of Evidence (7P2, 7P4):** The College provides evidence that it works systematically to improve its performance through the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment processes; periodic self-assessment using nationally-normed assessment tools; Business Intelligence (BI) function to enhance management, analysis, and distribution of data and performance information; institutional performance information that is collected via the ICCB Program Review, IBHE Performance Report, and ICCB Salary Survey; and review and analysis of data and reports by the Strategic Planning Council and the Board's Planning and Policy Committee.

**AQIP Category 8:**

**HLC Core Component 5.A. *The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.***

**Summary of Evidence (8P6):** The College provides evidence that its resource base supports its current programming and plans for maintaining and strengthening quality in the future through a planning process that provides for three separate mechanisms that align the College's strategic priorities with the allocation of resources; a process of reallocation of existing funding for priority projects and a Funding for Results Program that relies on set-aside funds; long-term master and facility planning that allows for building and renovation projects; and revenue is stable, expenditures are under budget, and the College has built an audited fund balance to safeguard its continued ability to fulfill its mission.

*Team consensus Accreditation Evidence Statements*

**1P1 & 1P2.** HLC Core Component *3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.*

**1P1.** Oversight for development of the core competencies is determined and validated through a process led by the full-time faculty Outcomes Assessment Coordinator and the General Education Committee.

**1P1.** Full-time faculty identified core competency categories for all degree graduates based on feedback from key stakeholders.

**1P1.** Core competencies are communicated to the general public through the College website and in its catalog.

**1P1.** Curriculum maps, identifying courses which address each core competency, assist faculty, OA leadership and administration in confirming the consistency in which students are engaged in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; mastering modes of inquiry; and through the skill of personal accountability, developing the ability to adapt to a changing environment.

**1P2.** Program specific learning objectives are developed by faculty with input from all key stakeholders.

**1P2.** Program coordinators, department chairs, faculty committees, and advisory committees provide leadership in working with faculty in developing program/discipline mission statements, educational goals, program and course-specific competencies, curriculum maps, and the methods and measures that assess student learning.

**1P2.** All occupational programs have advisory committees comprised of employers, practitioners, graduates, students, and faculty.

**1P2.** Advisory committees meet biannually to discuss the quality, cost and needs of specific programs.

**1P2.** Advisory committee members review student learning outcomes and are involved in determining benchmarks of performance and in making recommendations regarding improvements.

**1P2.** Faculty used data collected from panel discussions with employers, recent graduates, and transfer institutions to identify program expectations and to assist in identifying goals for the AA/AS degrees.

**1P2.** Guidelines for the development of programmatic student learning assessment are provided by the OA Disciplines Committee.

**1P2.** The Disciplines Committee reviews all programmatic mission statements, educational goals, assessment cycle reports, curriculum maps, and student learning action reports.

**1P2 & 1P18.** HLC Core Component *4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.*

**1P2.** Advisory Committees meet biannually to discuss the quality, cost and needs of programs.

**1P2.** Committee members review student learning outcomes and are involved in determining benchmarks of performance and in making recommendations regarding improvements.

**1P2.** Assessment Cycle reports identify when program specific learning objectives are assessed and ensure continuity of assessment.

**1P2.** Reports of student learning as well as recommended changes are submitted to the Disciplines committee and are included in the Program Review process.

**1P2.** Programs are reviewed once within a five year period and student learning is a major component of the review process.

**1P2.** The OA Forum was created to facilitate dialogue among faculty and administration regarding student learning outcomes.

**1P2.** During the OA Forum, faculty who recently completed the Program Review process are invited to present their objectives, findings and reported changes. After the presentation, feedback is shared regarding the level at which the program has been assessed, based on a rubric.

**1P18.** The OA steering committee is responsible for the oversight and evaluation of the outcomes assessment committees and the outcomes assessment coordinator.

**1P18.** The OA steering committee conducts a self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of outcomes assessment and annually identifies goals related to the assessment of student learning.

