

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

September 19, 2013



Academic
Quality Improvement
Program

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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ELEMENTS OF Minnesota State Community and Technical College's FEEDBACK REPORT

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.

REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL 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.

Ten years ago, M-State merged four community college campuses to better serve the needs of the communities in west central Minnesota and the Red River Valley. The College continues to mature as an organization, aligning processes and policies to deliver a quality education and meet the area workforce needs. The College has embarked on several improvements as a result of data, trend analysis and comparison with peer institutions in Minnesota and has recently reconfigured the process for the assessment of student learning. The College recognizes the impact of the change and embarked on an AQIP Action project to provide effective and efficient internal communication.

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

- Minnesota State Community and Technical College is committed to helping its students learn and has taken steps to develop and implement several processes in this category, including efforts made to align the Core Abilities and general education goals with program and course outcomes and aligning institutional outcomes to the state-wide transfer curriculum, MnTC. Additionally, shortening the program review cycle from five years to three years has resulted in the College's ability to better monitor program quality and currency. However, many processes seem to be in the beginning stages and do not have direct measures or performance results/analyses that can be used to determine their effectiveness. The College has an opportunity to focus greater institutional energy on

developing direct measurements for evaluating student performance in general education as well as effectiveness of non-externally accredited programs. Although the Portfolio contains some results relative to assessment and learning support, the measures shared are mostly indirect and minimal data analysis or plans for improvement were provided. Strengthening assessment measures can help provide a more accurate picture on student proficiency and enable the institution to better understand the degree to which it is meeting the needs of the stakeholders it serves.

- M State links accomplishing other distinctive objectives to the institution's strategic and other plans and the MnSCU strategic framework. These objectives center on serving the region with programs in the arts, business training and support, working with area high schools on college readiness, and providing funding through the campus foundations. The processes for design and selection of other distinctive objectives is presented very generally in the Portfolio and would benefit from specific detail and examples. The College does a good job of communicating about other distinctive objectives and seeking input from faculty and staff that help shape the objectives. The College provides good examples of improvements in this category.
- M State has made important efforts to identify the needs of students and other stakeholders through the use of data collection, analysis based on the data, and action based on information. A variety of approaches to understanding and meeting student needs are described including surveys of students, graduates, and employers; providing special services to students through learning communities, a math lab, learning centers, ELL services, and advising. The institution effectively identifies new student and other stakeholder populations and their needs.
- M State has processes in place for the selection and continuing development of its faculty, staff, and administrators. The College has some room for improvement in the compliance rate of annual employee evaluations; improving this rate will help all M State employees be aware of any needed performance improvements and will help the College better assess the overall strengths of its workforce. There is also some room for improvement in the collection and analysis of data related to Valuing People.

- M State has a clearly stated mission and the mission, vision, and values are integrated into the College's strategic planning process. The College has developed a policy approval process that affords employees an opportunity to comment anonymously, and is continuing to find ways to create a single multi-campus institution by improving communications.
- M State uses several methods to determine the support service needs of students and other key stakeholder groups: CCSSE, CCFSSSE, PACE, and departmental surveys. M State has successfully lowered its relative tuition rate since 2004 without lowering service standards. The College might benefit by explaining how some of the measures used, for example the College's CFI score, inform M State about its performance in supporting institutional operations.
- M State has recently joined the National Community College Benchmarking project to improve the College's understanding of its performance relative to other institutions. The College generates a number of routine data reports, collects and reports performance measures, and relies on the MnSCU system for comparative reports with peer institutions in Minnesota. M State has an opportunity to develop a way to measure the effectiveness of the data provided and document how College department administrators use the data effectively to make decisions.
- M State uses a planning process that incorporates multiple stakeholder groups. Planning processes and objectives contribute toward the College's mission and are aligned with the MnSCU Strategic Framework. M State has used its strategic planning process to better understand its organizational culture and to initiate changes to align performance reviews with strategic objectives. M State acknowledges that there are multiple factors that may directly impact short-term and long-term strategies, including decreased state funding and declining enrollment trends in rural Minnesota areas. An opportunity exists for M State to continue to develop a culture of continuous quality improvement. Comparing results with other institutions of higher education and with organizations outside of higher education will help with benchmarking and could inform the College's planning process for setting future targets, strategies, and objectives.

- M State recognizes the importance of developing partnerships and collaborations and has been successful in building several relationships that have been beneficial to the College, including partnerships with K-12 school districts, Adult Basic Education offices, and workforce centers. M State has developed articulation agreements with regional baccalaureate institutions. The College has been innovative by working with the MnSCU system to provide payroll, financial aid, and direct lending for five colleges, one university, and the centralized office. M State acknowledges that it lacks a formal planning process for building relationships. M State has an opportunity to formalize the processes by which the College creates and strategically prioritizes relationships.

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

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL 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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** 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:

1. M State has adequately described the many good things the College does. However, the College could benefit by improving the description/explanation of the processes it uses to make decisions.
2. In many cases, results were presented but there was no discussion of what the results meant to the College or how the results informed decision-making.
3. M State has acknowledged a need to improve communication and trust among its four campuses.

4. There seems to be an over-reliance on indirect measures of performance in most of the AQIP categories. For example, presenting results of “counts” does not inform the College about the quality of an initiative.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 1.

The College is in the process of strengthening and simplifying the assessment process through an AQIP Action Project. Resources were committed to Faculty and administrators to attend Assessment Workshops in 2013. The College conducts Curriculum Assessment Days during non-instructional time to allow all faculty opportunities to collaborate and review learning outcomes and assessment for the M-State campuses. The College has embarked on several improvements as a result of data, trend analysis and

comparison with peer institutions in Minnesota. Of note is the Up2U program designed to resolve the tension between maintaining academic rigor and increasing completion rates.

1P1a, S. M State has engaged in a deliberate process to identify four institutional Core Abilities and ten general education goals and ties them to the state-wide transfer curriculum, MnTC. Common student learning objectives are monitored by faculty and administrators through a collaborative model that includes programs and course review, the General Education Council, and relevant academic processes.

1P1b, O. While M State has defined a set of common learning objectives that are monitored through various reviewing processes, the manner in which objectives are established and assessed is not clearly articulated. The process is partially described in 1P2 and 1I1 but is vague and does not appear to be systematic and institutionalized.

1P2a, S. M State uses advisory committees, external accreditors, and industry partners to help the College determine specific program learning objectives.

1P2b, O. While some programmatic objectives are dictated by licensure or accreditation requirements, the Portfolio does not address the process used by non-externally accredited programs to set or evaluate their learning objectives.

1P3, O. M State uses CARP and AASC to track, document, review, and approve new program proposals. However, it is unclear how programs are designed and what support and assistance is given to new program creation. For example, there does not appear to be a systematic process for collecting and evaluating data and information to ensure M State's programs and courses are competitive with similar offerings at other institutions.

