

**Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE

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For

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A commission of the North Central Association

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## Elements Of Illinois Central College's Feedback Report

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

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

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

**Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary:** In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback; and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that each AQIP

Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

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

**AQIP Category Feedback:** The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* addresses each AQIP Category by identifying and coding strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Through comments, which are keyed to the institution's Systems Portfolio, the team offers brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by AQIP Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is often considered the heart of the *Feedback Report*.

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

**Quality of Report & Its Use:** As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the institution by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state, as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative

that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

## **Reflective Introduction and Executive Summary For Illinois Central College**

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

*Illinois Central College (ICC) is a public, not-for-profit, comprehensive two-year community college that serves approximately 17,000 credit and 10,000 non-credit students each year in Peoria, Illinois and surrounding area. The college's mission is "Through learning, minds change. We believe by changing minds, we can change the world." The college articulates its vision as "Exceptional Education Experience," and its values include learning, community, integrity, responsibility, and excellence. ICC employs 605 faculty members, including 180 full-time instructors and 425 part-time or adjunct instructors. The college offers five associate degrees, 57 career and technical programs, and 73 certificate programs.*

*ICC demonstrates commitment to serving its students and the greater community through degree programs, adult education, and professional development, as well as distance learning and outreach to local business via workforce development initiatives. The institution values the diversity of its student body and its communities, and recognizes the variety of their needs. It addresses the requirements of its students through the expansion of delivery modes for instruction, and recognizes the diversity of its student body by creating an Office of Diversity. The student experience has been enhanced at ICC by improving the feedback and orientation processes. ICC values its communities through the use of Adult Community Programs and the Professional Development Institute, both of which help to improve the quality of life in central Illinois. The college also helps regional businesses with its involvement in the Workforce Alliance and Workforce Network. ICC has had a positive reaction to the feedback given it by past AQIP peer reviews, and uses the identified opportunities to drive its AQIP action plans.*

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

- The college's commitment to student learning and continuous quality improvement provides a strong foundation upon which to continue the enhancement of the breadth and depth of its assessment of student learning. Progress has been made in the assessment of general education at the institutional level, and the college now has an opportunity to identify and collect appropriate metrics to assess program-specific learning objectives to help ensure that students have met the objectives of their program of study. In addition, there is an opportunity to demonstrate the cycle of continuous improvement by providing a direct link between data collection and curriculum response, using the results of data acquisition and analysis in the decision-making process to effect curricular change, and then monitoring the impact of these changes so as to continue to improve. The college also has an opportunity to focus on the efficacy of learning within particular student cohorts, such as online student learners.
- Through a mature and active Educational Foundation and Office of Diversity, ICC is able to serve its local area by providing access for students who would not otherwise be able to access post-secondary education. The Athletic Department supports the college mission by providing areas to foster relationships through service projects in the local community. An opportunity exists for ICC to build on the success of these three distinctive objectives and expand the processes to other clubs, organizations, and external stakeholders from surrounding communities regarding their interaction with the college.
- ICC uses systems and measures to collect information on students and some of its other stakeholder groups. However, the college does not provide evidence that these processes support the identification and prioritization of the needs of all key stakeholders when developing programs and services. Use of this type of evidence may provide ICC an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of its systems. Surveys indicate that the institution has an opportunity to improve on building relationships with its students, and a strengthened orientation now under development may produce positive change. Greater involvement of non-student stakeholders may need to occur for the results on stakeholder satisfaction to have significant meaning.
- ICC's use of multiple national surveys and its change from the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) to the Higher Education Insight Survey (HEIS) underscores

how much it values the people connected to the college. ICC performs above comparable institutions in some reported areas and, where the results are not higher, the institution shows commitment to change. The college does need to make improvements, but the transparency of these results is commendable. As ICC gains experience utilizing HEIS results, it will be possible to move forward in analyzing and implementing strategies for targeted change.

- ICC uses a variety of means for communication, with most employees appearing to have a positive outlook on the communication process at the institution. Different methods and workshops are used to enhance leadership skills, with the use of Six Sigma being a primary contributor to the institution's success. Nevertheless, the institution recognizes the need for additional ways in which senior leadership may communicate effectively.
- ICC has initiated a variety of improvements related to institutional operations. However, it remains unclear how these initiatives are linked to systematic processes or data analysis. Training for employees is documented, yet ICC doesn't demonstrate how this training impacts improvement in services. It is not evident that there is a relationship between performance results and improvement planning strategies. The institution has an opportunity to further define, develop, and integrate key processes and measurements into its overall processes that support improvement efforts.
- Through initiatives such as the development of an enterprise data warehouse and a partnership with Blackboard Analytics, ICC is refining its infrastructure supportive of institutional effectiveness, and the college is encouraged to continue its efforts toward creating a more intentional structure for measuring effectiveness. A significant opportunity exists for the institution to identify key measures of performance and link these measures to processes and improvements. Little evidence is provided in the portfolio as to how the institution analyzes and utilizes data to measure overall effectiveness. The college may also benefit from developing comparative data with peer institutions to help identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. ICC acknowledges a significant challenge with employee turnover in the Office of Institutional Research and may find cross-training within the department to be beneficial in minimizing departmental performance disruptions, as well as providing continuous, reliable information distribution to the campus.
- ICC has a well-developed institutional strategic planning process that is tied to the mission and goals of the college and incorporates internal and external reviews. The college continues to refine its processes for planning continuous improvement, as evidenced by the

addition of a three-year Boldly Important Goal that allows college leadership to better define and focus strategic goals and annual objectives. ICC has also revised its institutional indicators and is using Baldrige criteria to improve its planning process. In 2010, The Lincoln Foundation for Performance Excellence awarded the college its Silver Award for Progress Toward Excellence, acknowledging the steps ICC is taking toward improvement through utilization of the Baldrige criteria. While progress has been made and information is collected across a broad spectrum of strategic objectives, it remains unclear how these results have been used for process improvement.

- ICC articulates that the building and sustaining of collaborative relationships with a variety of stakeholders is essential to the fulfillment of its mission. The institution maintains an array of relationships, including several long standing and successful ones with business, industry, other educational institutions and the community. Metrics provided in the portfolio indicate the ability to meet strategic needs but do not provide information regarding analysis and review tied to improvement strategies. ICC has an opportunity to be more systematic and comprehensive in cultivating and analyzing its relationships, both new and existing ones. The college should consider a stronger presentation of analysis and review as the portfolio does not portray a coordinated process to track outcomes in order to determine how the investment of resources fuels the desired benefits to the college and its stakeholders.

