

## STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Illinois Central College has continued to develop and improve through its 35-year history. It is through the comprehensive and integrated planning processes that the College is able to remain focused on its Mission.

The planning process at the College starts with the Board retreat in January when the Board reviews the Mission and vision of the College and reaffirms or revises the broad institutional goals that have been established to achieve the Mission. After the goals are approved, individual departments develop the strategies to achieve the goals.

The planning cycle at the College is shown in the “Yearly Budget, Planning, and Assessment Cycle.” This series of actions is required to develop and implement the plans to achieve the College’s Mission and vision.

### College Decision-Making Processes

The entities involved in decision making at Illinois Central College include the following groups:

#### Board of Trustees:

Seven individuals elected from the district form the governing body. A student elected by the student body also serves.

**Executive Cabinet:** The Executive Cabinet consists of the President, Vice President for Academic and Student Services, Dean of Student Services, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Director of Institutional Research, Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, Director of Facility Services, Director of Information Services, Director of Human Resources, and Director of Marketing Services.

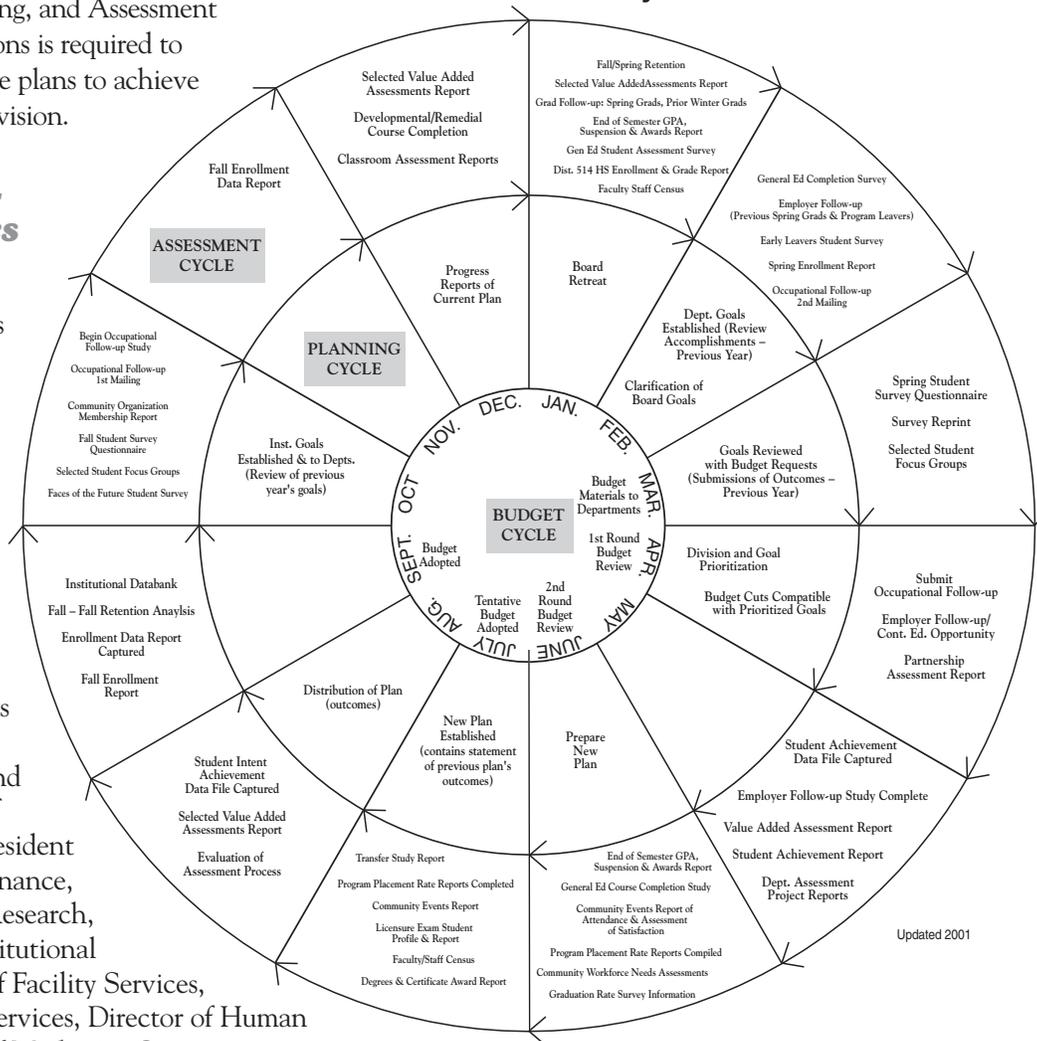
Prior to January 2001, an **Expanded Cabinet** existed. This group’s work has since been replaced by the President’s Council.