1P4, S. Responsive academic programming to meet career needs and the employment market is determined by advisory committee input and multiple sources of economic and employment data.

1P5, S. M State has a process in place for determining the preparation needed of students as well as for aligning preparation requirements with academic goals. Input/feedback from MnTC, regional universities, industry partners, and advisory committees are incorporated in the process. Placement using Accuplacer or alternative assessments help determine where a student begins their coursework, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics.

1P6, S. M State has a comprehensive plan for communicating student expectations that integrates both academic and student services from a student's initial contact through graduation. Methods

used for face-to-face communication include outreach and recruiting events, admission and advising process, assessment, and orientation. Expectations are further documented through the college handbook, class schedules, course syllabi, program and degree planner and promotional materials, and institutional website.

1P7, SS. M State has a comprehensive system of support to assist students in the selection of a program of study that matches their needs, interests, and abilities, including advising, career assessment and counseling, and program showcase events.

1P8, S. Students' academic readiness is assessed through Accuplacer and other program/external assessments. Underprepared students are placed into appropriate developmental courses to help them improve areas of weaknesses. An academic alert system and intrusive advising also allows the College to communicate with students when academic success is in jeopardy and intervention is needed.

1P9, O. M State does not appear to have a formalized process to detect or address differences in student learning styles. Although the topic of learning styles is included in the performance evaluation of unlimited full-time faculty and seminars on learning preferences have been conducted, the College does not have a mechanism in place to identify different learning styles and align professional development with those learning needs. Furthermore, the College could follow up on professional development activities to see if training has resulted in increased student success in the classroom and that precious institutional resources are being spent wisely.

1P10a, S. M State has developed a number of processes to serve the needs of several student subgroups, including disabled students, veterans, ELL students, and minorities.

1P10b, O. M State does not appear to have a process in place to recognize and identify emerging new student subgroups. Developing this type of process can help the College respond to the unique needs of those special students and provide timely assistance to help the College remove barriers to education.

1P11, S. M State described several methods for communicating and documenting institutional expectations for effective teaching and learning, including the hiring process, performance evaluation, faculty development and sabbaticals, academic honesty and integrity policy, intellectual property policy, and college catalog.

1P12a, S. Schedules are created a year in advance and the College involves internal stakeholders

in developing a delivery system that serves the needs of students and programs. Several faculty have participated in Quality Matters to improve online and blended courses. The College monitors the quality and rigor of dual credit courses, including faculty qualifications.

1P12b, O. M State might benefit by developing a systematic process to solicit input from students and other external stakeholders regarding their course schedule needs. Additionally, the College could analyze how delivery factors such as meeting time, frequency, instructional modality, and location impact retention and student success.

1P13, S. The program review cycle has been changed from five year to three years and is guided by clear principles and a systematic process. Currency and effectiveness are further monitored through accreditation standards, advisory committee input and feedback, and curriculum audits by the system office.

1P14, S. Decisions about program discontinuation involve all constituencies in a data driven process that involves an analysis of various metrics (enrollment, retention, costs, revenues).

1P15, O. CCSSE is used to determine student needs and M State used the CCSSE results in its decisions to hire a retention specialist and create other retention activities for the Campus. However, it is unclear how the College evaluates the information, prioritizes areas of concerns, and aligns need with institutional objectives to ensure resources are appropriately allocated.

1P16, O. While M State recognizes the value of co-curricular activities, it is unclear how the College ensures that alignment between co-curricular experiences and curricular learning objectives actually takes place.

1P17, O. M State has some mechanisms/measures to determine attainment of institutional learning expectations for programs that require a licensure or certification exam. It is less clear how the College determines that learning and development expectations have been met by transfer and other associate degree graduates.

1P18a, S. Student learning, program, and institutional assessment have become more systematic, data driven and improvement-oriented at M State over the past few years. An action project focused on curriculum mapping has resulted in better linkage between course competencies and program outcomes. Curriculum Assessment Days provide additional opportunities for faculty members from all campuses to collaborate and review learning outcomes and assessment.

1P18b, O. While M State has devoted time and resources to improve the assessment process such

as course mapping, there is no evidence that direct measurement and assessment of general education outcomes have been fully developed and implemented consistently across the curriculum. M State has the opportunity to develop an institutional assessment process that not only is capable of producing meaningful data but also addresses how the College plans to improve student learning as well as improving the process itself.

1R1, O. M State identifies several indirect measures used to determine learning and development: graduate Core Abilities indicators, advisory committee notes, internship participation, and CCSSE. However, the College has an opportunity to utilize more direct measure for assessing student learning.

1R2a, S. M State shares longitudinal results for Core Abilities as perceived by graduates. The College also collects data regarding online student learning and evaluates if the individual prerequisite and onsite courses affected the graduation rate differently.

1R2b, O. M State listed several measures and reported some results for Core Abilities learning; however, there is minimal evidence of any data analysis while the oral and written communication data are somewhat dated. The Portfolio also does not explain why only dual enrollment students were selected for Speech assessment. Those students tend to lean on the academic and support services at their own high schools and relying on the assessment outcome of this subgroup of student population may not be a good indicator of the College's instructional performance.

1R3, O. Program performance for the 12 career/technical programs are positive (above 80%). However, Advanced Degree Nursing and MLT programs have pass rates below 80% for the three years of results shared. No results are provided for other programs such as transfer and other associate degrees.

1R4, O. M State referenced employer surveys in the Portfolio but did not share the results from those surveys. Although employment percentages and internship numbers are important (Tables 1R4a, b, c), collecting and analyzing employer feedback could help the College improve its understanding of how well graduates are prepared for their careers. Additionally, data such as transfer institution feedback and graduate surveys could also prove valuable in understanding M State graduates' knowledge and skills.

1R5, O. While M State made an effort to analyze its learning support results, the results shared are primarily about participation rates, which do not necessarily inform institutional performance

in learning support processes. For example, the number of faculty using the academic alert system declined from 2009 to 2012 although the number of students increased. (Table 1R5.c) No explanation was given as to whether the change is a reflection of lowered need for academic alerts due to effective support services or a result of faculty not wanting to use the system.

1R6, O. According to data reported in Chart 1R6.a, licensure exam pass rates are low compared to other peer institutions within the MnSCU system. Furthermore, no analysis of the data is provided.

1I1, S. M State has documented a number of improvements in student learning and assessment, particularly with Core Abilities revision, inclusion of CLA+ in up2U, and developmental math. And as part of the College's effort to revitalize Core Abilities assessment, a core group also attended HLC's assessment retreat in February 2013 to learn best practices and receive feedback. M State has begun the groundwork for several important initiatives. Since those projects are still in various phases of the planning stage the College has an opportunity to monitor the progress of these initiatives to ensure that the momentum is not lost.

