SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the Systems Portfolio of

RICHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

October 14, 2009
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR RICHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

- Richland Community College has a commitment to helping students learn. Richland notes the relationship between teaching and learning and supports excellence in teaching. Many processes—such as assessment—are in the beginning stage and data is just starting to be evaluated. The need to formalize processes, measurement, and improvement has been identified and, in some cases, the implementation has begun. However, the college is its infancy, regarding these activities.

It is necessary to provide concrete examples of the processes and how they work, as well as data which indicate results. In addition, it is essential to identify how these results are used to improve student learning.

- RCC, through its other distinctive objectives, has chosen to address the challenges addressed in its overview (O8C Critical Characteristics.) RCC demonstrates its strong commitment to the community, actively working with community partners to bring new opportunities in education and employment to the people of its district (e.g. schools, farming industry, and other agencies.) In return, the community has reciprocated this commitment to RCC as noted in the 2005 referendum during a difficult economic time.

In order for RCC to respond effectively to the challenges of its college as well as those of the community, it identified the following opportunities: quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborative partnerships, it serves, and its flexible decision making processes, including AQIP (O8A, Critical Characteristics)

In order to use its opportunities to address its challenges in meeting its other distinctive objectives, RCC needs to identify how it plans to measure the results in this area and then use the results to improve its current processes and systems, by setting targets for improvement that are based up the processes and the results of achieving the objectives. RCC will then further strengthen its position as an effective partner in
responding to its constituents' needs by better preparing and educating the people in its service area.

- RCC appears to have a good understanding on its constituents, it utilizes numerous processes and methods to measure its effectiveness, and set targets and gauge its progress. However, while objective setting and review appear to be formalized processes, setting targets and using metrics to better understand progress and apply improvements is still in the very early stages. A more formalized and transparent process would further assist the college to grow and measure its effectiveness in meeting its stakeholders' needs.

- The college demonstrates its intention to value people through its system of personnel and faculty evaluation, its recognition programs held throughout the year, its use of emeritus status for both faculty and staff, and through recognition in its print and technological media. An all college survey provides feedback on employee performance, satisfaction, participation and motivation. Faculty and personnel appear to participate in the decision making process to a certain extent through participation on committees and task forces and invitations to such events as the President's monthly breakfast.

There is, however, no clear evidence that data have been defined or collected to indicate how effective these processes and activities are and how they can lead to improvement. The college understands the need to create formal processes that will help develop employees and lead to continuous improvement. Many of these processes are in the early stages so the college is encouraged to continue development and implementation basing the improvements on appropriate data, metrics, and analysis that lead to improvement in how they value people. Clearly defining the stages of the continuous improvement cycle (processes, results, improvement) allows RCC to open its lines of communication, creating the image of partnership among stakeholders that spurs growth, innovation, and communication.

- The college appears to understand the need to create formal processes that will help develop employees and lead to continuous improvement. However, the lack of formal processes associated with 5P1 and 5P2 and the resulting lack of effectiveness data will make these goals difficult to achieve. The college is encouraged to ensure that
formalized processes are in place for leading and communicating and that effectiveness data is identified and collected that can be used to guide decision-making in this area.

- Richland Community College appears to have a support structure in place with a commitment to continuous improvement; however, most processes for improvement appear to be ad hoc and are not integrated into the college’s decision-making structure. No data on effectiveness has been presented.

- While Richland Community College reports systems for collecting and reporting data across parts of the institution, there is not a critical body of data nor is there clear evidence of a coordinated or comprehensive assessment plan that provides for collection of data to from which drive a continuous improvement cycle. Thus, it is difficult from the responses provided, to determine whether the college understands the need, or has the capacity to capture and analyze the data needed to guide improvements to the college-wide system. Without a plan for assessment (including areas to be measured, identification of appropriate tools for assessment, results, analysis, and effecting change based upon the analysis), RCC could continue to struggle with its challenges. The addition of a balanced scorecard may help with this endeavor.

- Although the college presents information of what occurs in the planning process, there is no mention of measurable goals or presentation of quantifiable results. Concrete examples of the processes and how they work as well as data which indicate results collected and used in the planning process and then how the resulting discoveries were used to improve the planning process are missing and are required.

Additionally, although faculty and staff are supported with college resources for training that would enhance their ability to understand and implement continuous improvement concepts, there is no indication of the effectiveness of the training or the use of metrics to help measure and analyze its value.

- While the College recognizes the need for collaborative relationships and has developed processes for identifying and building relationships with new and existing partners, there is little discussion of how the relationships are prioritized, the effectiveness of processes/systems is measured, and the coordinated approach to improvement.
Improvement in these areas of building collaborative relations will help the college as it faces competition for the various shrinking populations (07A) and its key opportunities/vulnerabilities (08A-08D).

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

ELEMENTS OF Richland Community College's FEEDBACK REPORT

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

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team had only your Systems Portfolio to guide their analysis of your institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, their report may omit important strengths — if you were too modest to stress them in your Systems Portfolio, or if your discussion and documentation of them was unconvincing. Similarly, the team may have pointed out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving the institution's attention. Again, the team used its best judgment in identifying improvement opportunities. If some of these areas of potential improvement are now strengths rather than opportunities because of your own focused efforts, that is all to your credit. If the team was unsure about an area, we urged it to err on the side of giving your institution the best possible advice about where investing your efforts might pay off. If some of their advice comes after the fact, after you've already tackled an area, no harm is done.

Executive Summary: Summative statements agreed upon by the Systems Appraisal Team reflecting the reviewers' assessment of the institution's current status in relation to critical quality characteristics: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the
existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback, and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that the Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

Strategic challenges for the institution are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

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

**Critical Characteristics:** Your Systems Portfolio’s Organizational Overview provides context for the team’s knowledge of your institution’s identity, mission objectives, strategic goals, and key factors related to improvement. Critical Characteristics are those features most important for understanding the institution’s mission, environment, stakeholders, competitive position, goals, and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in the Report.

**Category Feedback:** The Report’s feedback on each of AQIP’s nine Categories specifically identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An S or SS identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by O, with OO indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your *Systems Portfolio*, offer brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team’s findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report.
STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

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

Issues Affecting Compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. An important goal for the Systems Appraisal was to review your institution’s compliance with the Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation. The peer quality experts who served on the team were all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission’s Criteria, and the Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the Criteria as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your institution’s systems and processes under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the Index to the Criteria for Accreditation that you provided with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the Criteria and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.