**President’s Council:** The President’s Council includes all administrators of the College.

**President’s Advisory Council:** This group includes representatives of all employee groups (Faculty, Classified, Professional, Supervisory and Support (P/S/S), and Carpenters’ Union).

**Faculty and staff** members contribute to decision making via standing committees and ad hoc committees as well as through their individual departments.

### Yearly Budget, Planning, and Assessment Cycle



## **Planning Processes**

Following the Board of Trustees' retreat, the individual departments are encouraged to develop strategies to accomplish the Mission of the College.

The College's vision of being a "national leader in preparing people who succeed in the job market, baccalaureate programs, career advancement, and lifelong learning" was developed as an outgrowth of an 18-month visioning process culminating January 2000. The College continues to focus on the implementation of the four broad goals:

- Continually assess, plan, implement, and improve.
- Understand and practice the Core Values.
- Remain affordable, fiscally responsible, and appropriately funded.
- Focus on and enhance quality.

In response to the developing need to assess student learning, the College formed a steering committee to incorporate assessment into College procedures. The Outcomes Assessment Committee has been proactive in planning and developing assessment tools and strategies. The College now has in place a requirement that all courses which are new or revised will list methods of assessment in their proposals.

Human and capital resources are reviewed at all levels of the College on a continuing basis with particular areas of responsibilities identified in the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan reveals the College to be forward-looking in areas critical to future success. Notable areas include plans to expand donor base and reduce operating costs.

Enrollment growth is one of the critical indicators of long-term success. In this area, the College's planning processes reveal a host of initiatives that are strategically sound and well suited to match the College's ability to serve the community. The College continually identifies underserved markets and develops curricula in response to community needs. Such things as retention, academic advisement, and career placement strategies clearly impact enrollment and are identified in the *Strategic Action Plan*.

Two recent developments unique to community colleges in Illinois reflect the College's ability to develop and implement strategies effectively to meet a changing environment. First, the general education requirements for Illinois colleges were revised. As with most schools, there was spirited debate concerning general education specifics, but the College made the necessary changes and continues to meet all requirements of the governing boards. Second, the College quickly responded to the developments in the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). With respect to IAI, the College made modifications to existing courses where needed and successfully submitted and received approval for its specified transfer courses.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee has begun to incorporate the initial results of recent North Central Self-Study data to develop comprehensive plans for the College over the next decade. The College has continued to adapt and develop to meet a changing environment and continues to measure success in all areas critical to long-range success.

## **Budget**

The budget is closely tied to the planning process which is linked to the *Strategic Action Plan* and the planning process. A forum is held by the president and senior finance staff members to explain how plans and initiatives should be tied to the budget. Each department submitting requests for budget funds must show how the funds will solve, accomplish, enhance or relate to the plans and goals of the department. All department goals and plans must support the accomplishment of the college-wide plans and goals. The assessment results and the *Strategic Action Plan* are the foundation of all budget requests.