**1P18.** The steering committee is comparing the College's current self-assessment process to an Institutional Self-Assessment Tool for Excellent Practice in Student Learning Outcomes Assessment document developed by the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability.

**1P18.** The outcomes assessment committees have determined the assessment process for exiting degree seeking students.

**1P18.** The Competency Skill and/or General Education Committees and Institutional Research staff have determined the methods to collect data from stratified and/or cluster samplings of student in order to assess the learning objectives for communication skills, reasoning skills, and citizenship.

**1P18.** College-wide assessment tools have been developed by the Competency Skill committees and are piloted the semester prior to full implementation.

**1P18.** The Outcomes Assessment Leadership sponsor workshops on the types of assessment tools that can be utilized and encourage the use of direct and indirect methods of assessment.

**1P18.** The Disciplines Committee provides recommendations about assessment to the faculty as a whole and specifically targets program coordinators and chairs for workshops that will help them develop their mission, goals, and assessment tools, in addition to learning how to utilize and interpret data collected.

**1P18.** A timeline has been established by the General Education Outcomes Assessment Committee to ensure that all core competencies are assessed College-wide at regular intervals.

**1P4 & 1P10.** HLC Core Component *1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.*

**1P4.** The diversity of the student population is a component of the Program Review process and the College requires all degree seeking student to complete a minimum of one human relations course to foster their understanding of diversity.

**1P4.** Students develop their appreciation and knowledge of appropriate behaviors for interacting in a diverse society through courses which address learning components of the Citizenship core competency.

**1P4.** The College has a process for acknowledging learning which occurs from a variety of unique educational, work, and life experiences and students can earn proficiency credit through demonstration of that knowledge or skills.

**1P10.** The College established a veterans' services area that serves veterans and their dependents.

**1P10.** The Minority Transfer and Multicultural Student Services Center provides students with support for academic success and successful College transfer along with multicultural programming.

**1P10.** The Disability and Access Center offers special population students a range of support services to assist in their College learning experiences.

**1P10.** The College participated in the Illinois Gender Outcomes Project (i-Go) to tailor strategies for CTE programs that would most likely respond to intervention. This process provided information to improve both non-traditional participants and completers.

**1P10.** The College established a Plus 50 Committee to facilitate the enhancement of services to current and prospective students over 50 years of age.

**1P4 & 1P12.** HLC Core Component *3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.*

**1P4.** Input was gathered from employers, graduates, and transfer institutions in the development of the programmatic and core learning objectives.

**1P4.** Program Review ensures regular assessment of the quality, cost and need of each program and department and fosters the integrated analysis of market place needs, student performance, and identified learning goals.

**1P4.** The occupational programs collect graduate and/or employer surveys 6 to 12 months after graduation.

**1P4.** Program Advisory committees provide feedback regarding student performance in the workplace.

**1P4.** Graduate surveys are conducted 6 months after graduation to determine how well students were prepared for successful transfer.

**1P4.** Faculty annually review this feedback from committees and surveys to respond to changing career/employment and transfer needs.

**1P12.** The effectiveness of the course delivery system is evaluated through student course enrollment patterns, student focus groups and surveys, the online evaluation of online courses, environmental scanning activities, course and program articulations, and feedback from advisory committees and employers.

**1P12.** Educational pathways have been developed to facilitate students' transition from high school to College.

**1P12.** Feedback from students prompted the College to enhance classroom technology.

**1P4 & 1P13.** HLC Core Component *4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.*

**1P4.** Program Review ensures regular assessment of the quality, cost and need of each program, department and discipline, fosters the integrated analysis of market place needs, student performance and identifies learning goals.

**1P4.** The quality of many occupational programs is validated through program specific accreditation requirements or adherence regulation by an oversight board or association.

**1P13.** Consistent and regular assessment at each level assists in ensuring that courses and programs are effective and up-to-date.