The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Richland Community College has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and each of their Core Components. Although the Systems Appraisal does not in itself constitute a review for continued accreditation, the team’s conclusion upon reviewing your Portfolio against the Criteria will serve as a telling piece of evidence during the Commission’s next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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

- Throughout this portfolio, RCC presents very little actual data to indicate how well it is accomplishing its learning or operational objectives, nor does the college provide any consistent comparative data using either internal or external benchmarks. There are no measures articulated in the descriptions of process, and there is little evidence that results have been accumulated systematically or that processes have been put into place to gather such data. Such data as are presented are not contextualized or shown as part of an internal trend or in external comparisons to other institutions. There is little, if any, trend data presented that shows results across years. Yet this is fundamental to the AQIP process and to the expected commitment to continuous improvement from AQIP institutions. In other instances, oblique references to data (data which are published elsewhere but not presented in the portfolio) are not convincing.

Team members expressed concerns about the lack of evidence, measurements and data throughout the portfolio, particularly when it is considered that RCC has been an AQIP institution for eight years and that this is its second portfolio. Consequently, when this issue is articulated in nearly all of the Category Summary Statements, it becomes a strategic issue that calls into question whether or not RCC is indeed committed to the continuous improvement cycle that requires ongoing data collection as the means by which improvement is measured and monitored.

It is the team’s expectation that, stakeholders at the college would have developed measurable outcomes by which to evaluate the effectiveness of its processes as well as measures that provide evidence that the processes have been implemented with fidelity. Recognizing that it is sometimes challenging to identify comparable data from peer institutions the team believes, nevertheless, that such comparisons are crucial to the continuous improvement/quality processes. Thus it expects that the college would gather and report data that reports outcomes, obtaining comparative data from peer institutions that provide both a basis for comparison as well as providing benchmarks for
improvement. Such data, both comparative and internal, would be presented as trend data in each of the nine AQIP Categories, showing the progression of results across time. For example, the college could demonstrate the impact of its assessment plan, or how employees increased their knowledge and acceptance of continuous improvement as a result of training specific to the AQIP initiative.

It was not clear to the team whether the lack of attention to results data stems from a lack of understanding of the AQIP process or from a lack of commitment to continuous improvement. Occasional mention of data sources did not convince team members that RCC understands or is sufficiently committed to the AQIP process. The team recommends that RCC discuss its intention and ongoing commitment to the AQIP philosophy and processes with AQIP staff.

**USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT**

The AQIP *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* is intended to initiate action for improvement. It is therefore important that the Report produced by the Systems Appraisal Team stimulate review of organizational processes and systems. Though decisions about specific actions are each institution’s, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement. At the next Strategy Forum an AQIP institution attends, its peers will examine in detail how it is using the feedback from its Systems Appraisal.

An organization needs to examine its Report strategically to identify those areas that will yield greatest benefit if addressed. Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of the Report may be: How do the team’s findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned?

How an organization interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP’s core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration and integrity. Based solely upon an organization’s *Systems Portfolio*, the Report reflects a disciplined, external review of what an organization says about itself. The report should help an organization identify ways to improve its *Systems Portfolio* so it functions better to communicate accurately to
internal and external audiences. But the Report's chief purpose is to help you to identify areas for improvement, and to act so that these areas actually improve. These improvements can then be incorporated into an updated Systems Portfolio, guaranteeing that future Systems Appraisals will reflect the progress an institution has made.

Within a year following the Systems Appraisal, an institution participates in another AQIP Strategy Forum, where the focus will be on what the institution has learned from its Appraisal (and from its other methods of identifying and prioritizing improvement opportunities, and what it has concluded are its major strategic priorities for the next few years. AQIP's goal is to help an institution to clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities through Action Projects that will make a difference in institutional performance.

**Critical Characteristics Analysis**

The purpose of this section is to identify what team members understood to be the critical and distinguishing characteristics of your institution. They are the shared understanding of the most important aspects of Richland Community College, its current dynamics and the forces surrounding it, and its internal momentum and aspirations, at least as team members understood them. This section also demonstrates that the Systems Appraisal Team recognized and knew what makes Richland Community College distinctive. Should you find some characteristics that you think are critical and missing from this list, you may want to clarify and highlight these items when you revise your Systems Portfolio and other literature explaining your institution to the public.

**Item Critical Characteristic**

**O1A** Richland Community College District 537 (Richland), established in 1972 and governed by a 7 member Board of Trustees, is a two-year public institution with an open-enrollment admissions policy. Located in central Illinois, it is one of the smallest downstate community college districts.

**O1B** Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly

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embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.

O1C RCC’s Mission was revised and adopted in February 2009: “to offer innovative educational experiences, opportunities, and environments that enable individuals, communities, and the region to grow, thrive and prosper.”

O1D RCC’s Vision is “to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development.”

O2A Richland, a public comprehensive community college with an “open door” admissions policy, offers transfer/baccalaureate courses and programs, adult education courses, occupational and technical courses and programs, developmental education courses, and a range of personal growth and special training needs as identified by the business and local community.

O2B The range of offerings includes: 34 areas of concentration for Associate of Arts degrees, 47 degrees and 85 basic and advanced certificates for Associate of Applied Sciences (which incorporates SCANS competencies as part of course and program development), Adult Education (GED, ESL, and ABE), and 9 developmental education courses.

O2C Instruction is offered via the traditional classroom, online, dual credit, credit by escrow, and distance education.

O2D Economic Development and Innovative Workforce solutions is a separate division housing both academic and workforce programs

O3A The student profile for Richland can be summarized as: 67.6% part-time and 38.4% fulltime; 77.2% White, 22.8% Minority; average age of 28, with older students studying on weekends: 7,280 taking courses for credit (51.9%), 5,245 taking non-credit courses (48.1%); 53.3% enrolled in AA/AS programs; 34.3% enrolled in occupational programs, and 10.7% in general education courses.

O3B Financial aid needs of students are increasing. In FY07, 3797 students received financial aid, almost double the number of students (2009) who received financial aid in FY06. Sources of financial aid are from federal and state funding including the PELL, MAP, and SEOG, and scholarships from local civic organizations and the Richland Foundation
(College fundraising entity). The number of students receiving scholarships through the Foundation increased from 199 in 2003 to 341 in 2007.

O4A Richland participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O4B Richland's collective bargaining unit and part-time union use the interest based bargaining approach to reach contract agreements.

O4C The College has become a key participant in the Decatur Area Education Coalition – an effort to ensure students succeed in K-12 and are prepared for college level studies.