## ***Responding to Anticipated Challenges***

Several mechanisms exist at the College to assist in responding to anticipated challenges within current decision-making processes. To help assure that faculty and nonfaculty employees are available when needed, the College has looked at the hiring process and created staffing plans. This was in response to a concern that the initial stages of the hiring process were taking longer than desired. A Faculty Staffing Plan was created in 1999-2000 and first used in 2000-2001 to help expedite the process of replacing faculty members who retire or resign. Presently, the number of anticipated retirements at the College is a concern in terms of replacing faculty members with both quality and level of experience. The plan includes consideration of current staffing levels and a process for requesting additional positions. An Institutional Staffing Plan for nonfaculty employees focusing on a five-year cycle is being created by the Human Resources Office using data representing current and future desired staffing. Gender, ethnicity, turnover rates, projected retirements, and the hiring of new staff have all been used to create a staffing profile for the institution.

The College is able to respond financially to its needs, based on the existing financial planning processes. A significant example of this is the issuance of bonds to fund technology, particularly Peoplesoft® and the present computer infrastructure. Technology at Illinois Central College is recognized to have a relatively short life cycle when compared to the purchase of durable goods. A technology life-cycle plan was created in 1998-1999 for replacing and upgrading campus technology. Since there were insufficient operating funds, it was decided that the College use bonds as a viable source of revenue. The bonds were issued, yielding the needed capital for these critical areas.

Another example of anticipating needs was the consideration of a request for a full-time presence in Pekin, Illinois. The College made a study of detailed statistical data available through the Institutional Research Office, and an additional perspective was gained through the College's visioning process, which included significant community input. Upon review, the College determined that the new location could not generate sufficient enrollment to warrant the expenditure of funds.

The Enrollment Growth Team, responding to the Strategic Action Plan, is involved in recommending possible strategies to increase enrollments such as the addition of new programs, partnerships to increase minority enrollment, the elimination of out-of-country tuition rates, and the establishment of an International Studies program to increase the College's international student population. The College's focus on diversification of the student body has resulted in the addition of a staff member to focus on recruitment of minority students.

Since availability of space has been a concern at the College, a Master Campus Plan is being developed through the office of the Executive Director of Institutional Advancement. Since the last NCA study, the College moved Health Occupations and Public Service/Law Enforcement to Peoria, giving greater space and efficiency for these programs and opening space in East Peoria for the expansion of other programs.

## ***Responding to Unanticipated Challenges***

During the visioning process, community leaders stressed the importance of the College being able to respond in a timely way to unanticipated challenges and emerging community needs.

Illinois Central College maintains a fund balance of approximately 25% accumulated earnings to respond to unanticipated financial challenges. The bonds that have been issued to finance technology needs create a type of financial corridor/vehicle for responding to future needs. In addition, the Mission of the Illinois Central College Educational Foundation is to provide resources for the College to meet emerging needs and satisfy unanticipated challenges. Each July, the Foundation Board in consultation with the College administration allocates all unrestricted gifts to support the College's priorities. The Foundation Excellence Fund provides support for important initiatives of the College.

As community entities request specialized training, Illinois Central College responds through Professional Development Institute (PDI) workshops and regular classroom courses. One significant example of an unanticipated challenge and opportunity was the new CAT Dealer Service Technician Training Facility proposal. Caterpillar Inc., approached the College to train technicians for its dealerships. In 18 months' time, a building was completed, a curriculum developed, and a program started. The benefits include the opportunity for students to obtain training that can lead to positions with Caterpillar dealers, the opportunity for the College to be a model program, the generation of positive community awareness of the College, and the realization of an outstanding partnership.

Illinois Central College's committees and decision-making entities with specific charges enable the College to respond in a timely manner. A strong Mission, Core Values, Philosophy, and vision, as well as planning at various levels by units of the College, enable the College to evaluate opportunities in light of the long-range goals of the College.

### ***College Assessment Processes***

Since 1992, as mandated by the North Central Association, Illinois Central College has devoted considerable attention and resources to develop a comprehensive system of assessment of teaching and learning outcomes. At the uppermost strategic level, assessment includes ongoing and historical research conducted primarily by the Institutional Research Office. The levels of assessment also include departments, faculty members, and students.