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

### **Strategic Challenges For Illinois Central College**

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

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

- ICC is experiencing the convergence of a number of strategic challenges shared by many public higher education institutions, namely, stagnant or declining enrollment, increasing competition for students, growth in unit costs, new performance-based state funding, and calls for improved completion rates from both the state and federal levels. While ICC collects data about student persistence and completion, and has made improvements in several activities targeting these areas, the college has an opportunity to leverage its considerable process-planning skills and improved analytic capabilities to develop a more comprehensive and systematic approach to address these operational, fiscal, and regulatory challenges.
- Greater integration of distance learning by ICC into its processes and results, including institutional research and assessment of student learning, represents a strategic challenge for the institution. The portfolio presents little discussion of distance learning, as evidenced by the lack of disaggregated data reported for this student cohort. Yet, the college identifies online programs as an important future source of enrollment growth. Greater integration of distance learning into the college's processes and results provides ICC with the opportunity to both systematically plan for anticipated enrollment growth and demonstrate that the needs of this student group are being met.
- It is clear from the Systems Portfolio that the college dedicates itself to continuous quality improvement. AQIP action projects and other improvement initiatives regularly incorporate Six Sigma principles, which the college includes in its professional development offerings, while the Data Warehouse assumes a central role in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. These strategies contribute to and strengthen a culture of continuous improvement.

While ICC regularly collects data, it has the opportunity to review, clarify, and revise processes governing the collection and analysis of data to ensure that the data collected and analyzed properly align with, and provide a robust portrait of the progress towards, its desired outcomes and goals, especially in the area of measuring effectiveness. The college may discover that the collection and analysis of additional data, both longitudinal and comparative, will assist not only in identifying future improvement initiatives, but also in measuring the actual effectiveness of those improvement initiatives.

Although there is evidence that the college uses data to drive improvement initiatives, the college may benefit by ensuring that the practice of using data to identify and measure the

effectiveness of improvement initiatives is more systematic and comprehensive. For example, it appears that not all departments or units have access to data, which presents a challenge to data-driven decision making. ICC might also consider ensuring that its processes governing the sharing of data utilize more of an “active” as opposed to “passive” approach: merely because data are made available to departments and units does not necessarily mean that those departments and units will actually review and act on those data. Confirming that data are regularly provided to, as opposed to simply made available to, appropriate stakeholders may help ensure that data not only drive improvement initiatives, but also provide critical information about the effectiveness of those initiatives.

### **AQIP Category Feedback**

In the following section, the Systems Appraisal Team delineates institutional strengths along with opportunities for improvement within the nine AQIP Categories. As explained above, the symbols used in this section are **SS** for outstanding strength, **S** for strength, **O** for opportunity for improvement, and **OO** for outstanding opportunity for improvement. The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the team members and deserves the institution’s thoughtful consideration. Comments marked **SS** or **OO** may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

**AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn.** This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education institutions and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 1.

*ICC has used AQIP Action Projects to address opportunities identified in the institution’s 2010 Systems Portfolio Feedback Report. These projects have prompted a college-wide focus on*

*general education goals, with an emphasis on student assessment (including co-curricular activities), student orientation, and student support services. Expectations for effective teaching and learning are conveyed to faculty, both full-time and adjunct, through multiple means, and faculty members are provided tools aligned with these expectations.*

**1P1, S.** The college utilizes its General Education Committee (GEC), which includes administration and faculty members from all areas of the college, to review general education learning goals and curricula on a monthly basis. Recent work of the GEC has resulted in faculty approval of seven general education goals, together with operational definitions of each goal, that assist the Assessment of Student Learning Committee in ensuring that all graduates have met the general education outcomes.

**1P2, S.** Specific program learning objectives, while ultimately the responsibility of program directors and chairs, are recommended and reviewed annually by program advisory committees that consist of industry and business representatives. Alignment of and modifications to specific program learning goals occur during the annual program planning process.

**1P3, O.** While the college has a well-designed process for program review as documented in its 2010 Systems Portfolio, it has an opportunity to strengthen the assurance that its programs remain competitive with those offered by other educational organizations and to review these processes annually.

**1P4, S.** Using job market data analysis and projected occupational demands, the college collaborates with business leaders, government organizations, and educators to inform the design of responsive academic programming.

**1P5, S.** The college determines the preparation required of its students – whether Arts & Science students or Career and Technical Education students – through processes driven by internal and external forces. Internally, faculty members and administrators recommend general education and course preparation guidelines, while faculty members, department directors and chairs, and program advisory committees recommend specific program preparation guidelines. Externally, the Illinois Board of Education articulates academic preparation guidelines for Arts & Science programming.

**1P6, O.** Although ICC has incorporated an optional New Student Orientation into its process to communicate to students the required preparation and learning and development objectives of its programs and courses, additional information is needed to

clarify how the New Student Orientation specifically and effectively communicates this information to its students, especially when the orientation is not mandatory.

**1P7, S.** The college offers a formal 8-week orientation course to assist students in the selection of appropriate programs of study. This course utilizes various assessments to determine student interests and abilities. The college also offers condensed workshops that incorporate similar assessments for students who elect not to enroll in the formal course. Continued refinement and assessment of the process, as well as increasing participation, may provide ICC with valuable feedback regarding student satisfaction and persistence.

**1P8, S.** ICC offers a variety of services to assist underprepared students, including academic advising, career counseling, academic support, and developmental coursework. Additionally, faculty members participate in a robust offering of professional development workshops and presentations designed to enhance their knowledge and understanding of developmental learners. The college's recently completed action project, "Advising Developmental Students," specifically addressed the increasing number and challenges of developmental students.

**1P9, O.** The college, which acknowledges an opportunity to pursue a systematic process to detect differences in student learning styles, is beginning to explore the incorporation of learning styles in its student orientation course.

**1P10, O.** Although ICC has demonstrated success with developmental students, it is unclear as to how the college addresses the special needs of other subgroups. For example, the college has the opportunity to explore how it addresses the needs of senior citizens and of students with physical challenges.