O5A Professional training of faculty ranges from AA/AS (5) degrees to the appropriate MA/MFA/MS degree (58) and the doctorate (7 of the full-time faculty, 4 of the 146 adjunct faculty).

O5B RCC has 96 fulltime faculty and 146 adjunct faculty. More than half (58) of the full-time faculty have 0-5 years of service at RCC, reflecting a recent wave of faculty retirements and the hiring of new faculty.

O6A Facilities include the main campus, Richland Center for Sustainability and Innovation, Clinton Education Center, RCC Hope Academy Center, The Fairview Park Place Center, The Fire Science Training Center, Project Read, and classes at local libraries, high schools, and libraries.

O6B Richland's programs in Surgical Technology, Radiography, Practical Nursing, Associate Degree Nursing, Automotive Technology, Emergency Medical Technician, and Medical Transcription are nationally accredited.

O7A Richland faces competition for the shrinking population in the following areas: public and private four-year institutions; Workforce Investment Solutions turning elsewhere for special training programs; online education programs; advanced placement programs; and programs that can respond to financial need.

O8A Richland views the following opportunities arising from its challenges: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic
needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

O8B Online course sections have tripled over the last four years as the competition for online courses has increased.

O8C Enrollment at the college has been negatively impacted by: a declining birthrate in the district; an egress of individuals due to job losses; a high drop out in local secondary schools; and an increasing number of underprepared high school graduates. Related to this is a decrease in funding through property taxes and state funding.

O8D An AQIP institution since 2001, the college has made a concerted effort to incorporate continuous improvement as the foundation for strategic planning.

**CATEGORY FEEDBACK**

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP Categories, selected Critical Characteristics are again highlighted, those the Systems Appraisal Team believed were critical keys to reviewing that particular AQIP Category. The symbols used in these "strengths and opportunities" sections for each Category stand for outstanding strength (SS), strength (S), opportunity for improvement (O) and pressing or outstanding opportunity for improvement (OO). The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the Systems Appraisal Team members, and deserves your thoughtful consideration. Comments marked SS or OO may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

**AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN**

*Helping Students Learn* identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how your entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student
learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

**Item Critical Characteristic**

O1C RCC’s Mission was revised and adopted in February 2009: “to offer innovative educational experiences, opportunities, and environments that enable individuals, communities, and the region to grow, thrive and prosper.”

O1D RCC’s Vision is “to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development.”

O2A Richland, a public comprehensive community college with an “open door” admissions policy, offers transfer/baccalaureate courses and programs, adult education courses, occupational and technical courses and programs, developmental education courses, and a range of personal growth and special training needs as identified by the business and local community.

O2B The range of offerings includes: 34 areas of concentration for Associate of Arts degrees, 47 degrees and 85 basic and advanced certificates for Associate of Applied Sciences (which incorporates SCANS competencies as part of course and program development), Adult Education (GED, ESL, and ABE), and 9 developmental education courses.

O2C Instruction is offered via the traditional classroom, online, dual credit, credit by escrow, and distance education.

O3A The student profile for Richland can be summarized as: 67.6% part-time and 38.4% fulltime; 77.2% White, 22.8% Minority; average age of 28, with older students studying on weekends: 7,280 taking courses for credit (51.9%), 5,245 taking non-credit courses (48.1%); 53.3% enrolled in AA/AS programs; 34.3% enrolled in occupational programs, and 10.7% in general education courses.

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O4A Richland participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O6B Richland’s programs in Surgical Technology, Radiography, Practical Nursing, Associate Degree Nursing, Automotive Technology, Emergency Medical Technician, and Medical Transcription are nationally accredited.

O8B Online course sections have tripled over the last four years as the competition for online courses has increased.

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

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<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>1P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Program objectives are established by a broadly participatory process that includes both a variety of internal stakeholders as well as, where and as appropriate, external stakeholder groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>The 2008-2009 pilot for testing an assessment matrix will provide an opportunity to implement the work of the Outcomes Assessment Taskforce that was created in 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>There is broad latitude for faculty to propose and develop new courses to support existing programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Prior to admission to most academic programs, students must provide evidence that they have appropriate academic preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P4</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>While there are a number of methods of communication, there is no discussion of a process used to ensure the communication reaches the appropriate parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P5</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A proactive advising program helps students select a program of study that matches their needs and interests.</td>
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There is no evidence that a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan has been developed. Developing and implementing such a plan is critically important and, when developed, will provide a foundation for other documentation of teaching and learning effectiveness.

RCC has developed several non-traditional time frames for offering courses including several that are offered evenings and weekends as well as increasing online offerings.

The approach to planning for course delivery appears to be primarily ad hoc. A more systematic procedure for reviewing and planning for alternative delivery formats would enhance the impact and potential of these efforts to meet diverse student needs.

Formalizing a clear and regular process for determining faculty and staff development would enable more consistent and reliable information for support.

There does not appear to be an explicit or outlined process for aligning co-curricular goals with curricular learning objectives including service learning opportunities.

This is the college's second AQIP portfolio. Still it appears that there is not yet a coordinated assessment plan that extends across the institution. The work of the Outcomes Assessment Taskforce to construct such a plan provides an important opportunity for the college to move forward in this area.

While there are a number of methods for measuring student preparedness, there is no discussion of a process used to ensure that the institution has the data necessary to measure and improve college-wide.

In the absence of an institution-wide assessment plan, there does not appear to be any procedure for determining the extent to which students have mastered learning objectives of the institution.

No meaningful data are presented for common learning or program learning objectives.
The evidence presented that students have acquired the knowledge and skills required for degrees and certificates is sparse and is limited to two years of pass-rates for nursing students in each of two programs and one year of data on students who were employed or pursuing further education at one year from graduation or completion.

The information presented describes processes; no results are presented.

Identifying appropriate peer institutions and developing comparative data on student learning are important as RCC develops a comprehensive assessment plan.

Developing a process whereby improvements grow out of data collected on student learning will be an important component of the RCC assessment plan.

The plan proposed for evaluating outcomes and developing a balanced score card will be useful when implemented.

**AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES**

Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution’s major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of your mission. Depending on your institution’s character, it examines your institution’s processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives, alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:

**Item**  Critical Characteristic
O1B RCC has identified its vision and mission and adopted (2001) five core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity), which comprise the core of its decision making processes at all levels of the institution.

O1D RCC's Vision is "to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development."