Assessment processes at these various levels form feedback loops, informing and guiding decision making throughout the College. For example, at the strategic level the annual assessment cycle is integrated with the planning and budgeting cycles. Further explanation of the assessment activities can be found in the Academic Assessment/Achievement chapter.

The College has always planned for the future. As far back as 1989, the College President and Board formed a Futures Task Force to look 10 - 15 years ahead to assess emerging needs in the community. This committee articulated a vision statement for the College's future with ten specific institutional goals. In the year 2000, the College revisited this plan, establishing a new vision and four broad-based goals that will help the College achieve this vision. Central to this effort has been dialogue with the community, including individual interviews with community leaders designed to solicit feedback and ideas for the future and questionnaires to assess the College's capabilities to meet these expectations.

### ***Current Resource Base to Support Future Activity***

In the discussion of Criterion #2, evidence has been presented that the College has effectively organized its human, financial, and physical resources to accomplish its Mission. In this section of the report, evidence will be presented illustrating that the College has the necessary resources to strengthen its educational effectiveness and accomplish its purpose in the future.

### ***Physical Resource Base***

#### **MAINTENANCE OF FACILITIES**

Upgrading the facilities is a continuous process, and the College allocates 15% of its annual operating budget for the maintenance of facilities. Each spring, departments submit capital outlay requests, building remodeling requests, and work order requests as part of the budget process. In addition, the Director of Facilities maintains a list of priorities for renovation and construction. Each year, the department requests and facilities list are reviewed by the Cabinet and prioritized.

In a recent survey of faculty members, only three areas were rated as poor: Perley Bookstore, student activities area in the Health and Public Safety building, and the Perley student activities area. The rating of these facilities is largely impacted by the space available in the two downtown buildings.

Several years ago, the College issued \$3.8 million in bonds to expand parking for students in downtown Peoria.

Over the last five years, the College has invested \$6 million in the purchase of computer hardware and software for faculty and staff members. As a result of its efforts, 79% of faculty members report that they have adequate computer hardware and software. In addition, the College is completing a \$4 million conversion to PeopleSoft® for operating, finance, and student administration. Technology is becoming an increasingly significant portion of the maintenance of our facilities.

## **MASTER PLAN**

Shortly after Dr. John Erwin joined Illinois Central College in January 2001 as its fourth President, he announced plans to develop a master plan for the College that will outline campus expansion and renovation projects through the year 2010. The Master Plan will provide for more purposeful growth and less reactive planning on the part of the College and effectively link facilities planning to comprehensive planning.

## **PARTNERING WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

As business and industry increasingly turn to the College to provide training for their workforce, the College has found it necessary to dedicate increasing amounts of space for specific programs. Our space utilization studies show that the College often has classrooms vacant in the afternoon hours. Unfortunately, consolidating class schedules and making dedicated space available are not always possible.

In some instances, the College has been able to partner with business, industry, the State of Illinois, and individuals to provide dedicated space. In 1997, a \$1.5 million contribution from Caterpillar Inc. allowed the College to construct a facility to house a program to train technicians for their dealers. Plans are currently underway for a three-phase project that involves the construction of a new greenhouse, a skilled trades/manufacturing addition, a new information technology center, and a career center. The project is being funded with \$16.2 million in State funds, a \$1.8 million private industry commitment, and a \$1 million gift from an individual.

Even when the resources to build facilities can be obtained, the College will be challenged to operate and maintain the space. The cost of operation and maintenance of the new skilled trades/manufacturing facility is estimated to be \$500,000 per year. Since the College will not recover the costs through tuition alone, forming partnerships to maximize financial support of these programs is critical. In March 2001, the Board of Trustees approved the position of Executive Director of Institutional Advancement with two of the primary duties being the identification and evaluation of partnership opportunities.