**1P11, S.** Expectations for effective teaching and learning are communicated through faculty orientation, the faculty handbook, and professional development opportunities; and these expectations are reinforced through program, department, and division meetings, classroom observations, and faculty evaluations.

**1P12, S.** The college relies on stakeholder feedback, analytics, and departmental monitoring to build and maintain an effective and efficient course delivery system. The college's data warehouse provides real-time analytics that inform decision-making processes, and the efficiency of the institution's course delivery system has been incorporated into both a Six Sigma project and an AQIP action project.

**1P13, S.** ICC utilizes the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) external program review process to determine effectiveness and relevance of the various programs offered at the institution. This process is supplemented by annual program and departmental reviews to ensure that the college's programs are up-to-date and effective.

**1P14, O.** Although the college's Curriculum Committee facilitates changes or discontinuations of programs and courses, it is unclear as to how, and upon what specific criteria, those decisions are made, especially with respect to the discontinuation of programs. The college may benefit from development of a clear set of indicators or criteria for program and course discontinuance.

**1P15, S.** ICC determines learning support needs through the use of student satisfaction surveys, focus groups, a student tracking system, and the data warehouse. Additionally, the college offers strong library services, as evidenced by the 2014 Excellence in Academic Libraries Award, and supplemental instruction, which shows promising results. A new AQIP action project, which focuses on using data to assess the effectiveness of the learning labs, has been launched.

**1P16, S.** Under leadership from its Assessment of Student Learning Committee, the college has utilized an extensive number of faculty members, administrators, and students to identify and align co-curricular goals with its learning objectives. The college may also benefit from a review of these processes, making adjustments and utilizing the results to influence change as needed.

**1P17, S.** The institution uses curriculum mapping, degree audits, transfer statistics, and employer surveys to determine whether students to whom degrees are awarded have met the college's learning and development expectations.

**1P18, S.** The college appears to have a robust and formalized assessment process that encompasses both program and course assessment. Under leadership of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee, the college has adopted a culture of continuous improvement with respect to assessing student learning, and is to be commended for its efforts in this regard.

**1R1, S.** ICC identifies various measures to assess student learning and development, including general education learning outcomes, licensure passage rates of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, employer satisfaction surveys, transfer student success rates, certification and licensure rates, employment placement rates, and

National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) measures.

**1R2, O.** The college provides performance results for its common student learning and development objectives. While the performance results are higher in the area of communications, ICC has an opportunity to strengthen its common student learning and development objectives as they relate to math reasoning, critical thinking and reading, and cultural awareness by demonstrating how the analysis of these performance results drives efforts to address change

**1R3, O.** Certification and licensure examination passage rates, which fall between 80% to 100%, constitute the primary component of the measures of specific program learning objectives. While overall pass rates of industry certification exams are useful in establishing program efficacy, ICC may want to consider the extent to which such measures can be used to assess program-specific learning objectives. The college has an opportunity to incorporate appropriate direct measures so as to better ensure that students are attaining the college's program learning objectives.

**1R4, S.** Evidence that students have acquired knowledge is provided through employer satisfaction, graduate employment, and transfer success data. In general, the college's students experience success rates that equal or exceed the success rates of native university students and students from other community colleges who transfer to Eastern Illinois University, Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**1R5, S.** With few exceptions, performance results for learning support processes show continuous improvement

**1R6, O.** Although the college presents completion and course success rates that exceed comparative benchmarks, an opportunity exists to strengthen retention rates, both fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall.

**1I1, S.** ICC has made substantial progress in the area of academic assessment, and there is continued strengthening of a culture of continuous quality improvement that is embraced by the entire community. Indeed, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) recognized the college for its performance by inviting it to present the topic of effective systematic assessment processes at the HLC annual conference. The college's use of Six Sigma strategies, together with its ongoing efforts to document and formalize processes, will continue to fuel future improvements.

**1I2, S.** As noted above, the college has established a culture of continuous improvement with respect to assessment of student learning, which drives AQIP action projects, learning targets, and performance results.

**AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.** This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the institution's character, it examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives, alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 2.

*The college features the following other distinctive objectives: a well-established educational foundation; a maturing Office of Diversity; and deep-rooted athletics. ICC acknowledges a need to broaden services in order to achieve these objectives. This is evident in the recent creation of the Alumni Association, Emerging Leaders program, and Student Athletic Advisory Committee. Of particular note is the Emerging Leaders program, a leadership program designed to increase the completion and success rates of African-American students.*

**2P1, S.** The college has a defined process that is utilized across all non-instructional areas to facilitate understanding of constituent needs. The process includes review of the fit of non-instructional processes with the college's mission, core values, data, and strategic planning, together with prioritization of opportunities that support non-instructional areas. Primarily, distinctive objectives are accomplished through the Educational Foundation, Office of Diversity and the Athletic Department.

**2P2, O.** Distinctive objectives are determined by listening to various constituents, including involvement of specific college personnel, and aligning needs with the mission, vision, and values of the college. However, it is unclear how often and in what manner the college queries its customers and stakeholders. The processes of determining distinctive objectives could be bolstered by formalizing these elements.

**2P3, S.** Expectations are internally communicated through detailed program plans, the Strategic Forum, and the August Celebration of Learning. Externally, expectations are communicated through newsletters, annual reports, meetings, and electronic media.

**2P4, O.** Review of the appropriateness and value of distinctive objectives occurs

through committee or other leadership team reviews, as well as through the strategic planning process. However, the college has not provided information that demonstrates the institution seeks to assess the value that is gained by maintaining the particular distinctive objectives that it holds.

**2P5, O.** “Conversations with Cabinet” are held each semester to facilitate a two-way conversation where faculty and staff can voice their needs. Student focus groups occur three times each year and provide an alternative venue for students to express their needs. However, it appears that a process for documenting, prioritizing and integrating the results of these conversations has not been formalized.

**2P6, S.** ICC reports its process to be unchanged from the 2010 Portfolio with respect to incorporating information from faculty and staff through the utilization of its Six Sigma process.

**2R1, S.** ICC utilizes a number of measures to determine whether non-instructional objectives are being met, such as financial resources raised by the Foundation, new scholarships funded, and minority course success rates.