1I2, O. M State has recently aligned administrative responsibilities, but the College acknowledges the need for continued improvement in its culture and infrastructure in order to be highly innovative rather than reactive.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 2.

The College provides a holistic educational experience through several student activities and athletics on the various campuses. The College is committed to economic development in the community as demonstrated through the Business and Entrepreneurial Services center and incubator offices.

2P1, O. M State's distinctive objectives are shaped by institutional guiding documents and

involve internal and external stakeholders; however, no systematic approach to designing and operating the key processes was described. The College has an opportunity to provide specific examples of how it designs and operates one or two of these processes.

2P2, O. Although overarching goals to provide a holistic educational experience focus on community education partnerships, economic development and community support through campus foundations, it is unclear how non-instructional objectives are prioritized for the College. This would be a stronger Portfolio if the process used to set and prioritize the objectives were fully described.

2P4, S. M State has developed an assessment plan for most of its non-instructional objectives. Table 2P4 lists the assessment activity and review processes for the main categories of non-instructional objectives. Data and feedback collected through surveys, advisory committees and other dialogs are reviewed by a program or the Cabinet to ensure activity and progress are on track and in alignment with the strategic objectives of the College.

2P5, S. The College uses multiple inputs for structuring employees' professional development. Each employee is encouraged to develop a professional development plan.

2P5, O. While several methods of collecting information from faculty and staff were shared, it was not clear how the information collected and considered are related to the non-instructional objectives and operations or how competing needs were prioritized.

2P6, SS. M State's strategic plan, which is aligned with the MnSCU framework, serves as the basis for regional strategies for non-instructional and other distinctive objectives. The plan and objectives are adjusted with input from multiple constituencies. For example, the College created the Center for College Readiness to enhance relationships with high schools to provide the format for communicating college-ready expectations

2R1, O. M State maintains a Snapshot Profile and Institutional Data Book that are claimed to assist in analyzing results and progress of non-instructional objectives. However the data elements listed do not relate to non-instructional objectives and it is unclear what specific data are collected and analyzed for other distinctive objectives. The College acknowledges it is in the process of expanding data collection and analysis for athletics, Business Entrepreneurial Services and the arts program.

2R2a, S. The M State Center for College Readiness (CCR) data on student and school participation demonstrate consistent growth over the reported timeframe. The CCR completed an assessment of its Ready or Not Writing Program in April 2012. Working with 120 students from five high schools, the CCR concluded that more than 50 percent of the participating students were either college-ready or showed improvement in writing after two interactions with college readers who provided feedback to the participants.

2R2b, O. M State presented performance results for several areas listed in 2P3. The results are provided by the MnSCU system. The charts are well done, but there is no evidence of an analysis of the results. Adding brief analysis summaries could demonstrate the College is using the results to make process improvements. No results were reported for the other distinctive objectives of Arts, Athletics and the Business Entrepreneurial Services.

2R3a, S. The College has a series of multi-year comparisons it uses to measure performance results. These include enrollment, custom training, foundation giving, and grants. M State's CTS enrollment figures compare favorably against other institutions in the region.

2R3b, O. Results are presented related to Custom Training and Foundation fundraising. No analysis or discussion of what the results mean or how they are being used was provided. M State has an opportunity to de-aggregate the CTS data by location to help further analyze individual campus strengths and weaknesses.

2R4, S. The College measures its strength by its success in grants economic development efforts and the college ready initiatives it also encourages communication in all areas of the College and external stakeholders.

2R4, O. M State highlights educational partnerships as important in their region, but fails to provide any specific results or details of ways the institution is strengthened through other distinctive objectives.

2I1a, S. In response to declining state funding and caps in tuition increases. M State has taken several steps to help generate greater revenue. Examples include funding and partnerships by hiring a foundation director, deploying a capital campaign, partnering with Ohio institutions, utilizing an external grant consultant, and purchasing a 12-station welding trailer that can serve training needs.

2I1b, O. An opportunity exists to strategically align funding requests with M State's mission and goals. Thus, the process will be more formalized and systematic.

2I2, O. Several improvements are implied in the M State response, but the lack of detail about specifics make it difficult to determine what improvements are targeted

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 3.

The College conducts surveys and tracks data on a recently created enrollment and persistence dashboard. The College has recently realigned administrative responsibilities to create a structure that will be proactive in setting targets and improving processes.

3P1a, SS. M State has implemented a number of data driven initiatives to better serve students and improve retention and success rates. Examples include the M State Solution Center which manages incoming calls and inquiries as well as outgoing call campaigns, online academic performance alert system, an advising portal, learning communities, and learning centers.

3P1b, O. Although the Portfolio states that survey results are shared with internal teams, it is unclear whether or not an effective systematic process is utilized to interpret and breakdown the data so that the analyses of the information could be used to determine student needs and improve not only M State as an institution but also different branch campuses and offices.

3P2, S. M State builds and maintains its relationships with students through its small class sizes, a variety of face-to-face contacts and programs, and by assigning an advisor to every degree-seeking student as part of an intrusive advising system.

3P3, S. M State describes processes for analyzing the needs of key stakeholder groups that align with its mission, accountability and funding requirements. Needs are assessed primarily through environmental scanning, local, state, federal, and accreditation reports/press releases, program

reviews, and advisory boards in the community.

3P4, S. Relationships with key stakeholders are built and maintained through advisory committees and dialogs with workforce agencies and businesses, and local and state government. The management team uses the General Advisory committee as well as academic program advisory committees. In addition, M State recognized the need to strengthen alumni relations and hired a director to address this need in 2013.

3P5, SS. M State analyzes a variety demographic data and input from the community to anticipate and discover potential new stakeholder groups as well as their educational and service requirements. For example, recently there has been an increased focus on outreach efforts to English Language Learners. Other recent initiatives have included a partnership with the Minnesota Rural Electrical Association and the Baudette Economic Development Association to supply energy units with qualified apprentices and a comprehensive enrollment management strategy to recruit and serve people who had previously attended college but never completed their college degrees.

3P6, S. Students and community members with service issues are encouraged to resolve issues directly and informally. Written complaints are entered into a master complaint log for the appropriate year. This log is analyzed at the end of the year and resolution and date of action are reviewed for future policy changes.

3R1, S. M State determines the satisfaction of students and other stakeholders by routinely analyzing results from surveys, student course evaluations, a persistence dashboard, employer surveys, and advisory group feedback.

3R2, O. M State has listed some very good charts and tables that show student satisfaction results. However, there is no discussion of the results. M State might benefit by including examples of how the College analyzes the results and uses the results to make changes. Furthermore, graduation rate, completion rate, and support service usage are indirect measures of student satisfaction.