**1P13.** The assessment and Program Review processes require faculty to continually review and evaluate course and program/degree/discipline objectives as well as teaching methodologies.

**1P13.** Transfer courses are reviewed every five years to ensure continued quality and expected outcomes.

**1P13.** Many transfer courses have been evaluated as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI).

**1P13.** Panels of faculty have agreed upon courses that will transfer between the IAI institutions and be accepted for general education and/or credit in the major.

**1P13.** The College maintains articulation agreements for courses that are not included in IAI agreements.

**1P13.** The College offers training workshops for new and adjunct faculty to ensure they are aware of and competent in the utilization of assessment tools.

**1P13.** The College collects assessment data from a broad range of external constituents to assist in assuring that programs and courses are effective.

**1P13.** The OA Coordinator conducts a syllabi survey every other year to assist coordinators/department chairs in validating that when multiple sections are taught by multiple instructors, all the involved faculty are teaching to the same course learning objectives and description.

**1P6.** HLC Core Component **2.B.** *The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.*

**1P6.** The College's catalog contains academic information for current and prospective students and is available in hard copy and electronically.

**1P6.** Students are able to access electronically by course the specific requirements and prerequisites for course enrollment along with textbook requirements.

**1P6.** All students participating in the incoming assessment process for course placement in English and math receive a College catalog and meet with a counselor.

**1P6.** The College offers brochures, flyers, pamphlet and other documents that reflect the requirements and provisions found in the catalog.

**1P6.** Southwestern's marketing staff ensures that the most current academic requirements are offered in the publications shared with students and communities.

**1P6.** The new student orientation process has been expanded to include an online venue that complements the in-person sessions.

**1P6.** The student portal system and College website provide information tools to facilitate student access to relevant information and services.

**1P6.** High School visit days and weekly tours connect students to College representatives and services.

**1P6.** Faculty have developed a standard course syllabus designed to ensure the communication of course, program and institutional requirements.

**1P6.** Posters identifying the core competencies/student learning objectives are posted in every classroom.

**1P7 & 1P15.** HLC Core Component **3.D. *The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.***

**1P7.** The Counseling Center provides services at each campus and at many extension center sites to support student learning.

**1P7.** Other services are provided through the Career Activities and Employment Center, Personal Advocate Linking Services, Minority Transfer and Multicultural Student Services Center, and the Disability and Access Center.

**1P7.** Counseling Center services are both educational and therapeutic and are designed to foster academic, personal, and career success.

**1P7.** Faculty counselors help students make educational and career decisions compatible with their educational goals.

**1P7.** The Counseling Center provides workshops on career assessment and decision-making.

**1P7.** The Career Activities and Employment Center offers services in job search, career assessment, and career exploration.

**1P15.** The Marketing Department conducts periodic focus groups and College departments conduct nationally normed surveys to collect information on specific student related concerns.

**1P15.** The College activities director regularly meets with student leadership and brings expressed needs forward.

**1P15.** The Success Centers use multiple sources to determine the academic support services needed for students.

**1P15.** The Success Centers offer tutoring and an early alert system.

**1P15.** Library learning support needs are determined by a variety of measures used to track student and faculty use of library services.

**1P15.** Faculty needs are addressed through support staff availability at the divisional level and an investment in supportive technology.

**1P15.** A faculty development program supports faculty needs and addresses faculty issues and concerns as they impact teaching and learning.

**1P15.** A faculty technology center provides assistance in course design and technology applications.

**1P11.** HLC Core Component **2.D** *The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.*

**1P11.** Expectations for effective learning are defined, documented, and communicated by the faculty with administrative support.

**1P11.** The institution's statements on academic freedom are identified in both Board Policy and in faculty collective bargaining agreements.

**1P11.** Academic freedom statements are communicated to part-time faculty through the Instructional Guidelines Manual.

**1P11.** The College communicates its expectations for academic honesty and integrity through statements on course syllabi, in the student handbook, and in the Instructional Guidelines Manual.