**2R2 O.** While some of the Educational Foundation goals have been met, there seems to be an overall downward trend except in the number of new scholarships. The Office of Diversity’s performance appears to be making progress toward goals in most areas, while the International Program’s performance is steady except for an increase in the number of ICC students studying abroad. The college acknowledges that the opportunity exists for improvement of performance.

**2R3, S.** ICC focuses on the Educational Foundation, diversity initiatives, and athletics for strengthening the overall institution as well as enhancing relationships with communities and regions served. ICC compares favorably to other Illinois junior colleges in all three areas.

**2R4, O.** The college reports it is able to serve the local area, through the initiatives of the Educational Foundation and the Office of Diversity, by providing access for students who would not otherwise be able to access post-secondary education. The Athletic Department supports the college mission by providing areas to foster relationships through service projects in the local community and by also providing regional visibility for the college. There is an opportunity for ICC to provide tangible results to measure activities from its other clubs, organizations, and external stakeholders from surrounding

communities, regarding their interaction with the college in accomplishing other distinct objectives.

**2I1, SS.** Recent improvements at ICC in accomplishing distinct objectives include implementing an on-line giving system for the Educational Foundation, launching the Emerging Leaders Program in the Office of Diversity, and establishing a Student Athlete Advisory Committee. These improvements appear both comprehensive and systematic and in alignment with the college's mission and strategic plan.

**2I2, S.** ICC utilizes its planning process to facilitate accomplishment of distinctive objectives and provides specific examples of areas of improvement. While recognizing the planning process is embedded in the culture and therefore provides a systematic process, the college may also benefit from further defining how the process improves performance results.

**AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.** This category examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification; student and stakeholder requirements; analysis of student and stakeholder needs; relationship building with students and stakeholders; complaint collection, analysis, and resolution; determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 3.

*ICC collects and analyzes data for the purpose of understanding the needs of students and other stakeholders who are included in strategic planning, and also utilizes Six Sigma to target specific projects to address those needs. Recent enhancements in this category include implementation of a Virtual Campus, development of a new student orientation, and improvements to the student complaint process. While financial constraints forced discontinuation of the intrusive advising model that produced good results, some of the successful advising strategies have been incorporated into the new student orientation.*

**3P1, S.** The college identifies the changing needs of its student groups through the regular collection and analysis of quantitative, qualitative, and comparative data that include trends in demographics, labor market and economics, and student success and satisfaction. The installation of an online feedback system will also help the college

respond to changing needs from students and other stakeholders.

**3P2, S.** ICC recognizes the importance of building student relationships and does so through a variety of contact points that include admission counselors, faculty, academic advising, and developmental coursework, where appropriate, in an effort to sustain student relationships through and beyond degree completion.

**3P3, S.** The college utilizes several data collection methods, such as advisory committees, surveys, focus groups, and email communication to analyze the changing needs of stakeholders. ICC is also well-represented in community activities in its service area.

**3P4, S.** ICC has a number of mechanisms and processes in place for building and maintaining relationships. Its primary stakeholders are employers, school districts, and community members in its service area, as well as transfer institutions and alumni.

**3P5, S.** Communication with current stakeholders, an annual SWOT analysis and environmental scans assist ICC in identifying other possibilities to serve new students and stakeholders while also considering the economic impact on the institution. The college has also made an effort to meet the needs of online students through its Virtual Campus and its Online Learning Task Force.

**3P6, S.** Due to feedback from the 2010 Portfolio and Baldrige, a prescribed process was instituted for formal and informal complaints. The feedback system is centralized and is a systematic process for collecting informal feedback from students. Student Services is a key component of the process via acknowledgement to the inquiring student and routing of the complaint to the appropriate department. The college may want to develop a process for analyzing patterns of complaints over time as well as the effectiveness of the process.

**3R1, S.** Student satisfaction is primarily obtained via the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). The president of the college also holds focus groups with the students and clarification regarding the frequency of these discussions during the year would help signify to the reader the importance of this activity for data analysis. The college may also wish to identify measurements that assess satisfaction of other key stakeholders, such as school districts, transfers institutions and community members.

**3R2, O.** For the measures addressed (instructional effectiveness) and with the exception of the students' relationship with counseling services, performance has improved but is below the national mean for participating institutions. No information is presented for distance learning students. This represents a potential blind spot that may limit the ability of the college to effectively meet the needs of these students.

**3R3-6, O.** While ICC shows improved results in the building of relationships with students, the college ranks below the national mean in a number of areas. Data provided are limited in scope and the college provides no clear explanation regarding utilization of data collected to make targeted improvements in this area. Disaggregation of composite data may support meaningful conclusions and actionable recommendations to assist in analyzing patterns over time. ICC may also benefit from broadening its scope on stakeholder satisfaction to include data from other key stakeholders such as school districts, transfer institutions and community members, while at the same time identifying measures that provide relevant data for benchmarking comparative metrics specifically related to building relationships.

**3I1-2, S.** The use of an AQIP Action project has led to significant improvements in gathering student feedback and complaints, including the use of an online feedback and complaint system, and a revised new student orientation as a means for increasing retention. The strategic planning process and subsequent departmental goals and objectives are designed to target improvement in specific areas as identified during the data analysis. Addition of the Vice President of Student Services to the Cabinet should enhance the college's relationship with its students.

**AQIP Category 4: Valuing People.** This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 4.

*ICC aligns its processes for valuing people with operational objectives that derive from the institution's strategic plan. Employment performance reviews and development plans for employees are in place to assure alignment with both core competencies and the strategic plan. ICC has multiple bargaining units in place and is making systematic improvements in this area, in part due to the recent/ongoing merger of Human Resources and Organizational Learning departments. Development of processes for analyzing employee satisfaction and share governance outcomes may assist ICC in closing the loop for valuing its employees.*

**4P1, S.** The college maintains a comprehensive, coordinated approach for identifying specific credentials based on industry standards, professional standards, and Illinois Community College Board minimum standards for faculty, staff, and administrative positions. Job descriptions begin with the hiring manager and Human Resources Employment Coordinators, and include core values of the institution and CougarCARE Principles.