3R3, O. M State has reported counts for various metrics, but it is not clear how the counts translate into performance results. Data reported in Tables 3R3.a, 3R3.b, 3R3.c, and 3R3.d reflect service usage and persistence rates as well as reason for non-returning. They are indirect measures of M State's performance on relationship building. Providing some analysis or context for the results might help make the connection between the data and the meaning of the data.

Although all students in degree-seeking and career and technical programs are either assigned an advisor or receiving intrusive advising, Table 3R2b indicates that most students do not use academic advising, career counseling, placement assistance or tutoring.

3R4, O. M State has an opportunity to report direct results for stakeholder satisfaction.

3R5a, SS. According to Chart 3R5.a, 100 percent of employers surveyed indicated they would employ another M State graduate.

3R5b, O. The institution has not developed an instrument for measuring the results for building relationships with partnership high schools or community leaders. The College may wish to collect and assess these results formally in order to better understand its constituencies.

3R6a, SS. M State utilizes an intrusive advising approach to promote student success. The M State Solution Center team calls students and send e-mails to students after students return from spring break. These contacts are viewed as opportunities to build personal relationships with students and provide students with information, such as referrals to academic advisors, information about academic support services, and information about future term planning.

3R6b, S. M State's results on the CCSSE are consistent with other national and state institutions in student satisfaction with advising and other support services.

3I1a, S. M State has made improvements in gathering feedback from external stakeholders and disseminating information through a dashboard system. Additional improvements to increase college experience and academic success occurred in advising, registration, mid-semester checkup, the Success Matters Campaign, and ELL staffing.

3I1b, O. In light of all the improvement activities, the data in Table 3R2.b on student satisfaction with various advising and support services show little to no improvement between 2009 and 2011. The College has an opportunity to continue to track student feedback to determine whether recent efforts made to build and maintain relationships with students have indeed made a positive difference.

3I2, S. The College attempts to meet the challenges of multiple campus locations by using technologies, planning, and communications on the portal to build a constant interface with stakeholders. The College also has high expectations for its students to achieve educational goals.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 4.

The College gathers information formally and informally to determine professional development needs for faculty and staff. A formal evaluation process exists for full time faculty, staff and administrators. A formal review process for adjunct faculty could benefit the College and provide information as to the effectiveness of teaching students with different levels of preparation and learning styles.

4P1, S. M State has well-defined processes for identifying the credentials needed for staff, faculty, and administrators. The College follows guidelines established by MnSCU.

4P2a, S. M State's hiring processes are thorough, designed to ensure equity and result in the hiring of the best candidate. M State trains its search committees, conducts reference checks, and uses a probationary period to ensure that the people the College employs possess the credentials and skills required for the position.

4P2b, O. M State conducts an evaluation each semester for each course taught by adjunct faculty. M State strives for 100 percent participation in annual evaluations of employees. During the past three years, 70 percent of employees have participated in the evaluation process. M State has an opportunity to formalize its annual evaluation process to ensure that all M State employees are being evaluated, thus contributing to continuous quality improvement.

4P3, S. To ensure a diverse pool of applicants for open positions, M State utilizes numerous recruitment channels, including the M State website, MnSCU website, regional electronic and print media, and international websites such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Higherjobs.com*.

4P4a, S. M State provides face-to-face and online orientation for all new employees. New employee packets include institutional history and mission information.

4P4b, O. The College did not describe an orientation process for adjunct faculty or whether the existing orientation process adequately addresses their specific needs.

4P5, O. M State does not have a formal, proactive process for succession planning. Although the College has a solid process for filling new and vacant positions, a formalized process for planning personnel changes can ease the transition for the new employee while maintaining the performance efficiency of the position and identify cross-training opportunities for current employees.

4P6, S. M State uses the PACE system, technology, employee participation in decisions, and a commitment to customer service to promote productivity and employee satisfaction. M State values consistency in standards and utilizes Customer Service Commitment and Customer Service Standards training to communicate acceptable standards throughout the College.

4P7a, S. The College encourages ethical practices of all employees through a variety of workshops and policy and procedures designed internally and also by MnSCU. An IRB has been established to assist in research ethics and practices.

4P7b, O. The College does not indicate mechanisms through which violations of law and policy, discrimination, and harassment can be reported anonymously.

4P8, O. Time for employee training and development is provided through administrative duty days for faculty and regular retreats for other staff. However, it is unclear how the College assesses and determines whether needs and requests align with institutional objectives prior to scheduling training. Conversely, it is unclear how the College aligns training with the performance appraisal process.

4P9, S. The College and MnSCU provide time and resources, including sabbaticals, for educational and professional development and reinforce training through presentations and train-the-training opportunities.

4P10, S. Employees are evaluated in accordance with M State and MnSCU evaluation policies, which align with instructional and non-instructional objectives of the College. Unlimited full and part-time faculty participate in annual course evaluations and a comprehensive evaluation every 3 years; adjuncts are evaluated through course evaluations; and staff members are evaluated annually.

4P11, S. M State recognizes and celebrates employee accomplishments. Among awards and

recognitions are a peer-nomination and portfolio process for the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development and Excellence in Teaching awards presented through the System Office.

4P12a, S. M State provides multiple opportunities for employee input through a campus governance system, monthly forums, and surveys. Analysis of issues raised is done at various levels with a goal of high employee performance and satisfaction.

4P12b, O. Although issues related to motivation are analyzed by the administration or Shared Governance committees, it is unclear how courses of action are selected and progress is shared with employees at all campus locations.

4P13, S. M State utilizes LCSC for workplace safety and crisis planning and EAP to assist employees and their family member with personal and workplace concerns. LCSC meets with safety committees monthly to identify and monitor safety issues and concerns and EAP service is available 24/7.

4R1, O. Although M State uses multiple measures of employee satisfaction and employee engagement, there is an opportunity to provide more direct measures of satisfaction as well as historic trends to see whether the institution is making improvements.

4R2, O. According to data reported in Table 4R2.b, the percentages from the 2012 System Office Staff Professional Development Survey have decreased compared to 2010 results. M State has an opportunity to review the data and develop strategies and procedures to increase percentages, especially the percent of staff who have updated performance evaluations and the percentage of staff who have updated professional development plans.

4R3, OO. There is a lack of data showing effectiveness and goal achievement for Valuing People. Years of service is not necessarily a measure of productivity or effectiveness.

4R4a, S. The PACE survey shows data comparable with national norms for the survey. The means show a consistent high rating. The trend data will provide confirmation and assistance.

4R4b, O. The College collects data regarding the years of service in the result section. The College could benefit by using a more robust measurement such as overall cost of service per student or the number of students served by the total number of staff.

4I1, S. M State has made improvements in valuing people, such as new employee orientation, online employee resource training, implementation and training of Service Standards, employee

portal, and personnel reorganization of administration and student services.