## **PEORIA FACILITIES**

In 1985 and 1995, the College completed renovation of two facilities to establish a presence in the downtown Peoria community. The Public Building Commission (PBC) authorized the issuance of bonds for the renovation and provided an annual levy to pay a \$2.1 million debt. In turn, the PBC pays Illinois Central College \$1.2 million a year to operate and maintain the facility. The agreement with the PBC will expire in 2013, and the ownership of the facilities will revert to Illinois Central College. The College will become responsible for the operating costs for these facilities which are currently \$880,000 a year. At that time an estimated \$4 million in reserves will be available in a fund balance for the College's ongoing maintenance and operation of these facilities.

## **Financial Resource Base**

### **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

Each year, the Vice President of Administration and Finance develops a three year long range plan and a five- to eight-year plan for finance and debt planning. Issues of critical importance to the College are outlined at the annual Board retreat along with steps the College is taking to ensure the financial health of the College.

The annual financial plan is initiated with the submission of departmental goals for the next fiscal year. Each division of the College is responsible for developing a comprehensive budget linked to the Strategic Plan. Capital and human resource requests are submitted in conjunction with the proposed budgets. The three Vice Presidents meet individually with the directors, deans, and department chairs to review the budgets and goals established by each department. Decisions are driven by the goal-setting process.

### **CURRENT FINANCIAL RESOURCE BASE**

Illinois Central College is supported through a combination of funding sources: State apportionment (29%), property tax revenues (28%), and student tuition and fees (28%). Grants, contracts, and other sources provide 15% of the funding. State apportionment and state equalization dollars have leveled off over the last two years. Property tax revenues continue to increase slightly. The intent of the Board of Trustees is to keep the three major funding sources in line with each other so neither the taxpayer nor the student pays a disproportionate share of the burden.

Illinois Central College is financially sound with a fund balance of \$8 million on a \$35 million budget or 23% of annual expenses. The goal of the Board of Trustees is to maintain a fund balance that is 25% of operational expenditures or \$8.75 million. Initial projections indicate that Illinois Central College will maintain its financial good health over the next five years and will continue to accomplish its Mission.

### **STUDENT TUITION AND FEES**

The tuition rate increase of \$3 per credit hour in FY2000 was the first increase in four years. The modest increase placed the College in the middle range of tuition costs of other community colleges in the state.

Effective Spring Semester 2002, the Board of Trustees has approved a tuition increase of \$5.00 to replace the College's current fee structure. While students pay an average of \$2.47 in fees, the fees are not distributed equitably and not covered by financial assistance. Course areas with high fees become unaffordable for some students. The tuition increase will also offset a portion of the computer life-cycle replacement costs that now totals \$1.2 million a year.

The College recently decided to eliminate a separate tuition rate for out-of-country students as part of an effort to attract a more diverse student body. These students will now pay the out-of-district tuition.

### **ENROLLMENT**

Over the past 20 years, Illinois Central College has had an average enrollment of 12,398, but since 1994, the enrollment in credit courses has been below 12,000. Declining student enrollments result in decreased tuition dollars and state apportionment. However, funding generated through noncredit enrollment has increased to \$1.5 million in FY2001. The College sees noncredit enrollment continuing to increase over the next years as business and industry turn to the College to train their workforce.

## TAX CAPS AND EQUALIZATION

Numerous counties throughout the state have adopted tax caps that limit the dollars generated through property tax revenues. In order for the College to be impacted by tax caps, Peoria County would have to adopt them. In order to insulate the College against such an occurrence, the College maintains a certain amount of debt on the books.

Illinois Central College currently receives \$3.5 million in funding through the equalization formula utilized by the State. These funds help to equalize funding to community colleges when assessed valuation and enrollments generate less revenue. Pressures from the suburban counties on legislators could cause the legislature to revise or eliminate the formula that provides these funds.