**1P11.** HLC Core Component **2.E.** *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

**1P11.** Institutional, programmatic and classroom learning objectives are defined in performance based terms relative to students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes/beliefs.

**1P11.** Institutional core competencies and program specific competencies are documented and communicated through the College website and /or in student programmatic handbooks.

**1P11.** Classroom learning expectations are identified through course syllabi.

**1P11.** Assessment cycle reports identify the links between the course objectives and the programmatic learning objectives.

**1P11.** Common rubrics are useful in communicating expectations of student performance for the core competencies.

**1P11.** Assessment findings are documented and reported to stakeholders as portions of internal and external Program Review requirements, advising efforts and curricular development activities.

**1P11.** Faculty members report assessment findings to the Curriculum Committee as they propose changes to courses, programs, and degrees.

**1P11.** Advisory committees are informed of assessment findings and provide feedback to the occupational faculty.

**1P11.** Transfer program faculty receive feedback from senior institutions as they report the performance of graduates.

**1P16.** HLC Core Component *3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.*

**1P16.** The OA steering committee has added a representative from support services to help broaden its perspective on the assessment of student learning.

**1P16.** The College is in the process of expanding its efforts to include student learning assessments that are linked to the College's core competencies.

**1P16.** Success Centers supplement and enhance classroom instruction and help students to become independent and active learners.

**1P16.** The Success Centers support the mission of the College by fostering the individual educational growth of students through tutoring, workshops, and computer access.

**1P16.** Success Center staff and specialists work with academic departments and instructors to assure that assistance is appropriate, relevant, and effective.

**1P16.** The Success Centers participate in the Outcomes Assessment program.

**1P16.** College activities contribute to the range of student learning experiences.

**1P16.** Many courses offer service learning opportunities that tie community service with curricular objectives and a separate service learning course has been created for students who wish to focus on community service.

**1P16.** The OA Coordinator meets with the Student Leadership Team to provide assessment updates and get student input.

**1P16.** The Student Leadership Team includes current students who lead the various clubs and organizations throughout the College.

**3P1.** HLC Core Component *4.C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.*

**3P1.** Data is analyzed at departmental and divisional levels as well as by campus-wide groups.

**3P1.** Students are assisted in retention through addressing gaps identified through the 2010 CCSSE.

**3P1.** Measures implemented to enhance student success are determined through surveys, forums, focus groups, and assessments.

**3P1.** College wide forums are held to identify specific student needs. Key recommendations from this process become Action Projects.

**3P1.** Gaps in service identified through the 2010 CCSSE were identified and addressed resulting in a significant commitment to improving student services and access to technology.

**3P1.** Student needs related to student engagement are determined through individual program evaluations, focus group discussions, and district wide surveys.

**3P1.** The Campus Behavioral Intervention/Threat Assessment Team was established in response to safety concerns on campus.

**3P1.** Data and information received are analyzed at department and division levels as well as in several cross-functional teams such as the Instructional Leadership, Campus Community, and Operational Leadership Teams which include representatives from each instructional division, College campus, and student services area. From these venues, departmental, divisional, and program objectives and associated tactical plans are developed as part of the annual strategic planning process.

**3P1.** CCSSE data on specific student service items were compared to item summary data and norms from peer Colleges as well as that of all Colleges. Improvements in student satisfaction and engagement were noted in most areas (Figure 3.2).

**3P3 & 3P5. HLC Core Component 1.D. *The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.***

**3P3.** The College utilizes advisory boards, collaborations with other organizations, meetings, regular communication, and an environmental scanning process to identify changing needs of students and other stakeholder groups.

**3P3.** Stakeholders' requirements are determined both formally and informally based upon what is required for institutional and departmental accountability and reporting.

**3P3.** SWIC has the largest enrollment of veterans of any public College or university in Illinois and the College has expanded its services to meet the needs of this group.

**3P3.** In 2009, the College implemented the e2campus emergency notification system.

**3P5.** SWIC uses data from its strategic planning process, assessment processes, community outreach, and community involvement activities to identify new student and stakeholder groups.