O2D Economic Development and Innovative Workforce solutions is a separate division housing both academic and workforce programs.

O4A RCC participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O4C RCC has become a key participant in the Decatur Area Education Coalition - an effort to ensure students succeed in K-12 and are prepared for college level studies.

O8A RCC perceives the following opportunities: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

O8C Enrollment at the college has been negatively impacted by: a declining birthrate in the district; an egress of individuals due to job losses; a high drop out in local secondary schools; and an increasing number of under prepared high school graduates. Related to this is a decrease in funding through property taxes and state funding.

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

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<tr>
<td>2P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The identification of other distinctive objectives incorporated into the Strategic Plan involved the intentional inclusion of ideas of stakeholders from across the College through the strategic planning and from the geographic region with public input through REACH.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The process that RCC has used to determine these distinctive objectives and the consequent action plans is not clearly delineated. Clear delineation of the process for determining distinctive objectives and the implementation of the consequent action plans allows RCC to communicate more clearly its academic directions to constituents while providing for stronger accountability within the decision-making process.

RCC's faculty, staff and administrators have developed multiple avenues for communication within its community through participation in such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce, the Local Workforce Investment Board, and K-12 leaders among others. RCC also makes wide use of print and technology media (press releases, email, internet broadcasts, etc.) to communicate information. These avenues facilitate the communication of expectations to its service area while providing for partnerships in new economic and training ventures.

RCC has developed an integrated process that links the need for staff and faculty with the budgeting process.

Although budgetary aspects relating to new positions are addressed in the budgeting process, RCC does not mention how other faculty/staff needs (training, supplies, development of new skills, additional support services etc.) are identified or addressed. Consideration of these needs provides a realistic estimate of the full costs of supporting faculty and staff.

Members of the college community from faculty committees through the Board of Trustees are systematically engaged in reviewing objectives and envisioning the college's future.

Central to continuous improvement is the identification of specific assessment measures to evaluate each of the distinctive objectives in such a manner that the institution knows its successes and where adjustments are needed. The measures provided don't align with the objectives stated in 2P1.
There are no data reported from the measures for determining distinctive objectives described in 2P5, nor is there a connection between the stated accomplishments and the objectives listed in 2P1. Without the capture and utilization of this data, RCC is not able to implement and continue the cycle of the continuous improvement process (i.e. knowing what to change, where and how.)

The absence of comparative data from peer institutions prevents RCC from showcasing its strengths to its external stakeholders who are also a source of funding. Developing and utilizing comparative data from peer institutions provides important benchmarks by which the college can determine how well it is doing in achieving its distinctive objectives.

Richland has strong community support. A referendum for the College passed with 69% of the vote in 2005.

The new VP for Economic Development and Innovative Solutions will provide momentum and leadership for continuing to develop and implement distinctive objectives.

While RCC has given examples of ways they have responded to identified needs for change in their processes (e.g. the Progress City), and has indicated they will improve their tracking of these objectives, there does not appear to be a set process in place for improvement at this time.

RCC has identified several targets (e.g. explore expanding distant learning, feasibility of more representation from K-12 systems) for improvement through REACH.

RCC has an opportunity to measure the impact of its collaborative work in the communities in which it is involved. Data collected over the coming year, the analysis of its results, and the setting of targets for improving the meeting of its other distinctive objectives will assist RCC in assessing the impact of its relationships and in planning for the future of these relationships.
AQIP CATEGORY 3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS

Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification, student and stakeholder requirements, analysis of student and stakeholder needs, relationship building with students and stakeholders, complaint collection, analysis, and resolution, determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O2A</td>
<td>Richland, a public comprehensive community college with an “open door” admissions policy, offers transfer/baccalaureate courses and programs, adult education courses, occupational and technical courses and programs, developmental education courses, and a range of personal growth and special training needs as identified by the business and local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O3A</td>
<td>The student profile for Richland can be summarized as: 67.6% part-time and 38.4% fulltime; 77.2% White, 22.8% Minority; average age of 28, with older students studying on weekends: 7,280 taking courses for credit (51.9%), 5,245 taking non-credit courses (48.1%); 53.3% enrolled in AA/AS programs; 34.3% enrolled in occupational programs, and 10.7% in general education courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O3B</td>
<td>Financial aid needs of students are increasing. In FY07, 3797 students received financial aid, almost double the number of students (2009) who received financial aid in FY06. Sources of financial aid are from federal and state funding including the PELL, MAP, and SEOG, and scholarships from local civic organizations and the Richland Foundation (College fundraising entity). The number of students receiving scholarships through the Foundation increased from 199 in 2003 to 341 in 2007.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O4A Richland participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O4B Richland’s collective bargaining unit and part-time union use the interest based bargaining approach to reach contract agreements.

O4C The College has become a key participant in the Decatur Area Education Coalition – an effort to ensure students succeed in K-12 and are prepared for college level studies.

O5A Professional training of faculty ranges from AA/AS (5) degrees to the appropriate MA/MFA/MS degree (58) and the doctorate (7 of the full-time faculty, 4 of the 146 adjunct faculty).

O5B RCC has 96 fulltime faculty and 146 adjunct faculty. More than half (58) of the full-time faculty have 0-5 years of service at RCC, reflecting a recent wave of faculty retirements and the hiring of new faculty.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>RCC uses a variety of instruments to determine student satisfaction and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P1b</td>
<td>OO</td>
<td>There does not appear to be a systematic process for utilizing the collected satisfaction and needs information in a decision-making and improvement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>RCC provides a number of informal and formal settings and opportunities for faculty and staff to build and maintain relationships with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>The various means for developing student relationships offer opportunities to identify specific outcomes and measures that will help determine their effectiveness and strengthen the improvement cycle. There is no evidence of plans of how to communicate with students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3P3 S Creation of the 2007 Facilities Master Plan involved a broad spectrum of key internal and external stakeholders.

3P4 S RCC, through REACH and its affiliation with a number of organizations and boards in the community, maintains contact with key decision making groups in the area.

3P6 S Numerous means are used to collect student feedback on issues and concerns. Student senate has a systematic procedure for reviewing ideas and concerns and presenting follow up.

3P7 O There is no clearly defined process for utilizing student and stakeholder data. Developing a process facilitates decision-making and improvement.

3R1a O Minimal data are provided on student satisfaction beyond a narrative description from two (2005, 2007) administrations of the Faces of the Future survey. For example, there is no information about the number of surveys actually returned, what the breakout of responses was, nor of the content of the survey.