4I2, O. M State acknowledges that opportunities for improvement exist, including networking opportunities, conference attendance, and professional development. While the culture of regular meeting and communication are important to valuing employees, it is not clear how targets are set and courses of action are prioritized.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 5.

The College has undergone many changes in leadership and overall structure. A recent implementation of an AQIP Project to improve communication holds great promise to improve internal information sharing.

5P1, S. M State's mission, vision, and values are set and monitored by the President's Cabinet as part of the strategic planning process. Annual retreats are held to review and assess the progress made toward the institutional objectives.

5P2, S. The College leaders embarked upon a comprehensive strategic planning process by gathering information from internal and external stakeholders to set directions and expectations in alignment with the mission, vision, values, organizational learning and innovation. The result is a five-year strategic plan, implemented in 2012 and to culminate in 2017.

5P3, S. Directions set by the strategic plan and mission are matched to the needs of students through Program Advisory Committees, Enrollment Initiatives, a reorganized Student Services Division, and community and university partnerships. The recently implemented plan has provided the College with renewed focus in light of external impact of such factors as a changing economy; reduction in state funding; and the impact of technology on educational access and success.

5P4, S. The President's Cabinet uses a variety of means, criteria, and input to identify future

opportunities. This includes national, state, local, and system-wide initiatives and requirements, environmental scans, data analyses, and constituent feedback.

5P5a, SS. M State has an inclusive policy approval process that provides an opportunity for all M State employees to review proposed policies and provide feedback and comments about the proposals. To promote open participation, employees submit comments through a confidential process.

5P5b, O. M State recognizes that its multi-campus structure has created challenges for the process of decision making. Since most decisions impact all campuses, care needs to be taken to ensure that each campus has adequate representation on the key committees to communicate their campus' needs and requirements.

5P6, S. M State regularly uses performance data and relevant information to support fact based management and data-driven decision making.

5P7, S. M State is a multiple campus college and relies heavily on face-to-face meetings to promote trust and open communication. Recent improvements to the College portal and campus forums could yield opportunities to formalize and improve the integrity and efficient exchange of pertinent information.

5P8a, S. M State has used the strategic planning process to communicate the institutional mission and values. The plan is regularly used at multiple levels to reinforce M State's mission, vision and values in a consistent fashion across the four campuses.

5P8b, O. Leaders of the College communicate shared mission, vision, and values through the strategic planning process. However, it is unclear how progress and results are communicated to external stakeholders in a timely manner in order to reinforce institutional direction and priorities.

5P9, S. The College fosters an environment in which employees are encouraged to develop leadership abilities through internal and external professional development, knowledge sharing, in-service activities, and statewide initiative and planning involvement.

5P10, O. Committee members and structure are selected and created to develop continuity, focus, and consistency. However, the College has an opportunity to develop a local succession plan that might help M State ensure that its mission, vision, and values are preserved as the College leadership changes.

5R1, O. M State uses a communication audit, the PACE survey, and its committee and task force

structure to measure its performance in leading and communicating. However, the College has an opportunity to more fully describe the process by which the results of these instruments are analyzed rather than just being reported.

5R2, OO. M State has an opportunity to develop direct measures of institutional performance in leading and communicating. Data presented in Charts 5R2a-5R2c describe employee preferences in information delivery, content, and source. However, the data presented do not reflect institutional effectiveness and efficiency in leadership and communication.

5R3, O. M State has reported its PACE results compared to the national norms, but has an opportunity to provide a context for the results. For example, M State is slightly below the national norm in each reported category, but there is no discussion about what this means, whether the difference is significant, and whether M State is putting plans in place to improve its performance.

5I1, S. M State created an AQIP monthly newsletter in 2012. Each issue highlights the continuous quality improvement process at M State. Communication strategies such as these newsletters help to keep stakeholder informed and updated about key AQIP initiatives and processes.

5I2, S. M State realizes the importance of effective communication by implementing an AQIP communications project and is committed to formalizing and refining processes in order to achieve greater trust, respect and understanding within the College.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 6.

The College seeks information from internal and external sources to provide a comprehensive overview to support institutional operations. The College participates in an Office of Civil Rights review to ensure that campuses are safe, inclusive and secure for all constituents.

6P1, S. M State has identified six support services areas and their responsibilities to students and non-employee stakeholders. Needs are determined through surveys, CCSSE, PACE analysis of data, department surveys, financial and facilities dashboards, technology satisfaction, classroom assessments, and committee meetings and listening to different groups, and an academic alert system.

6P2, S. M State determines the support service needs of faculty, staff, and administrators by using the PACE and CCFSSSE surveys and through regular campus committee meetings, evaluation forms. Employee needs are also determined through the employee union bargaining process and personnel plans.

6P3a, S. Physical safety and security are managed through committees on each campus and coordinated with a contract with the Lakes Country Service Cooperative. An alert system is in place to notify students and staff in case of emergency. An Office of Civil Rights reviews identified areas of strength and areas for improvement. Strengths included the implementation of Safe Zone for GLBT populations, as well as linking minority students to the community via the Community Connection.

6P3b, O. M State has the opportunity to describe its systematic process for collecting and analyzing stakeholder input relative to safety and security issues and concerns.

6P4, S. M State uses custom data queries done by each department to identify problem areas and then adjust processes to meet the identified need. In addition, annual program reviews and other reporting are used to identify issues and manage support services.

6P5, O. The college portal and website are used to track and document progress and improvement. M State recognizes that a systematic alignment of progress and improvement using these for tracking progress will contribute toward a better-integrated documentation process and improved alignment between work units and strategic goals.

6R1, S. The primary sources for information and comparison for the College and national standards is PACE and CCSSE. Internal reporting from the College information system provides institution specific information.

6R2, O. Although slight improvements were reported in CCSSE results related to student support processes between 2009 and 2011, M State has an opportunity to identify and provide direct performance measures and results specifically for the Supporting Institutional Operations

category. The College also has an opportunity to provide an analysis of the reported results

6R3, O. The results provided in Charts 6R3.2a-c do not directly address M State's performance in or quality of administrative support service processes. M State has an opportunity to identify and provide direct performance measures and results specifically for the Supporting Institutional Operations category.

6R4, O. M State does not describe a process through which the institution plans to make use of the data identified in 6R2 and 6R3 for improvement purposes.

6R5a, S. The College has maintained a higher-than-average CFI for the past three years. This is an important accomplishment in light of the current economic climate.

6R5b, O. The College presented charts showing CCSSE results compared to the national norms and a chart depicting percent of operating costs devoted to support service. Discussion of the meaning of the results would be useful. The indirect measures presented do not inform the quality and efficiencies of the support service processes at the College.

6I1, S. M State has recently implemented four improvements, including a new textbook rental program offered by the bookstore, the development of a central campus Service Center, and enhancements to the eCampus Service Process.