**3P5.** The College's response to feedback from students and other stakeholder groups has regularly included development of action plans and processes to improve identified shortfalls in performance.

**4P2 & 4P10 HLC Core Component 3.C. *The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.***

**4P2.** Every vacancy is reviewed to determine if it needs to be filled in order to keep staffing levels both in and out of the classroom sufficient to meet the needs of the institution.

**4P2.** Credentials must be job-related, appropriate to the position and in alignment with other similar jobs.

**4P2.** To ensure that employees possess skills necessary for success post-hire, supervisors request training from the HRO for staff members as needed.

**4P2.** When employees leave, positions are reviewed for accuracy and need.

**4P2.** New faculty members are encouraged to attend three Success Strategies for New Faculty sessions where they are acquainted with the policies and procedures, are introduced to student support programs available to enhance students' learning, and learn about and discuss classroom management and teaching techniques.

**4P10.** For the tenure-track faculty the evaluation process includes a planning conference and two evaluation conferences and recommendations for promotion are based on student evaluations, peer evaluations, supervisor evaluations and classroom observations.

**4P10.** Administrators are evaluated annually with emphasis on their effectiveness in performing job duties and on their progress toward tactical objectives set the previous year.

**4P10.** Faculty performance reviews are multi-dimensional, including work by the employee, supervisor,

and the tenure committee.

**4P7.** HLC Core Component *2.A The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.*

**4P7.** There is an ethics statement in the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual that requires ethical behavior as a condition of employment.

**4P7.** As a unit of local government, the College is required to comply with Illinois statutes to assure the ethical behavior of public employees and provide a system for compliance.

**4P7.** It is understood that students may face expulsion and faculty may face termination for violations of academic honesty and integrity standards.

**4P7.** The College's Mission and Values Statement and formal Board Policy support ethical practice.

**4P7.** Conflict of Interest declarations are signed annually.

**4P7.** The College has adopted all required policies and has appointed an external ethics officer to oversee these efforts.

**4P7.** The College publishes a Student Handbook that includes guidelines for appropriate and ethical behavior for students in and outside of the classroom.

**4P7.** All senior faculty, department chairs, and senior administrators complete an annual Statement of Economic Interest with the county clerk.

**4P7.** Operational audits and inspections from external parties provide opportunities to determine if existing practices need improvement.

**4P7.** Workers compensation audits and reports address work conditions; insurance liability inspections determine if safety issues are properly addressed.

**4P7.** Financial endeavors are monitored to ensure that processes are in accordance with best practices.

**4P7.** Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component *2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

**4P7.** College syllabi reinforce ethical practices at the College.

**4P7.** The SWIC faculty created an Institutional Research Board (IRB). It is empowered to set standards and expectations and to exert oversight to research and scholarly processes that impact faculty, staff, and students.

**4P7.** The Student Handbook clearly articulates ethical and honest expectations in the academic environment.

**4P7.** The College conducts an annual IT security audit to review the information security controls and

ensure that “need to know” and “least privilege” principles are relative to each person’s job function.

**4P7.** The College employs an external ethics officer to oversee compliance.

**5P1 & 5P2.** HLC Core Component *1.A The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.*

**5P1.** Institutional understanding is aided because the institution’s values correspond to the institution’s academic programs, student support services and enrollment profile.

**5P1.** The College’s mission and values serve as core objectives to be met in the College’s annual Strategic Plan.

**5P1.** The Strategic Planning Council (SPC), which includes diverse representation including trustees, administrators, faculty and staff, has responsibility for monitoring and proposing changes to the College mission and values statement annually using environmental scanning tools.

**5P1.** Every program of study at SWIC has educational purposes and goals that reflect the institution’s mission. The College is dedicated to a continuous process of assessing and improving student learning.

**5P2.** The administrative performance evaluation system that requires annual employee objectives that are keyed to the strategic and tactical plans.