3R1b S The number of grievances submitted to the Judicial Board dropped from 10 to 3 from 2005 to 2008.

3R2a S Richland uses a broad array of methods to disseminate information about the college's "goals and tactics."

3R2b O A careful analysis to determine reasons for the gap between statewide completion rates and those of RCC could provide important information for the college's quality improvement processes.

3R3 O Data presented for stakeholder satisfaction are sparse. Developing a richer and more comprehensive data-set could provide important information.

3R5 OO Developing an on-going consistent data-set to permit comparisons of results with peer institutions is an important opportunity for RCC.

3I1 O Developing a consistent process for integrating and utilizing the variety of stakeholder information will be an important key for improving RCC's
ability to understand and respond to stakeholder needs. The need for continuous improvement has been identified.

Few improvement processes are currently implemented.

**AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE**

*Valuing People* explores your institution's commitment to the development of your employees since the efforts of all of your faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 4, Valuing People:

**Item  Critical Characteristic**

O1B Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.

O3A The student profile for Richland can be summarized as: 67.6% part-time and 38.4% full-time; 77.2% White, 22.8% Minority; average age of 28, with older students studying on weekends: 7,280 taking courses for credit (51.9%), 5,245 taking non-credit courses (48.1%); 53.3% enrolled in AA/AS programs; 34.3% enrolled in occupational programs, and 10.7% in general education courses.

O4B Richland's collective bargaining unit and part-time union use the interest based bargaining approach to reach contract agreements.
O5A Professional training of faculty ranges from AA/AS (5) degrees to the appropriate MA/MFA/MS degree (58) and the doctorate (7 of the full-time faculty, 4 of the 146 adjunct faculty).

O5B RCC has 96 full-time faculty and 146 adjunct faculty. More than half (58) of the fulltime faculty have 0-5 years of service at RCC, reflecting a recent wave of faculty retirements and the hiring of new faculty.

O8a Richland perceives the following opportunities: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

O8C Enrollment at the college has been negatively impacted by: a declining birthrate in the district; an egress of individuals due to job losses; a high drop out in local secondary schools; and an increasing number of under prepared high school graduates. Related to this is a decrease in funding through property taxes and state funding.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>RCC has identified a detailed, inclusive hiring process for selecting administrators, faculty and staff with the skills and attitudes that reflect college needs and core values for positions. The hiring process includes supervisors, peers and other stakeholders in interviewing and selecting the appropriate candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Initiated in 2003 and revised following input from a CIP team and participants, the orientation process for employees covers the functions of the offices and key aspects of campus culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P2b</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>RCC does not provide a discussion of how employees are retained or how the college plans for changes in personnel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Including such information in the orientation process, for example, provides new employees with the opportunity to identify their future at RCC.

RCC, based upon the report of a CIP team on organizational development has made communication through diverse information systems (electronic, written, and oral) for employees of all categories and divisions a priority in the college.

The college's core values and emphasis on ethics are consistently reflected throughout the institution's communication, training experiences, and expectations.

While RCC indicates diverse events for communicating, learning, and skill sharing, it has not identified ways in which the process and activities contribute to high performance, innovation, empowerment and organizational learning. Identification of how these to processes and activities are related to performance provides its employees with a feeling of ownership and connection to the institution.

RCC provides a rich array of short term professional development opportunities related to the operations of the college for its faculty and staff.

RCC has not addressed how they ensure employees, especially faculty, continue to develop their professional knowledge of their field throughout their careers. Current information of trends, information, skills, and training tools are essential to offering viable programs and training that serve the community and the students.

Over 80% of full time employees will have participated in Continuous Improvement training by the end of the 2009 spring semester.

Classified Personnel and faculty do not appear to be part of the planning process for identifying training needs, rather the process appears to be more top down.
A more systematic procedure for collecting and analyzing data on training needs would target a system of training opportunities that focus on such topics as student preparation, and student learning.

Over the past 6 years, RCC's administrators and classified personnel have developed and implemented a comprehensive system for evaluation (Personal Performance Plan) of classified personnel. The plan includes the opportunity for classified personnel to set personal performance objectives in the area of work and service.

RCC has developed a comprehensive Faculty Evaluation and Development program tied to its mission and core values which is integrated with tenure. The tenure system provides a 3-year process to evaluate faculty members' teaching, advising, and service. A committee provides feedback and support for new faculty as they move forward in the process.

With the clearly defined systems for evaluation in place, the opportunity exists to strengthen RCC's response to the planning process and the needs of the community by aligning the work of faculty and staff to overall college initiatives, thus assuring the training needs of the college and the community are addressed.

RCC has identified a variety of means for recognizing faculty through the promotion process and classified staff and faculty service. These means of recognition provide positive reinforcement to faculty and classified personnel.

As with the evaluation of performance process, RCC has neither aligned its forms of recognition to the mission, vision and goals of the college nor with the key performance areas.

While RCC uses an All College Survey to identify key areas such as participation and motivation, it does not describe a process for collecting evidence of the effectiveness of RCC's motivational efforts. Such evidence when collected and analyzed leads to improving faculty and staff motivation and morale.
The College regularly administers an HR initiated all-college survey to examine key areas such as participation, motivation, challenges and strengths as well as assessing employee satisfaction, health and safety issues and their well-being.

RCC has identified several measures of the extent to which employees are satisfied with the college.

Because the data on employee satisfaction is highly aggregated and not dated, it is not possible to ascertain whether the employees are satisfied or not with the institution. The data will be useful for decision-making only if it is further broken down so as to permit more specific identification of actions that need to be undertaken in order to lead continuous improvement in this area. Further, results should reflect several years of data so that trends can be identified.

Without results [for this category], RCC has positioned itself for further problems with communication and trust among its internal stakeholders. Results include the analysis of data collected, communication of the findings, and a means of addressing the concerns identified. Without open communication of how the concerns are to be addressed, there will continue to be problems with stakeholder commitment to the mission, vision, continuous improvement, and growth of the college.

RCC has presented no results to indicate that its processes are working or not working. As noted in 4P5 and 4P8, the processes do not describe how data will be collected or analyzed. Information on which activities (e.g. personnel evaluation, safety training, CIP teams) are working informs what RCC should continue to do to grow and adapt to its changing demographics and what it should not do.