## TECHNOLOGY

Illinois Central College currently maintains a three-year life cycle for replacement of technology. While the initial purchase and replacement of technology have caused the College to issue bonds three times, the cost of replacement technology is part of the ongoing operations and needs to be incorporated into the annual operating budget. Therefore, the Trustees enacted the above-mentioned fee/tuition increase partially to offset this cost.

## COMPETITIVE SALARIES AND BENEFITS

The tight labor market and shortage of qualified candidates mandate that Illinois Central College be competitive in salary and benefits because minimum salary offers do not attract qualified candidates. During the past several years, the College has experienced increasing difficulty in attracting and maintaining quality staff. The College must anticipate the replacement of the 45 employees projected to retire in the next fiscal year.

The College began in 1979 to self-insure its health benefits and saved \$400,000 the first year. Even with a disastrous 1999-2000 year, health care costs continue below the national average. Two new measures, a Wellness Program and restructuring of the health plan offerings, have been instituted as proactive measures to contain health care costs. In order to insure the College against a disastrous benefits year, administration is recommending that an appropriate reserve be established over the next three to four years.

## GRANTS

Approximately \$4.5 million is raised each year in grant revenues through the collaborative efforts of the grants office and departments throughout the College. In 1998, the College established a full-time institutional research position, and in 1999, the College employed a full-time grant writer. The Institutional Research Office has allowed the College to measure more effectively its performance and to provide data critical to grant resources. The Coordinator of Grants Development has provided training in grant writing, supported faculty and staff members in the development of grant applications, and helped secure resources for the College. In the first year of the position, Illinois Central College secured a \$1.75 million Title III grant to expand skilled trades and information technology programs.

## EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Educational Foundation assets have reached \$5 million. The Foundation through its mission to provide access to higher education and enhance the quality of education at Illinois Central College has contributed \$530,000 in support in the form of scholarships, faculty/staff development, mini-grants, software/technology, equipment, and programs during the last fiscal



year. During FY2001, the Foundation secured \$1.6 million in support of the construction of a skilled trades facility and is currently raising funds to equip the Teaching/Learning Center for the College. The Foundation also assisted with the College's efforts to secure \$9 million in State funding for support of the construction of the skilled trades facility.

## **Partnerships**

The new President recently established the position of Executive Director of Institutional Advancement to assist in the development of partnerships with area businesses and public service providers. Partnerships allow the College to leverage its resources by sharing costs and to respond to community needs.

## **Human Resource Initiatives**

Another important component of strategic planning is the College's human resources.

The College has organized its full-time employees into personnel categories as detailed in the Human Resources Chapter.

The College has undertaken several key initiatives to maintain and improve its human resource base to help position it for the future. These initiatives are of particular importance to the College as it has undergone a growth trend over the past several years that is expected to continue in most employee groups.

Along with this growth trend in employees, the College has had to deal with the recent issue of employee turnover. During the 12-month period ending December 31, 2000, the College had a total of 62 terminations, 13.7% of its employee base population. The critical factor concerning these terminations is that 29 of the 62 (46.8%) terminations were due to retirement. Moreover, for the fiscal year 2001-2002, the College is anticipating another 45 retirements from all employee groups. These retirements reflect a history of dedication to the institution by all employee groups.

The impact of this turnover in staff has also highlighted the changing demographic structure of the College as new employees are hired. As of September 2000, 32.2% of the faculty had a length of service to the College of five years or fewer with 30% of the administration having a length of service of five years or fewer. The result has been a major initiative on the part of the Human Resources Office to evaluate current hiring practices in an attempt to attract and hire the best candidates available. This is the first of three goals that the Human Resources Office has set for the future. The second goal is to broaden and enhance diversity education for all employee groups, and finally the Human Resources Office is examining methods to retain and develop staff.