6I2, OO. M State acknowledges that it is still developing an organizational culture and infrastructure that will make decisions and implement improvements based on data. It was unclear how specific processes are selected for improvement and how targets are set to benchmark and measure improvement in support services.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 7.

The College continues on a path of data informed decision-making. Process and technology is available to employees to create a culture of continuous improvement. The College recently joined the Community College Benchmarking Project to improve upon the use of comparative data for purposes of evaluation and improvement amongst peer institutions.

7P1, O. Although M State indicates it uses several processes to select, manage, and distribute the data needed to support instructional and non-instructional programs; these processes are not clearly described in the portfolio. Additionally, the College has not described a process that informs the college about the effectiveness of the data it distributes.

7P2, O. Although M State uses MnSCU Performance measures to guide planning and improvement, the College might benefit by more fully describing how it uses these data to guide local planning and improvement efforts. M State recently joined the NCCBP to get some guidance in this area.

7P3, O. Although individual departments, committees, councils, and teams work to establish the data needed and collection formats, M State does not appear to have a systematic process that proactively reaches out to departments and employees to understand their data needs or provide training to help employees understand their data collection, storage, and accessibility options.

7P4a, S. M State uses its strategic plan goals and the data and information tied to the performance results of these goals to bring information to the institutional level. This information is shared through the employee portal, query warehouse, and enrollment dashboard. Trend comparisons and analysis are possible because several years of data can be accessed.

7P4b, O. M State has outlined the process by which data is distributed to various College departments, but has an opportunity to describe the manner in which the data are analyzed and the way these analyses are shared across the institution.

7P5a, S. M State aligned institutional research with quality improvement to foster a closer collaborative relationship between these functions.

7P5b, O. M State acknowledges the difficulty in finding comparable institutions and recently joined the NCCBP to begin the process of analyzing its performance with comparative data.

7P6, O. M State has just begun to develop a process to better connect department/unit analysis of information with institutional objectives across the College. The College only began intentionally connecting the strategic plan with the AQIP process in 2012. The existing process focuses

primarily on data dissemination. M State has made a deliberate decision and effort to link the strategic plan goals to the use of data and analysis at both the institutional and department level.

7P7, S. The College meets the security of information storage security, and integrity with up-to-date data systems, network monitoring, and firewalls and backup systems. Additional staffing provides timely, accurate data and reporting.

7R1, OO. The College acknowledges that it is in the early stages of sharing data and making data driven decisions. As the process of developing a comprehensive system information and knowledge management matures, there is also an opportunity to identify measures of effectiveness that can help the College assess how well this system is meeting its needs to disseminate the information on student, employee and public web portals.

7R2, O. While M State reports performance results on data accessibility, the College does not have a systematic strategy for measuring the effectiveness of the processes associated with data collection and analysis and decision making.

7R3, O. M State acknowledges that it does not have comparative data for this category. By comparing data with similar institutions and with organizations outside of higher education, M State has an opportunity to develop an organizational focus on continuous quality improvement.

7I1, S. Various groups on campus are able to request access to data and express their needs for performance information. The improvements outlined are important improvements to facilitate institutional communications across the institution. Elements such as id control (StarID), common organized point of data storage (employee portal), and the data storage to support them are key foundations to improving processes and sharing data.

7I2, OO. M State acknowledges it is developing and enhancing its systems in order to establish targets for improvement. However, the process used by the College to set targets and select action was not clear.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 8.

The College recognizes the potential impact of the changes in leadership on the central mission of serving their students and surrounding communities. Work is underway to further integrate the campuses into a cohesive institution that works strategically and collaboratively to reap the benefits of continuous improvement.

8P1, SS. M State has a comprehensive planning process that incorporates input from multiple stakeholder groups and generates operational planning processes and objectives that align with and contribute toward the College's mission and vision as well as with MnSCU's Strategic Framework.

8P2a, S. M State's management team selects short and long term strategies aligned with M State's three strategic directions. Internal and external stakeholders provide input to management, and external factors such as reduced funding, possible declining student enrollment, and increased personnel costs are considered as strategies are developed.

8P2b, O. M State acknowledges that there are multiple factors that may directly impact short-term and long-term strategies, including decreased state funding, increased operational and personnel costs, and declining student enrollments in rural Minnesota areas. M State might benefit by describing how it take these factors into account when the College selects strategies.

8P3, S. M State develops key action plans through the analysis of stakeholder input and other data sources such as CCSSE, retention and graduation data, financial and enrollment reports, efficiency information and survey data. The management team aligns proposed ideas and projects with the MnSCU framework and the College's mission but also considers the institution's current commitment to other projects as well as any organizational constraints.

8P4a, S. M State uses its strategic plan as a document to organize, coordinate and align strategies and action plans. Planning is coordinated by an associate vice president and the President's Cabinet.

8P4b, O. M State recently aligned functions to create a comprehensive tracking and documentation system to plan for continuous improvement. The process holds promise in providing information.

8P5, O. Although the portfolio states that performance measures and targets for the strategic and

operational plans are selected at the Cabinet level, it does not describe the process utilized for setting strategic objectives.

8P6a, S. M State has been creative in supporting development and innovation, notably a presidential set-aside innovation fund to ensure some funds are available to invest in unforeseen needs and opportunities and leading efforts in initiating shared services to generate new income.

8P6b, O. While it is important for the College to find creative means to be frugal during this economic downturn, there is no quantitative evidence presented that M State was able to reduce expenditures while improving efficiencies.

8P7, OO. While M State has incorporated risk assessment in several areas (financial, demographic, and technology), there is no formal risk management structure. The College plans to incorporate risk management in the planning process for AQIP with the use of tracking software.

8P8, S. M State describes an extensive professional development system for both faculty and staff that aims to keep employees current with best practices and continuously improving behavior.

8R1, O. The operational and strategic plans for the College provide basic information and direction on data collection. The College is developing and utilizing better tools to collect and analyze their efforts.

8R2, O. While the College is making an effort to collect employee input on areas of concern, the measures reported in Table 8R2 are broad-based and do not appear to have direct linkage to any specific area of the strategic plan or institutional measures of effectiveness. This might make it difficult for the College to prioritize and focus on any specific processes to improve and to measure the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

8R3a, O. Although M State has listed a number of performance targets across many areas of the institution, the College acknowledges that many metrics to assess performance have not been developed or strategically aligned.

8R4, O. M State has an opportunity to compare results with other institutions of higher education and with institutions and organizations outside of higher education.

8R5, O. M State notes improved use of data and the development of a culture of continuous improvement. However, it is also noted that these efforts are still in their infancy and that tracking software will help guide the institution's next strategic plan.

8I1, S. M State has used the strategic planning process to understand the culture at the institution and initiate changes to align performance reviews with strategic objectives.