No meaningful comparative results have been presented, yet this is the college's second Systems Portfolio. Without comparative results, the college is not in a position to say to its internal and external stakeholders that it is providing a quality educational experience that responds to student and regional training needs.
While the college acknowledges the need for improvement in the area of valuing people and has started developing groups, including CIP and other committees that, RCC has not defined processes linking data to improvements and does not appear to be integrating them across the college. Communication continues to be an on-going challenge. Clearly defined processes that include data collection, analysis of results, and relating the two to the improvement cycle are key to improved communication.

Targets for improvements in valuing people are incorporated in the college’s strategic planning. The College tries to improve current systems and processes for valuing people and has set some targets.

RCC does not provide any discussion related to how the results of the satisfaction survey are communicated to the stakeholders. Without a discussion of the results, the college is missing an opportunity to determine priorities and to address areas of concern related to communication among its stakeholders.

**AQIP Category 5: Leading And Communicating**

*Leading And Communicating* addresses how your institution’s leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines your institution’s processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction setting, future opportunity seeking, decision making, use of data, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

**Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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</table>

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O1A Richland Community College District 537 (Richland), established in 1972 and governed by a 7 member Board of Trustees, is a two-year public institution with an open-enrollment admissions policy. Located in central Illinois, it is one of the smallest downstate community college districts.

O1B Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.

O1C RCC’s seven-person Board of Trustees revisited its mission, vision, and core values of the College and revised them since the college’s acceptance into HLC’s AQIP and again in 2009.

O1D RCC’s Vision is “to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development.”

O4A Richland participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O4B Richland’s collective bargaining unit and part-time union use the interest based bargaining approach to reach contract agreements.

O8A Richland views the following opportunities arising from its challenges: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5P1</td>
<td>OO</td>
<td>While the college has identified important elements required for setting institutional direction, it has not described a process to ensure that all the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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appropriate avenues for input and communication along with the necessary steps for improvement are included in the plans. Describing how the various stakeholder groups actually communicate, how the planning process moves to and from each group and how mission, vision, values, planning, actions and outcomes are integrated has not been addressed.

The leadership at RCC is involved in a number of professional organizations and oversight groups, in several instances assuming leadership of these groups. This helps assure the exchange of ideas between those inside the college with others outside of it. Additionally, internal stakeholders (students, faculty and staff) are involved in the exchange of ideas related to current and future needs.

The 2003 Vision is by now more than 6 years old, yet there is no mention of a process for reviewing or updating it. A more current statement reflecting current environmental realities would provide improved guidance for the continuous improvement processes to which the college has committed itself. While there are examples provided of changes that have occurred, there is no discussion of a process that is used to help the guide the college in making the necessary changes for future opportunities and sustainability.

Using consensus decision making reinforces the college's commitment to participation by all stakeholders in its future. Examples are provided of decision-making across different groups (e.g. Counselors and Deans on scheduling) before Board approval and how these changes are then shared with the college community via the intranet.

The actual data being used, the processes by which data are reviewed, and how it is integrated into the decision making and continuous improvement process has not been made clear.

RCC recognizes on-going concerns in internal communication processes as noted, for example, in a recent employee survey. Addressing these concerns on the basis of relevant data collected and utilized will be a key
element in ongoing improvement of the college's internal communication processes.

5P6  S  The Board of Trustees and the President seek to ensure that the mission and core values of the college remain highly visible in the planning and operation of the college.

5P7  S  RCC's policy of supporting employees who are pursuing a bachelor's degree and promotion of professional development opportunities for employees will strengthen its employee base over the longer term.

5P8  O  There is no formal plan for leadership development. With more than half of the current faculty replacing retirees, there will be opportunities for training and shaping these individuals to assume future leadership roles.

5P9  S  An evaluation system for faculty and non-faculty employees has been institutionalized throughout the institution. RCC utilizes annual performance appraisals for all non-faculty employees including the President review by the BOT.

5R1  OO The data presented do not contribute to an understanding of the effectiveness of RCC's leadership and communication, nor does it indicate how they will use if for improvement. Very few results were provided. In particular, no results associated with effectiveness in communication or decision making, or comparisons with peer institutions, were presented or discussed.

5R2  OO Development of comparative data on leadership would provide a benchmark against which to evaluate present performance and improvement. No comparison or trend data are provided.

5J1  S  The President's Breakfasts provide a useful means of fostering dialog and communication across the campus. Such meetings have led to identification of needed improvements based on stakeholder feedback data. RCC states that it is in the process of improving its current systems and processes for leading and communicating.
AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:

**Item** Critical Characteristic

**O1B** Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.

**O2A** Richland, a public comprehensive community college with an “open door” admissions policy, offers transfer/baccalaureate courses and programs, adult education courses, occupational and technical courses and programs, developmental education courses, and a range of personal growth and special training needs as identified by the business and local community.

**O2B** The range of offerings includes: 34 areas of concentration for Associate of Arts degrees, 47 degrees and 85 basic and advanced certificates for Associate of Applied Sciences (which incorporates SCANS competencies as part of course and program development), Adult Education (GED, ESL, and ABE), and 9 developmental education courses.

**O2C** Instruction is offered via the traditional classroom, online, dual credit, credit by escrow, and distance education.

**O3A** The student profile for Richland can be summarized as: 67.6% part-time and 38.4% fulltime; 77.2% White, 22.8% Minority; average age of 28, with older students studying on weekends: 7,280 taking courses for credit (51.9%), 5,245 taking non-credit courses.
(48.1%); 53.3% enrolled in AA/AS programs; 34.3% enrolled in occupational programs, and 10.7% in general education courses.

O3B Financial aid needs of students are increasing. In FY07, 3797 students received financial aid, almost double the number of students (2009) who received financial aid in FY06. Sources of financial aid are from federal and state funding including the PELL, MAP, and SEOG, and scholarships from local civic organizations and the Richland Foundation

O4C The College has become a key participant in the Decatur Area Education Coalition – an effort to ensure students succeed in K-12 and are prepared for college level studies.

O6A Facilities include the main campus, Richland Center for Sustainability and Innovation, Clinton Education Center, RCC Hope Academy Center, The Fairview Park Place Center, The Fire Science Training Center, Project Read, and classes at local libraries, high schools, and libraries.

O8A Richland views the following opportunities arising from its challenges: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

O8B Online course sections have tripled over the last four years as the competition for online courses has increased.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>RCC collects information about the support needs of its students from a variety of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6P2</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Information about the support needs of administrative personnel is collected from several sources, but it is not clear how systematically or consistently the information is collected, or how it is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6P3a</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>More systematic and consistent procedures for collecting and managing information about support processes and documenting the processes will...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
enable better monitoring of successes and identification of areas for improvement. It will further empower the faculty, staff and administrators to feel ownership while making a commitment to the college and its students support services.