The primary initiative of attracting and hiring the best candidates has been the development of an ad hoc committee to develop the Handbook for Hiring Full-Time Faculty. The document outlines the roles of those involved in the hiring process, the steps to be undertaken in determining the need for faculty members, and the process to be followed in recruiting and selecting candidates. Of importance was the creation of a timetable for the procedure. The Human Resources Office has begun tracking the hiring of new faculty members to determine if this timetable is indeed the most efficient method. The creation of the handbook and the refinement of the hiring process have served as a template for a similar document and procedure to be used for the hiring of staff positions. The anticipated result is to improve the College's ability to attract and hire the best candidates available in a timely manner.

The second goal of the Human Resources Office is to broaden and enhance diversity education at the institution. Ethnically in the past, 89.8% of the College employee population has been white, Non-Hispanic and the next highest African-American with 8.5% of the employee population. To accomplish this goal,

the College has established a joint College committee on cultural diversity that is charged with enhancing the understanding of diversity within the College, classroom, and the community. The committee has developed a Five Year Diversity Education Plan. This committee was responsible for organizing a faculty/staff training workshop during Spring Semester 2001 on diversity awareness for all employees currently serving on screening committees. Future workshops will be held over the next five years on a rotating basis in an attempt to reach all of the College employee population. In addition, this committee is examining all policies and procedures in use at the College.

The final objective of Human Resources Office is to develop a means for retaining and developing faculty and staff members. The following activities will assist in accomplishing this goal:

- Institutional Climate Survey
- Employee Performance Appraisals
- Employee Advisory Groups
- Staffing Plan
- Exit Interview

A Performance Review and Development Plan (PRDP) for staff has been developed to guide managers and employees in planning professional development that is concurrent with the goals of the College which is to help staff reach their full potential and in turn help the College accomplish its Mission.

These detailed goals and initiatives will serve to position the College for current and forthcoming changes and challenges in the area of human resources.

## **Strengths**

- Since 1992, the College has made substantial progress in refining and supporting a comprehensive system of academic assessment. The Strategic Action Plan for 2000-2001 emphasized Illinois Central College's commitment to assessment, planning, implementation, and improvement on a continual basis as the first point on its "platform for action."
- The College completed a visioning process in January 2000 that involved all of its major constituencies – students, members of the community, and faculty/staff which developed four breakthrough goals:
  - assess, plan, implement, and improve on a continual basis,
  - understand and practice Core Values,
  - remain affordable, fiscally responsible, and appropriately funded,
  - focus on and enhance quality.
- Dr. Erwin has provided leadership for the planning process by initiating a new comprehensive planning process that will integrate the North Central Self-Study results with the visioning process into a new plan for the College, and he has established a committee to develop a Master Campus Plan for the College.
- Illinois Central College is working to enhance alternative sources of funding for its strong financial base.
- In 1998, the College established an Institutional Research Office that provides useful data for the decision-making process.
- The College is working through various initiatives to meet anticipated and unanticipated changes concerning its faculty and staff members.

## ***Opportunities for Improvement***

- The College needs to identify the appropriate steps to secure adequate funding for construction and operations.
- The College must establish hiring procedures that will expedite the hiring process so that the best candidates can be hired.
- Alternative funding sources will be necessary in order to maintain the financial health of the College in the event tax caps are adopted or state equalization dollars are eliminated.
- The process of assessment of student outcomes needs to be reviewed, updated, and clarified. It is imperative that it remains unassociated with student assessment of faculty members.
- The College needs to promote a climate of academic freedom that fosters responsiveness and innovation while striving to evaluate programs and personnel appropriately to meet the need for accountability.
- Efforts to develop new assessment processes and to solicit input for the College's strategic planning should not be linked directly with the accreditation cycle.

## ***Recommendations***

- All units of the College should be involved in the creation of plans that focus on strategic change in order to ensure that the College is proactive.
- Administrators and supervisors should seek to include all constituents in the planning process.
- All employees should be given the opportunity to build their skills in strategic thinking and increase their understanding of the planning process.
- Technology plans should be more fully integrated into comprehensive planning for the College.