8I2, O. M State acknowledges its infrastructure is adjusting to the strategic planning process that began in 2011. As M State matures in this category, an organizational culture of continuous quality improvement will be created and will help guide the institution's work.

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 **Minnesota State Community and Technical College** for Category 9.

With the reduction in state funding, College leadership is more strategic in identifying and prioritizing collaborative relationships. The College provides a centralized payroll-processing system through a Campus Service Cooperative for Minnesota State College and Universities. Through the more efficient use of resources the College has a greater ability to expand programs, services and enrollment.

9P1a, S. M State has created and built numerous partnerships that have been beneficial to the College, including collaborations with K-12 school districts, Adult Basic Education offices, and workforce centers.

9P1b, O. M State has an opportunity to describe processes by which the College creates and prioritizes its relationships. For example, how would M State decide if it should expand relationships with high schools or discontinue an existing relationship?

9P2, S. M State maintains relationships with regional baccalaureate institutions and employers. Higher education partnerships are primarily built on articulation agreements and connections with program faculty. Employer relationships center on industry representation on advisory committees.

9P3, O. Although all employees are directed to build and maintain quality relationships with organizations serving M State students, such as the online bookstore and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, the College has an opportunity to formalize the processes by

which the College creates and prioritizes relationships with organizations that provide services to students.

9P4, S. Processes are well defined for creating, prioritizing, and building relationships with organizations that supply materials and services to the College. M State seeks vendors and suppliers that provide quality products and services that meet the College needs. Good business practices such as timely payment, regular communication, and acknowledging appreciation are used to maintain and reinforce relationships.

9P5a, S. M State provides several examples of relationships in consortia and the community, including providing payroll services for other institutions in the MnSCU system and the recent establishment of a College-wide General Advisory Committee.

9P5b, O. While it is evident that M State engages in collaborations and partnerships with area industries, educational providers, and economic development groups, the portfolio does not describe a systematic process to create and build current and future relationships.

9P6, O. M State has several informal methods in place to assess its partnerships but acknowledges a need to create a formal assessment process for the effectiveness of the relationships.

9P7a, S. M State recognizes that being a multi-campus college creates challenges for maintaining relations among departments and units in the College. Targeted activity such as surveying, interdisciplinary activity, and a number of communications processes have been developed to address this need.

9P7b, O. M State acknowledges that it lacks a formal plan for building relationships. Further, M State has an opportunity to continue to foster an internal organizational culture of trust.

9R1, O. M State engages in the tracking of data relative to collaborative relationship measurements in 15 key areas outlined in the portfolio. Although the listing of those key areas suggests that relationships exist, the College does not provide any information on the quality and effectiveness of those relationships.

9R2, O. Although M State has created a number of partnerships such as articulations and concurrent enrollments, no analysis or discussion of these results is provided so their significance is unclear.

9R3, O. M State recognizes an opportunity to develop comparative measures with external

organizations.

9I1, SS. The College has worked with the MnSCU system to provide payroll, financial aid and direct lending for five colleges, one university and the centralized office. This is an innovative example of collaboration.

9I2a, S.M State continues to work on building a single multi-location college from the four separate colleges that merged to create M State. The College recognizes the importance of internal and external partnerships.

9I2b, O. M State highlights the importance of partnerships, but does not give an explanation of how specific processes are selected for improvement and establishing targets.

ACCREDITATION ISSUES MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL 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.

The team noted no accreditation issues.

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
Adequate but could be improved.	X				
Unclear or incomplete.					

Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X			
Adequate but could be improved.			X		
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.					

Evidence Statements 1.A: The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement was first written in 2003 as part of the strategic planning process when different campuses merged to reflect the nature and culture of the institution, and a concise version was later developed in 2012. A comprehensive process involving employee input was utilized and culminated in the approval of the mission statement by the Board of Trustees.
2. M State conducts strategic planning every 4 to 5 years and aligns the process with the MnSCU Strategic Framework. The strategic goals are integrated into unit planning and budgeting processes in order to strengthen the institution.
3. Each level of the College, including academic programs and support services, develops an operational plan that enables it to undertake activities to support the institution in meeting the organizational objectives.

Evidence Statements 1.B: The mission is articulated publicly.

1. M State has a formal mission statement and a concise version for marketing and promotional purposes. The mission is published in the College’s website, catalog, student handbook, annual report, and various publications and documents. Additionally, the mission is posted at the main entrance of each campus.
2. M State’s mission and value documents require the College to prepare learners for living, working and serving through quality and accessible education
3. M State’s mission statement is published publically through multiple channels, including the institution’s website, catalog, student handbook, and annual report.

Evidence Statements 1.C: The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society

1. M State is committed to diversity and infuses diversity and multicultural awareness education into courses, programs and co-curricular activities.
2. M State supports education regarding Global Perspectives as listed in the Goal Area Eight of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.
3. M-State added an Office of Diversity and Inclusion at one of the system's campuses. The mission is: "to empower students, faculty, and staff to explore a deeper understanding, respect and value for diversity in its many forms."

Evidence Statements 1.D: The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The Mission is used by the Cabinet to annually set goals and priorities in a way that demonstrates a commitment to the public good. This information is shared with all stakeholders.
2. A combined College Advisory Committee communicates with the President about current events and service to all communities the College serves.
3. The College's educational responsibilities are defined by state statute and implemented at the institution through a shared governance process.

Evidence Statements 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.

1. The MnSCU system Office Code of Conduct and the M State Core Values set accountability guidelines for acceptable employee ethics and conduct.
2. M State's strong commitment and adherence to sound policies and procedures in financial practices is evident by the clean audit reports it received from external auditing firms since 2005.
3. An IRB process created in 2012 assists employees' understanding of ethical and fair research practices.

Evidence Statements 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.

1. M State's website and catalog are resources for students, employees and the public reflecting academic requirements, costs, policies, and accreditation status. The website lists specific information for students, Business & Industry, News & Media, in addition to employees.
2. M State's Degree Audit Report System (DARS) is available to all students through their online portal and enables them to track which program/diploma requirements are met and unmet. All students are assigned a faculty or staff advisor.
3. M State provides public access to all course outlines on the website.

Evidence Statements 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.

1. Minnesota State Statutes and MnSCU Board Policy state that Board of Trustee has the authority to adopt appropriate policies in order ensure the efficient operation and maintain the fiscal and administrative integrity of its institutions.
2. By MnSCU policy, campus administrators are responsible for the application of policies and procedures within their institution.
3. The Board of trustees exercises oversight by routine reports and meetings while external accrediting and regulatory agencies also exercise oversight functions of the College's operations

Evidence Statements 2.D: The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

1. The College abides by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities policy when reviewing faculty credentials for teaching.
2. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities policy delineates policies regarding academic freedom and acceptable use of technology.
3. The MSCU policy delineates student rights and responsibilities including freedom of expression, freedom to learn and freedom of association.