**4P2, S.** ICC has hiring processes in place to assure that people employed possess the credentials, skills, and values required for specific positions. Advertisements that include specific skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, and abilities required for positions are used to seek candidates. Interview questions that are specifically related to applicants' skills, values, etc., are developed by the hiring manager and HR. Screening Committees that have had specific diversity training and possess agreed upon screening rubrics are then used to narrow the search and interview candidates. Potential faculty are required to do sample teaching demonstrations. After checking references and any other specific testing required for positions, a recommendation from the Screening Committee is given to the hiring manager, who in turn, recommends a candidate for hire to Human Resources.

**4P3, S.** The college recruits employees through local, state, and national advertisements, in addition to community networking and job fairs. Of particular note is the college's commitment to hire diverse faculty through a new faculty recruiter position. Beyond financial and leadership opportunities, the college provides ways for employees to enhance their physical and mental lives. Employees are regularly offered professional development activities, tuition waivers, and tuition reimbursement benefits. ICC also encourages its employees to grow into other positions at the college and assesses its success at retaining employees through its annual climate assessment survey.

**4P4, S.** All new employees at ICC go through an orientation that covers the college's

mission and history, in either face-to-face or online formats. New employees are also oriented on preventing sexual harassment, promoting ethical behavior, and promoting diversity on campus. Other avenues for communicating the mission of the college include faculty and staff handbooks, screensavers, the college catalog, and annual events that are planned around the mission, such as the Annual Celebration of Learning. Additionally, a Cougar Colleagues staff mentoring is in place whereby new faculty and staff are paired with experienced employees to assist in orienting them to ICC.

**4P5, S.** During the annual budget and planning process, ICC reviews staff requirements based on anticipated changes such as retirements, departures and enrollment growth, with succession planning at the executive level residing with the President's Office. Cross-training and process-mapping assist in filling positions that are vacated by unexpected departures.

**4P6, S.** Work processes are designed via SWOT analysis as well as cross-functional teams of faculty and staff members who are guided by the college's strategic objectives and assisted by Six Sigma staff. The college utilizes process mapping to identify work processes to improve and streamline job descriptions.

**4P7, S.** ICC ensures ethical practices through published ethical standards, which appear in the Employee Handbook and the Faculty Handbook, in conjunction with the Illinois Central College Ethics Ordinance. Additionally, sexual harassment, diversity, and ethics training are incorporated within the New Employee Orientation, and the annual employee appraisal process also includes elements addressing ethics.

**4P8, S.** ICC identifies training needs through the strategic planning process as well as departmental planning, with the associate dean of Organization Learning and the associate dean of Online Learning working with the Organizational Learning Committee to develop opportunities that are aligned to strategic priorities and action plans. The college may benefit from determining the degree to which the training needs actually strengthen the institution's instructional and non-instructional programming

**4P9, S.** Training is provided to employees in many formats including facilitated groups, general workshops and in-house seminars, as well as outside professional seminars. Professional development is fostered through learning goals developed in program plans and individual performance reviews, all aligned with the institution's strategic plan.

**4P10, O.** ICC indicates its current review process for staff and administrators emulates

the description in the previous portfolio and that the process has been recently reviewed and redesigned. It is unclear how the newly designed process was aligned with objectives for instructional and non-instructional programs.

**4P11, SS.** ICC continues to build on its strong employee recognition system that recognizes excellence in instruction (by both tenured and adjunct faculty) and employee accomplishments in community service, diversity, and Six Sigma. Compensation is reviewed and revised through a formal interest-based bargaining process for full-time faculty and union employees. Benefits are reviewed annually and benchmarked against local businesses and other colleges.

**4P12, O.** ICC has utilized climate surveys for several years as a means by which to monitor key issues related to employee satisfaction and motivation. The college recently moved from the PACE survey to the HEIS in order to provide a more detailed view of the internal climate. Results from the survey are reviewed at the Strategic Planning Retreat and as a result the employee review process has been redesigned to include motivation and engagement as key elements of performance. However, ICC indicates it is still developing the course of action process for HEIS.

**4P13, O.** The college provides a comprehensive benefit package that includes wellness, fitness, and mental well-being programs. Campus safety is provided by a campus police department, which has a 24-hour presence at many of the campuses. The college utilizes a joint advisory committee to facilitate safety initiatives throughout the institution. Examples of initiatives include development of a protocol to assist troubled students and the implementation of a “panic button” in classrooms and offices. However, it remains unclear how the institution provides for, evaluates and analyzes employee satisfaction.

**4R1, S.** ICC regularly collects and analyzes data and performance results in relation to valuing people. Measurements reported from PACE and HEIS include, for example, assessment of teamwork, supervisor support, work climate, professional development, frequency of feedback, and campus safety.

**4R2, S.** The most recent PACE climate survey shows a continued upward trend with scores above the norm. Indicators of workforce engagement scored high as well, placing ICC in the desired collaborative range. Safety and security issues showed a downward trend between 2007 and 2009, but when issues were addressed with specific education and intervention programs on campus, 2011 results returned to the levels of 2007.

**4R3-4, O.** PACE results for ICC showed an increase in employees' relationships to supervisors between 2008-2011. However, results from the HEIS survey indicated ICC has an opportunity to make improvements in the areas of shared governance, policies, resources, efficiency and collaboration, as these areas scored slightly below norm.

**4I1, S.** Significant and noteworthy improvements include the hiring of a faculty recruiter to recruit a broader diversity within the faculty; hiring of a Vice President for Human Resources; creation of a performance management team to review the overall performance process and develop core competencies for personnel; and the implementation of MyAlert, a college-wide alert system to address emergency issues. The development of a systematic review process of the new performance tools and measures is underway and will provide important data for the management team.

**4I2, S.** ICC has effectively utilized the AQIP process and action projects to address strategic issues, and improvement of its infrastructure and culture attests to significant progress in performance results for Valuing People. The college may benefit from communicating how specific processes are chosen to improve and meet objectives.

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

*The college's leadership structure, consisting of a board, the college president, and cabinet members, manages and implements institutional policy and strategic initiatives. Regulatory and accreditation compliance also rests with this group. Issues of continuity and integration of mission into everyday tasks are addressed in the institution's BlueBook. ICC acknowledges that its communication and succession planning processes continue to mature. Improvement efforts focus on climate surveys, shared governance, and leadership.*

**5P1, S.** ICC's mission statement was developed with broad-based input from faculty, staff, students, and community members and approved by the Board of Trustees. ICC

reviews the statement annually at the January Strategic Planning Retreat for any revisions it feels are needed and each year the Board of Trustees reviews and reaffirms the mission and core values statements.