**5P2 & 5P6.** HLC Core Component *5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.*

**5P2.** The administrative performance evaluation system requires that annual objectives are aligned with strategic and tactical plans.

**5P2.** The Strategic Plan is a proactive system that scans internal and external environments, and seeks to integrate leadership and community.

**5P2.** Alignment of the mission and values of the College to the strategic plan, tactical plans, annual employee reviews and other processes provide unified direction, employee commitment and a robust system of annual review.

**5P6.** Key data elements are routinely monitored and addressed by the president and her staff in weekly meetings.

**5P6.** Vice presidents accept specific issues for action and follow-up discussion.

**5P6.** As necessary, working groups are developed, or issues are referred to standing committees.

**5P2.** HLC Core Component *2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.*

**5P2.** SWIC’s Board of Trustees is constituted as a division of local government and is comprised of elected representation from seven sub-districts..., which reinforces the independence both individually

and collectively and enables them to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and the diverse communities it serves.

**5P2.** Board policy that applies to trustees and administrators ensures both groups' independence from undue influence on the part of College donors (the SWIC Foundation is a separate 501-C3 entity), elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.

**5P2.** Every senior administrator and faculty member is also required to annually file a statement of economic interests report with the St. Clair County Clerk.

**5P3 & 5P8.** HLC Core Component *1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.*

**5P1.** The College catalog lists the Mission and Values Statement including a footnote on the link between programs and goals with the mission.

**5P1.** The College's mission and values serve as core objectives in the annual strategic plan.

**5P8.** The Mission and Values Statements are publically available on paper and on-line institutional documents, and in the College Catalog and on posters displayed across campus.

**5P8.** The Mission and Values Statements are publicly available along with all planning documents and key publications.

**5P8.** The annual strategic plan is kept current and strategies and outcomes help explain the emphasis on aspects of the College mission.

**5P5 & 5P9.** HLC Core Component *5.B. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.*

**5P5.** The process of making decisions at SWIC involves reaching consensus at the divisional/departmental level, and then recommendations are taken by the respective deans/directors to their vice president and the president, with final approval provided by the Board of Trustees.

**5P5.** AQIP Action Project teams play a key role in institutional decision making.

**5P5.** The Board of Trustees utilizes a sub-committee process for meeting with key stakeholders in advance of scheduled monthly Board meetings to facilitate decision making.

**5P9.** SWIC AQIP Action Projects – each of which requires collaboration between faculty, staff, and administrators – are a means by which the College enhances the capabilities of employees throughout the institution.

**5P9.** Leadership development at SWIC includes administrator participation in programs like Leadership Belleville and the Illinois Council of Community College Administrators Leadership Academy.

**5P9.** Faculty members have the opportunity to participate in institutional leadership roles.

**5P9.** AQIP Action Projects allow for leadership development in all employee groups.

**5P9.** Faculty and administrators are able to participate in leadership development through conferences, seminars, and programs.

**7P2 & 7P4.** HLC Core Component *5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.*

**7P2.** On the instructional side, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment (OA) processes generate data and performance information needs that are incorporated in the plans.

**7P2.** On the non-instructional side, in addition to Program Review the College engages in periodic self-assessment using nationally-normed assessment tools (e.g., CCSSE) which generate additional data and performance information needs.

**7P2.** Specific tools used to select, manage and distribute data and performance information in support of planning and improvement efforts include the PeopleSoft Report Manager and query functions, and add-on applications nVision and Crystal Reports.

**7P2.** BI in conjunction with the AQIP Infrastructure Action Project, is developing a formal BI function that will enhance the institutions ability to manage, analyze, and distribute data and performance information to support planning and improvement efforts across all levels of the institution.

**7P4.** Overall institutional performance information is collected through several processes such as ICCB Program Review, the IBHE Performance Report, ICCB Salary Survey, the ICCB Unit Cost Report (discontinued by the ICCB in 2012), performance measures listed on the IT Portfolio, and performance indicators specific to the strategic plan.