Evidence Statements 2.E: The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

1. The Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) contract protects academic freedom and intellectual property. Course syllabi and course assignments belong to faculty members.

2. The creation of an IRB in 2012 helps to ensure ethical practices related to research endeavors.
3. Students at M State are expected to adhere to principles of academic honesty. In 2012, several M State faculty members participated in an assessment project regarding plagiarism.

Evidence Statements 3.A: The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. M State's Academic Affairs and Standards Council provides direction for the College president in all matters included in academic affairs, course outlines, award requirements, academic standards, course and program components.
2. Course competencies are identical regardless of the delivery formats whether it be online or on site. The College uses Quality Matters, a faculty-centered, peer review process, to certify the quality of online programming.
3. High school teachers delivering dual credit courses are required to submit a syllabus for the class. The College provides a competencies template to assure alignment with the standard course. NOTE: The review team suggests a clarification on this. If the High School teacher is teaching the college course, please explain the need for the high school teacher to create a syllabus. A clarification will help ensure the course is appropriate to higher education.

Evidence Statements 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.

1. M State develops the general education core for all degrees through application of the ten emphasis areas as part of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Goals. (Minnesota statewide transfer curriculum.)
2. The M State General Education Council is responsible for curriculum review, coordinating and communicating assessment activities, conducting general education program review and planning for improvement. All program and course competencies are reviewed by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council.
3. M State defines objectives for general education in its general education policy. Policies are included in instructional programs, the college catalog and website.

Evidence Statements 3.C: The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The College follows a defined process guided by internal and MnSCU policies and requirements to recruit, screen, select, and evaluate qualified employees.
2. The College meets the state standard in full-time faculty to adjunct faculty ratio.
3. Vacancies are driven by the strategic planning process while minimum credential requirements are set by MnSCU's Academic Affairs College Faculty Credentialing Unit.
4. In accordance with M State and MnSCU policies, the College evaluates full-time and part-time faculty using annual course evaluations and a 3-year comprehensive evaluation cycle.
5. Through MSCF contract, M State provides full-time faculty and staff with \$250 in professional development funds annually. Additionally, the College is committed to supporting its employees by hosting professional development days throughout the year and offering sabbaticals to the faculty.

Evidence Statements 3.D: The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. M State provides multiple means of learning assistance to students, including tutoring and supplemental instruction.
2. M State employs academic advisors to assist students. The advisors utilize a holistic approach to advising in order to best assist students.
3. M State orients students to the D2L platform for online courses. Students have access to a "How to D2L course." To enhance student support for online students, M State recently hired a new retention specialist for students enrolled in online courses.

Evidence Statements 3.E: The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. M State supports clubs and organizations related to career programs, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Student Government, diversity, service learning and religion.
2. M-State's student organizations sponsor events related to social justice, diversity, civic engagement and entertainment. The learning center sponsors sessions on critical issues affecting students.

3. M State's Fergus Falls campus supports men's and women's athletic teams and is a member of the Minnesota College Athletic Conference and Region XIII of the National Junior College Athletic Association.
4. M State is committed to developing student leadership skills by providing opportunities through the Student Government Association and Student Senate on all campuses.

Evidence Statements 4.A: The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. M State's credit hour policy provides information about requirements and procedures related to credit hour determination.
2. In 2012, M State changed its program review cycle from a five-year cycle to a three-year cycle. This provides an opportunity for review and discussions to occur on a more frequent basis.
3. All M State career and technical programs have an advisory board to provide feedback for continuous quality improvement. In 2012, M State began to formally survey employers of M State graduates.

Evidence Statements 4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The faculty define learning objectives for courses and programs and participate on the General Education Council.
2. The faculty participate in Curriculum Assessment Days that are set aside from the regular instructional days to focus on collaboration and review of the learning outcomes and assessment plans.
3. M-State's Curriculum Committee, CAO, Academic Affairs and Standards Council and the Cabinet dedicated 2010-2011 as a time to re-evaluate and implement improvements to the College assessment plan. The faculty conducted curriculum mapping and began the systematic process of determining opportunities to improve student learning.
4. The College has recently reorganized its administrative structure. The restructuring resulted in realignment of the goals and initiatives in accordance with strategic planning. The change holds promise to create greater coordination across departments and among the campuses.

Evidence Statements 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.

1. M State collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, completion by location, program, course and student group and need.
2. Annually the IR Office maintains and publishes the institutional data book and M State at a Glance while MnSCU office tracks performance on completion and persistence at all system institutions and top performers are encouraged to share best practices with peers.
3. Data analyses of M State's student needs have resulted in numerous improvements that include academic alert system, advising portal, learning communities, enrollment dashboard, ABE program, math lab, learning centers, and ELL classes.
4. Although the College reviews management reports and MnSCU dashboard for improvement opportunities in student retention, persistence and completion, the Portfolio does not contain evidence to indicate appropriate goals are set to encourage and gauge institutional effectiveness in these areas.

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

1. M State's CFO works closely with functional units at the College during the budgeting process. M State uses an Innovation Fund as a contingency for special projects and circumstances that arise after the budget is developed.
2. M State's reserve fund balance has increased from 4% of expenditures in 2008 to over 10% of expenditures in FY2013
3. M State's executive cabinet has final responsibility for the budget and department managers are trained to oversee departmental budgets.

Evidence statements 5.B. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The MnSCU System Office provides legislative and executive oversight of the College, and the institutional policies align with MnSCU system policies.

2. Decision-making involves employees in the development and review of policies, regulations, and processes. All employees are invited to participate in the policy development and revision process through committee membership and confidential input/feedback process.
3. M State's Board of Trustees is responsible for strategic decision making. Members are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Evidence statements 5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. Administrators and managers participate in the strategic planning process that includes the reviewing of the College's mission, vision and values as well as creating institutional goals. Advisory boards and community stakeholders' input is considered.
2. The College developed an AQIP project to create a formal process for aligning resource allocation with strategic priorities.
3. The College integrates program review with evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
4. The College monitors and anticipates emerging factors and makes adjustments based on enrollment, the economy, state appropriation, technological and curriculum trends, and workforce requirements.

Evidence statements 5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. M State supports planning and improvement at the program level through the use of program reviews and at the institutional level through the strategic plan and the MnSCU dashboard.
2. Elements of the MnSCU dashboard are made available annually to all M State stakeholders and to the general public.
3. The data query warehouse, enrollment dashboard and operational plan progress documents are located on the employee portal to promote data accessibility.

QUALITY OF SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO FOR MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL 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 Minnesota State Community and

Technical College with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

The portfolio was generally of high quality and well presented. The links provided within the portfolio were generally very good, but a few links referenced general sections of a linked page and it was a bit difficult to find the exact information to which the link referred. The writing was consistent and most charts and data were well presented.

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.