**5P2, S.** The college utilizes a 12-step strategic planning process that, together with the resulting Blueprint for the Future, ensures alignment with the college's mission, vision, and core values. Identified strengths and challenges are reviewed within the context of the college's institutional priorities while alignment is further confirmed by college leadership and supervisory staff members.

**5P3, O.** It is not clear how the directions identified as part of the strategic planning process in 5P2 actually take into account the needs and expectations of current and potential students and stakeholder groups. Although the college cites its improvement in the area of collecting student feedback and complaints, that process is but a single indicator of student needs. The college has the opportunity to better describe how the strategies discussed in 5P2 specifically take into account the needs of its stakeholders.

**5P4, S.** Leaders at ICC are expected to develop strong relationships with area businesses and economic entities, with many serving on community boards in an effort to help build bridges for students as they finish programs at ICC. Leaders do this while keeping in mind teaching/learning goals and objectives of faculty and students, and choosing priorities within the Strategic Plan and the Big Important Goal.

**5P5, S.** The primary decision-making body at ICC includes ten senior management members plus one representative from the faculty. Joint committees representing faculty, staff, and administration, and often co-chaired by one faculty and one administrative person, provide recommendations to senior management. The Six Sigma process allows for input from anyone at the institution, and training has taken place to allow for wider participation in this process. When a process is agreed upon, a process owner is appointed and given the responsibility, authority, and tools to carry out the implementation of the process. The institution may benefit from having student representation in its decision making processes.

**5P6, S.** Data are collected and stored in a data warehouse that addresses student demographics, course fill-rates and enrollments, as well as target and benchmark data. These are accessible to managerial decision makers on campus. Performance results are collected and monitored throughout the year by the Office of Institutional Research. ICC has a well-defined and systematic process that is aligned with core values and the

mission statement for collection of data, analyzing data, and using data for decision making.

**5P7, S.** Communication occurs between and among college departments and units through a variety of traditional and electronic means, in addition to face-to-face meetings and forums. Of particular note, eNews provides college employees with updated information, including video “newscasts,” about the college. ICC utilizes an emergency alert system to broadcast urgent communications.

**5P8, S.** The college uses various outlets to communicate the institution’s mission and values. The college’s core values of learning, community, integrity, responsibility, and excellence are effectively inculcated.

**5P9, S.** Leadership abilities are first and foremost modeled by current leaders at ICC. In addition, all new faculty and staff are assigned a mentor when they begin their employment at ICC. Every academic year a variety of professional development workshops are offered that can enhance leadership skills. ICC also furnishes professional development funds for faculty and staff to attend off-campus meetings where leadership skills can be gained.

**5P10, S.** The mission and core values are reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees. Each cabinet member is asked to create a succession plan for his or her area which would include the preservation of core values and mission. Institutional processes and plans are also stored on the shared network of the institution. Recently the HR Office has been asked when hiring new faculty to display the core values and mission in both graphic and textual formats.

**5R1-2, S.** Results from the annual PACE survey show steady improvement from 2008 through its last administration in 2011 in the areas of overall climate, reflecting mission, and integrity in sharing of information. In each of the four years, ICC outperformed the industry comparison standard.

**5R3, O.** The college recognized the opportunity for improvement in the areas of shared governance, senior leadership, communication, and faculty, administration and staff relations in order to be viewed as equal to or better than those institutions classified in the Carnegie Association or honor roll and moved to the HEIS survey in 2013 to better address these areas. However, it is not clear how ICC intends to identify tasks and activities that will assist in this area. The college may benefit from developing a process

that will set appropriate targets for improvement in this area.

**5I1-2, S.** It is evident that changes have occurred within the culture and infrastructure of the college to support effective communication, and a number of communication mechanisms, both internal and external, have been developed. Movement from PACE to HEIS survey has provided the college an opportunity to more closely explore its communication strategies and activities.

**AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations.** This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 6.

*The college utilizes a wide spectrum of departments and units to support its operations. Of particular note, the institution offers child care services to its students, employees, and the community at large. Support departments report to specific divisions within the college, thereby helping all segments of ICC to stay on task in achieving the goals of the college. ICC notes that its focus is on enhancing communication between departments and making its operational support processes more proactive and less reactive.*

**6P1, S.** The support services units of ICC use several data collection methods to identify and respond to the needs of the learner. Individual departments and programs gather information, either formally or anecdotally, about the needs of students as well as support service needs, and the college supplements this information with an online feedback system and various surveys such as SSI, CCSSE and SENSE as administered by the Office of Institutional Research.

**6P2, S.** Support needs for administration, faculty, and staff are identified through annual program and departmental plans submitted for the Strategic Planning Process, with the Joint Committees also identifying support services needs. Annual reports from these committees are made available to faculty and administration, and then rolled into the annual program review process.

**6P3, S.** ICC has a campus-wide safety and security program that includes various departments and individuals who are responsible for designing, maintaining and

communicating information and processes related to physical safety and security of the constituents of ICC. The security staff is well trained and responds to a variety of issues and/or incidents on campus; the Facilities Planning and Design Department is responsible for identifying and reviewing safety concerns regarding buildings; the Risk and Benefits Management Department and Health Services/Wellness Center work together to provide training regarding work-place safety; and the Safety Committee meets quarterly to discuss safety concerns and determine appropriate actions. The MyAlert Program serves as a rapid messaging system utilized to provide up-to-date emergency notifications.

**6P4, S.** The college manages its day-to-day processes through process owners, functional units, and department managers and support staff, and outlined procedures and policies govern these processes.

**6P5, O.** Although ICC documents its support processes, it recognizes an opportunity to take further steps to enhance knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment. In its present form, it is unclear whether support processes are actively communicated to relevant personnel: rather, the process depends on stakeholders to access support processes, and, in some instances, the ability to access those processes is limited.

**6R1, S.** ICC provides data on student satisfaction as collected through the SSI and SENSE surveys. The results reported in the portfolio in the areas of scheduling, advisement, enrollment/registration and financial aid indicate ebb and flow year over year within each category. The college may wish to further analyze the annual results and take actions that provide consistent improvement year over year.