**7P4.** The Report Center provides numerous enrollment reports on vital enrollment statistics and additional analysis tools. In April 2013, student retention data was added to the data warehouse and additional retention reports and analysis capabilities have been added to the Report Center.

**7P4.** Analyses occur at multiple levels and ultimately funnel to the president's staff, the Strategic Planning Council, and the board's Planning and Policy Committee.

**7P4.** As data and analysis become available, vice presidents require departmental engagement to explore opportunities for self- improvement.

**7P4.** The sharing of performance data is embedded in the strategic planning process. As these reports are reviewed and accepted, improvement needs are identified and referred or resolved.

**7P4.** Department and institutional Intranet sites and dashboards are being planned in InfoShare to facilitate sharing information on departmental performance and overall institutional performance.

**8P6.** HLC Core Component 5.A. *The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.*

**8P6.** The planning process provides for three separate mechanisms that align the College's strategic priorities with the allocation of its resources.

**8P6.** The SPC can recommend that the Board of Trustees give special consideration to initiatives or projects that have high strategic value.

**8P6.** The College utilizes a process of reallocation of existing divisional funding to align resources to priorities.

**8P6.** The Funding for Results Program establishes a set-aside fund to advance specific projects with high strategic importance.

**8P6.** Although cost-containment is practiced as a matter of good stewardship, the Board of Trustees has directed that the measures taken not impact the College's educational mission.

**8P6.** SWIC has expanded its physical base with new buildings and major renovation projects.

**8P6.** SWIC served an annual FTE of 9,482 students in FY12 with an annual budget of \$112,215,952; its expenditures per credit hour were \$388.69 compared to the Illinois state average of \$405.12.

**8P6.** Institutional budget processes are well-developed and are appropriately informed by environmental scanning, peer comparisons and internal needs assessments.

**8P6.** Revenue is stable, expenditures are under budget and, importantly, the College has built an audited fund balance of \$105,351,033 to safeguard its continued ability to fulfill its mission.

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## QUALITY OF SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO FOR SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE

Because it stands as a reflection of the institution, the *Systems Portfolio* should be complete and coherent, and it should provide an open and honest self-analysis on the strengths and challenges facing the organization. In this section, the Systems Appraisal Team provides SWIC with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

The Systems Analysis Team would like to compliment SWIC for producing a portfolio that provided an excellent overview of the institution and clearly described the institution's mission, values, and goals. The portfolio identified the institution's strengths and challenges and presented many examples of improvements and changes flowing from the well-established AQIP Action Project process. Throughout, the portfolio provided evidence of a culture and infrastructure that promotes continuous quality

improvement, focused on student learning, and is committed to key priorities that evolved from a strong Strategic and Tactical Planning and Environmental Scanning process. The responses throughout the portfolio presented a convincing vision of an institution that is maturing in its processes and moving to aligned systems that are tied to the institutional mission and key priorities. Another valuable component of the portfolio was the clear identification of evidence statements, making it easier for team members to locate and develop evidentiary statements for the feedback report.

The Team members would also like to offer suggestions for improvement when writing future portfolios. The portfolio did not appear to have “one voice” overall that might have added to the consistency and “flow” of the document, thus increasing readability for multiple audiences. It was not evident that one editor or editor team reviewed and carefully edited the entire document. The portfolio also included multiple combined responses in different categories that added a level of complexity for team members in identifying whether all components of the questions were answered. In the team’s opinion, avoiding combined responses whenever possible would strengthen the portfolio. Finally, the team members recommend providing more references to related processes, data, and/or performance results in other portions of the portfolio whenever possible. It is challenging to remember exactly where related information is without a reference to the location in the portfolio. This allows the institution to provide connections when relevant without constantly repeating responses from other categories.

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## USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

AQIP reminds institutions that the Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for institutional improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of this report may include: 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.

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 in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.