6P3b S Supervisors and staff are in direct contact with students and the public, thus managing and monitoring day-to-day operations and providing customer service. There is flexibility in implementing changes at the front line, without the need for higher level administration authorization.

6P4 S Individuals have received training in continuous improvement processes and concepts in an effort to help move the college toward more consistent data-based decision making.

6R1 OO No data or results are reported or presented.

6R2 OO No data or results are presented on processes for administrative support service processes.

6R3 OO Since no data has been presented in the previous sections on results, there is no comparative data available.

6I1b O More clearly specified processes utilizing data gathered on process effectiveness will enable completion of the continuous improvement cycle for support services.

6I2b O Developing a systematic and consistent procedure for reviewing and considering information leading to possible improvements will enable better accountability and more consistent data-based decision making to improve support services.

AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURIN G EFFECTIVENESS

Measuring Effectiveness examines how your institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data – at the institutional and departmental/unit levels; institutional measures of effectiveness; information...
and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O1B</td>
<td>Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1C</td>
<td>RCC’s Mission was revised and adopted in February 2009: “to offer innovative educational experiences, opportunities, and environments that enable individuals, communities, and the region to grow, thrive and prosper.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1D</td>
<td>RCC’s Vision is “to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O7A</td>
<td>Richland faces competition for the shrinking population in the following areas: public and private four-year institutions; Workforce Investment Solutions turning elsewhere for special training programs; online education programs; advanced placement programs; and programs that can respond to financial need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O8A</td>
<td>Richland perceives the following opportunities: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O8B</td>
<td>Online course sections have tripled over the last four years as the competition for online courses has increased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| O8C  | Enrollment at the college has been negatively impacted by: a declining birthrate in the district; an egress of individuals due to job losses; a high drop out in local secondary
schools; and an increasing number of underprepared high school graduates. Related to this is a decrease in funding through property taxes and state funding.

OBD An AQIP institution since 2001, the college has made a concerted effort to incorporate continuous improvement as the foundation for strategic planning.

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>RCC's Administrative Information System (AIS) provides a robust environment for gathering, managing and reporting data. Data are accessible by the departments and areas that need it and is reportedly used to make decisions. Attitudes toward the use of quantitative and qualitative data are reported to have improved over the past two years. The reported Environmental Scan offers important trend data in three areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>While RCC has begun the collection and analysis of data, the actual processes used to relate the data to student learning, overall institutional objectives, and improving the college are not reported. The ways in which data affect student learning, institutional objectives and lead to improvement within the college are central to the college’s growth and sustainability. Developing a comprehensive system for collecting, managing and analyzing data that is closely integrated into the decision making processes and structures will be crucial to the success of the AQIP continuous improvement model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Development and implementation of the new portal will enable improved data management and more flexible reporting in response to key management and improvement questions, demonstrating a proactive approach to understanding user needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P3a</td>
<td>OO</td>
<td>As reflected in the results section of this category there has been a lack of comparative and benchmark data, suggesting the processes for selecting</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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and obtaining this data are not as robust as necessary. No comparative data or systematized comparative processes are reported.

RCC appears to use data needs from external or granting agencies such as the ICCB, AQIP, to determine priorities and types of data to be collected. The extent to which internal stakeholders generally play a role in identifying data needs to support their programs and/or services in the AQIP process is not clear. Yet, it is their needs that drive the day-to-day operations of the college that must provide the foundation for identifying data that can be used for decision making and improvement. The Balanced Scorecard, when developed, may help provide the appropriate balance between internal and external agencies, departments, and individuals in identifying data and reports needed.

While there is movement toward a balanced scorecard/key indicators report, it is not yet in place. The Institutional Data Book, the Environmental Scan and the proposed Balanced Scorecard have the potential to provide relevant information that can inform the improvement process. The college is encouraged to continue their efforts toward their full implementation and utilization for decision-making.

The college reports methods for departmental-level analysis that are intended to align curriculum with outcomes through its current project on institutional/cross curricular student outcomes that will “develop rubrics and gather base-line data.” However there is no evidence that the processes described have been integrated into a “system” nor how these efforts will be maintained in the future.

Technical staff and AIS staff work collaboratively to determine upgrade and security needs for the computer system.

While RCC indicates that it collects information or data from a variety of sources, it has not indicated what the data are, the manner in which it is collected and the role that the data play in the decision making process. The data collection appears to be random in its approach. When data collection is aligned to vision, mission, values and specific program goals,
it provides insights into the areas that need change or adaptation, and the ability to make decisions that are informed by data.

7R1 OO No data or results on effectiveness are presented. Yet such results, including source of information and comparisons with other institutions, are essential in order to ascertain the successes and needs for change in the area of assessing effectiveness.

7R2 OO RCC has indicated that it has strengthened data collection for this category since it began using AQIP. However, no comparative data or results are presented. Further work is needed to show what results are used to evaluate student services, student learning, stakeholder satisfaction, planning and other areas and to indicate the results are used at RCC to inform or shape change.

711 OO RCC has indicated that it intends to more clearly define and institutionalize its improvement processes. However the lack of results (as indicated in 7R1 & 7R2) make the process for improvement difficult to see and understand. Successfully measuring effectiveness requires a structured system that assures that the process, collection and analysis of data can be used to improve the system and to address the college’s self-described challenges in understanding and utilizing data. Implementation of such a system will provide a major opportunity for growth as RCC matures in its continuous improvement processes. The process-results-improvement cycle needs to be integrated into all areas of institutional life, especially student learning so that RCC can effectively position itself to respond to the current economic, geographic, and demographic factors impacting its current and future status.

712a S RCC has identified six areas in which goals have been set for improvement.

712b OO Institutionalizing the continuous improvement process, including clear definition of the process and establishing appropriate measures across all areas of the college includes establishing priorities for measuring
effectiveness, communicating them to the internal stakeholders as well as the external stakeholders.

**AQIP CATEGORY 8: PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

*Planning Continuous Improvement* examines your institution’s planning processes and how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision. It examines your institution’s processes and systems related to institutional vision: planning; strategies and action plans; coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; measures; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

**Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement:**

**Item** | **Critical Characteristic**
--- | ---
O1B | Richland has identified its core values (commitment, respect, excellence, accountability, and diversity: 2001), vision, and mission (2009). Those, along with “Community,” are important to RCC, both internally and externally, and the college seeks to explicitly embed those components in its decision making, its processes, and in expressions of its mission.
O1D | RCC’s Vision is “to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development.”
O7A | Richland faces competition for the shrinking population in the following areas: public and private four-year institutions; Workforce Investment Solutions turning elsewhere for special training programs; online education programs; advanced placement programs; and programs that can respond to financial need.
O8A | Richland views the following opportunities arising from its challenges: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.
Online course sections have tripled over the last four years as the competition for online courses has increased.