**6R2, O.** Although performance data related to student support services reveal some strengths, the college has an opportunity to target particular areas for improvement, including course variety, registration processes, and financial aid.

**6R3, O.** The PACE survey last administered in 2011 indicated ICC ranked above the comparison group on a number of measures of administrative support service performance. However, on the Higher Education Insight Survey (HEIS), administered for the first time in 2012, results were mixed, with the institution acknowledging an opportunity to improve its orientation of new employees.

**6R4, S.** Examples of how ICC has used measures for improvement in safety and security included Campus Police utilizing data to make improvements after a decline

surfaced in 2009 survey results. After the improvements were made the subsequent survey showed an increase in satisfaction. Another example is the creation of the “green button” process allowing faculty to press a button on their computer screen to immediately call for assistance from Campus Police. When there is a concern for safety and security, units can make improvement alone or ask help from a Six Sigma Team or the AQIP Steering Committee. However, additional comparative data sets that provide longitudinal and detailed information, outside of the realm of Campus Police, could assist the institution in making future judgments related to its Supporting Organizational Operations efforts.

**6I1, S.** Inclusion of new technologies for system wide campus notifications and secure access points as well as a better trained police force have improved safety on the ICC campus.

**6I2, S.** The college has a culture dedicated to improvement as evidenced by the development of Yellow Belt and Six Sigma Training opportunities for college employees.

**AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.** This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers institutional measures of effectiveness; information and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 7.

*The college relies on a set of institutional indicators to monitor and assess institutional effectiveness, and those institutional indicators drive its strategic planning and goal-setting activities. Improvement efforts are focused on enhancing the accessibility and timeliness of data, collecting data about local competitors, and deploying a business intelligence system.*

**7P1, S.** Data for use in decision making are selected through the Strategic Planning Process. ICC's data are collected and managed through the division of Enterprise Systems/Technology Services and the Institutional Research (IR) Office. Information is

also distributed through a business intelligence platform. Cabinet members and program directors can access data, and others may request access through the IR Office.

**7P2, S.** The college continues to build on a strong foundation of selecting, managing, and distributing data for planning and improvement. The processes utilize Six Sigma Black and Green Belts, an enterprise warehouse, and an AQIP Action project focused on student retention data.

**7P3, S.** Program plans from departments are a key element that determines what information is needed to feed into the annual Strategic Planning Process. Data are provided for program accreditation reviews, internal program reviews, and standard reports required for external agencies.

**7P4, S.** ICC reports that their system for collecting and analyzing data for overall performance is well-defined and robust based on their 2010 Systems Portfolio. The college's use of national benchmark assessments for community colleges is well-documented throughout this portfolio.

**7P5, S.** The IR office at ICC is responsible for identifying and collecting comparative data within and outside the higher education community. While difficult to identify comparative data on local private competitors, the IR office does collect information publicly available through the external environmental scan utilized in the strategic planning process. The college may benefit from improvement in the definition of the process used to collect comparative data.

**7P6, O.** It is unclear from this portfolio how institutional processes are used to provide relevant information regarding needs, assessment and measurement of performance, nor the benefit derived from either the process or the data.

**7P7, S.** With the addition of the PeopleSoft system, student data is current and student accounts are reviewed daily. The college's information management system ensures the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of college information.

**7R1-7R3, O.** Outcomes reported in this area regarding the measurement of performance and effectiveness of ICC's system for information and knowledge management are limited to faculty satisfaction with information technology and institutional knowledge regarding the use of information in decision making processes. ICC has not developed a systematic assessment of the efficacy of its measurement program and may benefit from developing comparative data with peer institutions

regarding the area of measuring effectiveness. There is no information presented that provides evidence of a comparison to other higher education organizations in terms of the “performance” results for measuring effectiveness.

**711, S.** Improvements in this area include a partnership with Blackboard Analytics, the implementation of a data warehouse, and the implementation of SharePoint within the context of data collection and sharing. The college can continue to advance in this area by developing processes for measuring effectiveness that will allow better utilization of data for analysis of performance as well as identifying opportunities for improvement.

**712, S.** ICC has received positive responses from its data collection and analysis, which suggest that it has embraced a culture of continuous improvement. This is evident in the institution’s ability to successfully upgrade its technology systems. However, additional clarification should be provided on how data are used in the assessment and measurement of performance.

**AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement.** This category examines the institution’s planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping to achieve the institution’s mission and vision. It examines coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 8.

*The college utilizes a 12-step strategic planning process that focuses on six priorities: student learning and success, workforce, communication, outreach, service, and value. ICC has utilized new technologies, new performance management tools, and a new partnership with the non-profit Illinois Performance Excellence in order to strengthen this area of the institution. Improvement efforts focus on enhancing the action plan development and deployment process; aligning individual and program performance plans; and projecting performance.*

**8P1, SS.** The college has a well-defined and documented 12 step process used to drive their Strategic Planning Process, inclusive of analysis of data and trends, and internal and external assessments (Figure 8:P1-1). Within the Strategic Planning Process ICC has developed a three-year goal and labeled it BIG (Boldly Important Goal).

**8P2, S.** The college has a concise diagram for specific short-term goals. These goals

have been developed with many participants through the strategic planning retreat and with data from external scans and internal assessments. These strategies focus on issues that are likely to have the greatest impact on the college, its sustainability, and accomplishment of its long-term goal of national recognition for student success.

**8P3, S.** In February of each year, members of the Executive Cabinet work with process owners and stakeholders to draft action plans in support of objectives defined in the strategic plan and to identify appropriate metrics. Annual action plans are adjusted as needed when information and data suggest an objective is not unfolding in the manner in which it was intended, allowing for corrective action to be taken immediately rather than waiting until the next planning cycle.

**8P4, S.** The coordination and alignment of planning processes and intended outcomes rely on the close involvement of stakeholders at all levels of planning. Cabinet members share the intended action plans at an open meeting of the Strategic Forum where program managers and coordinators are given more details. This develops into an orientation presented by the Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning. ICC uses a standard template to assist program managers in determining if consistent data is being used.

**8P5, S.** ICC utilizes historical and comparative data to identify its objectives, measures, and performance targets during the initial phase of its annual strategic planning process. These objectives, measures, and performance targets are finalized during the next stage of the strategic planning process.