Enrollment at the college has been negatively impacted by: a declining birthrate in the district; an egress of individuals due to job losses; a high drop out in local secondary schools; and an increasing number of underprepared high school graduates. Related to this is a decrease in funding through property taxes and state funding.

An AQIP institution since 2001, the college has made a concerted effort to incorporate continuous improvement as the foundation for strategic planning.

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The college defines a scanning and planning process that is inclusive in its methodology and relates to changes in vision, mission, and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Through the use of Continuous Improvement Process teams and the strategic plan, the college has defined a process for selecting short and long term priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8P2b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>It is not clear how short and long term goals are defined within an integrated planning process that leads to college goals and critical performance areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8P3b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>While the institution reports the development of key action plans to support its institutional strategies as part of the CIP providing stakeholders an avenue to discuss needs with the Board of Trustees, there does not appear to be tracking of the action plans and how they are implemented within the college. Tracking is a key component in determining how effective the process is working, especially as it impacts the learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8P4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The college reports a process that aligns the planning processes, strategies, and action plans with the various departments and divisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The college utilizes internally generated as well as externally generated measures to set baselines against which performance goals are evaluated. The college is in the early stages of creating an institutional Balanced Scorecard that will provide college-wide communication of goal setting and measurement.

The college reports a resource planning and allocation process that is aligned with its annual budget cycle.

RCC has reported a cycle for budgeting which does not necessarily identify how resources are tied to selection and action plan implementation, including impact on facilities, personnel, new programs, etc. Quality improvement is an active process that requires the institution to interconnect its resources in the planning process to assure that the human, fiscal and physical resources are there now and in the future.

Faculty and staff are supported with college resources for training that will enhance their ability to understand and implement continuous improvement concepts and encourage taking initiative and ownership of the improvement.

While employee development opportunities are available, there is little indication that the employee development process is built into the planning process (i.e. optional, not required).

While various instruments were identified as sources for measures, there is little indication of which metrics inform the college of the effectiveness of its planning system (i.e. how do they know?).

The results presented are anecdotal, not systematic and do not represent measures. Developing quantifiable and measureable indicators of effectiveness will provide the ability to review performance against predetermined benchmarks as well as enabling comparison with selected peer institutions.

While the college identified some future performance projections for strategies and action plan activities, they are not measurable as
presented. Measureable goals are needed in order to observe progress and to enable comparisons with benchmarks and peer institutions.

8R3 O
The college provided no data for which to make the comparisons.

8R4 O
There is little evidence to ascertain whether the system for planning continuous improvement is effective.

8I1 O
While an annual improvement plan was created using committees and task forces, quantifiable and measurable indicators of effectiveness of the continuous improvement processes and systems must be developed in order to strengthen the college's continuous improvement cycle.

8I2 O
While an annual improvement plan is in place, quantifiable and measurable indicators of effectiveness of the continuous improvement processes and systems must be developed in order to strengthen the college's continuous improvement cycle. In particular, specific improvement priorities must be identified and more specific information is needed on how targets are set.

AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Building Collaborative Relationships examines your institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Richland Community College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

Item Critical Characteristic

O1D RCC's Vision is "to be the premier source for education, workforce training, partnerships and economic development."
O2D Economic Development and Innovative Workforce solutions is a separate division housing both academic and workforce programs.

O4A Richland participates in a range of partnerships to meet the academic needs of its students and the communities that it serves. These collaborations include the following: Partners in Education, Articulated 2 + 2 degree programs, cooperative educational programs with other community colleges, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

O4B Richland's collective bargaining unit and part-time union use the interest based bargaining approach to reach contract agreements.

O4C The College has become a key participant in the Decatur Area Education Coalition – an effort to ensure students succeed in K-12 and are prepared for college level studies.

O6A Facilities include the main campus, Richland Center for Sustainability and Innovation, Clinton Education Center, RCC Hope Academy Center, The Fairview Park Place Center, The Fire Science Training Center, Project Read, and classes at local libraries, high schools, and libraries.

O8A Richland views the following opportunities arising from its challenges: new ideas from quality faculty and staff, low tuition rate, attention to student personal and academic needs, its collaborations and partnerships in the district it serves, and its decision making processes, including participation in AQIP, which allow for flexibility.

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

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<tr>
<td>9P1c</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The college Board of Trustees through REACH has involved the community (business, social services, educators, etc.) in addressing the issues of job training and retraining, serving diverse populations, lifelong learning, creating an awareness of RCC, and a financial outline of community college funding to guide their planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>RCC has provided a means of identifying how to build relationships. However, it has not addressed how the information gathered is used to create, build and sustain relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9P2a  S  The college meets various needs of its students and constituents and maintains partnerships, develops new initiatives and employee contacts in the community to determine actions and connections. Connections to partnerships are guided by the Strategic Plan and encompass a broad number of sectors and actual or potential partners.

9P2b  O  While RCC maintains an active participation in local, regional, state and professional agencies and organizations, it does not provide evidence of how it identifies ways in which the needs of those in these relationships are met (especially relating to business and industry).

9P3  S  The college has instituted multiple avenues for building internal relationships (e.g. President’s breakfast) and is working to expand these and improve the communication channels.

9P4a  S  The college reports its building of collaborative relationships via the use of the All-College survey administered at two-year intervals as well as analyzing data from various areas that may impact relationship building.

9P4b  O  It is not clear that the indicators presented as “measures of collaborative relationships” provide information that is or can be benchmarked or used for guidance in continuous improvement processes.

9R1a  OO  While RCC has collected data in the past, the information is not current (2003) and does not appear to be an indicator of the effectiveness of the collaborative relationships. There is also no discussion of trend or longitudinal data.

9R2a  OO  The college has not provided evidence of how its results compare with other higher education institutions and organizations nor has it provided any trend data. Such comparisons strengthen the basis for providing information of RCC’s successes with its partners.

911  OO  The College does not appear to have a coordinated plan for improving processes and systems for building collaborative relationships.
There does not appear to be a coordinated or comprehensive plan for setting priorities for improvement.