**8P6, O.** Although the college takes into consideration current resources and future needs with respect to the linkage between strategy selection and action plans, it is not clear what factors are used in determining action plans to be funded. The college has an opportunity to clarify its decision-making processes by identifying the relevant factors, and the weight given them.

**8P7, S.** Risk is assessed three times in the policymaking cycle at ICC. In each of these steps, a different group assesses the risk, ensuring a greater amount of analysis and consideration. In the final step, risks are assessed based on budget demands.

**8P8, S.** Utilizing open meetings held by the IR Office, a Strategic Forum held in February of each year, and the activities of the Teaching and Learning Center in cooperation with the Organizational Learning Committee, ICC ensures that it identifies

and provides professional development for faculty and staff that align with institutional and departmental goals and objectives. It is not clear the level of participation in the professional development opportunities provided and ICC may benefit from further analysis of the levels of participation.

**8R1, S.** The college utilizes various measures of effectiveness for five out of its six planning processes and systems. These performance results encompass student learning, outreach, service, value, and workforce, and these metrics are reviewed on a monthly basis. ICC is in the process of identifying appropriate institutional metrics for the sixth strategic priority.

**8R2, O.** Performance results for this category are varied, with improvement evident in areas where the college has focused its efforts, such as institutional climate (Figure 8R2-13) and the percent of new students participating in the new student orientation (Figure 8R2-20). Favorable trends are also evident in the annual strategic objectives reported in Figure 8R2-10. However, in other areas declines are noted, such as in the reduction of market penetration for credit students to its lowest level in five years. In still other areas, the college's indicators reveal considerable longitudinal variability, and ICC may benefit from exploring the explanations for these volatile patterns. While the college collects an array of data concerning the institution's planning for continuous improvement, it is not clear how the institution has used the results to advance in its quality journey.

**8R3, S.** Objective-specific performance goals for strategic priorities (Figure 8P1-2) and objectives (Figure 8R2-20) are clearly defined.

**8R4, O.** While comparative data is available, it is not clear how ICC utilizes the data in determining its performance against best practices.

**8R5, O** ICC assesses the effectiveness of its planning processes primarily by whether the college achieves its planning process goals. However, as the success or failure in achieving the planning process goals do not necessarily reflect on the effectiveness of the planning process itself, the college has an opportunity to identify and articulate the effectiveness of its planning processes through the use of factors and evaluations separate and apart from the success or failure to achieve the planning process goals.

**8I1, S.** The college has altered its approach to defining strategic objectives and has utilized the implementation of BIG to help the institution better focus on projects. The institutional indicators have been expanded and revised to better measure effectiveness.

In addition, ICC has successfully implemented the Baldrige award tool to assist in its journey of continuous improvement.

**8I2, S.** ICC has now deployed the Six Sigma methodology to change its infrastructure and culture so that the voice of its stakeholders, students, faculty, and staff are part of the continuous improvement work of the college. The planning processes are intentional and well-communicated.

**AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships.** This category examines the institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution accomplishing its mission. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, and building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Illinois Central College for Category 9.

*Collaborative relationships are viewed by ICC as essential to accomplishing its mission. The institution's Educational Foundation is a key source for assisting students and a primary avenue for stakeholders to build a collaborative relationship with ICC. The college also strengthens its relationship with area communities and businesses through its leadership role in the Workforce Network.*

**9P1, O.** ICC builds its relationships with area high schools through the College and Career Readiness Department. Within this department, outlets to improve relationships are prioritized through feedback from area high school administrators. ICC also collaborates with Workforce Network, CareerLink, and employers to assist in finding ways in which the institution can offer classes or training to these partners. ICC works with non-academic entities such as Goodwill to prepare financially and academically challenged students for a post-secondary education. Although these relationships are in place, it is not clear what process exists to prioritize these relationships, build new ones or discontinue those that are no longer beneficial.

**9P2, S.** Relationships are built and maintained via advisory committees, connections with the Chamber of Commerce, interactions at conferences and meetings, transfer agreements, and Illinois Articulation Initiative panel discussions. When additional

graduates are needed in business and industry, these close connections enable the institution to adjust quickly to changing needs.

**9P3, O.** Similar to the feedback provided in 9P1, it is unclear as to how the college creates and prioritizes relationships with organizations that provide services to students. The college references the Noel-Levitz SSI as its primary data source; however, that survey is administered only once every two years, and may lack the frequency required in order to ensure that relationships are created and prioritized in a timely manner.

**9P4, O.** While the institution states that its suppliers of materials and services have not changed since 2010, a more detailed example of “external environmental factors” as referenced for the basis of prioritization would assist the reviewers’ understanding of this statement.

**9P5, S.** A variety of partnerships have been built that include services to the community, such as low cost dental and therapeutic massage services, affordable daycare, literature-based and lecture art series. Relationships are then prioritized according to alignment with the college’s mission.

**9P6, O.** ICC reports that communication via formal agreements such as memoranda of understanding, articulation agreements, purchasing agreements, etc., serve as the basis for meeting the needs of its partners. Although the college enters into numerous agreements with various partners, those agreements, in and of themselves, might not provide an accurate measure of whether those partnerships are actually meeting the varying needs of stakeholders. The college has the opportunity to identify and implement processes that could be used to ensure that the agreements with various community partners actually enhance those partnerships.

**9P7, S.** Cross-functional committees and teams are formed that result in collaboration and team building; employee groups include Strategic Forum, Faculty Forum, trade unions, Instructional Administrator’s Circle, and Administrative Assistant’s Forum. A detailed list of members of these committees and meeting minutes are available to employees for review on the Intranet.

**9R1, O.** The data provided for collaborative relationships focuses on relationships with high schools (market penetration, dual credit, and enrollment) and employees (teamwork and collaboration from PACE results). Given the number of other relationships, the college has an opportunity to identify performance results from these other relationships.

ICC also has an opportunity to develop objectives for collaborative relationships along with a method of analysis that views trends and provides opportunity for corrective measures.

**9R2-3, S.** ICC reports a healthy market share for new high school graduates as well as dual credit enrollment. Performance has exceeded the NCCBP comparison group for students obtaining employment in fields related to their programs. However, results from the Higher Education Insight Survey (HEIS) indicate that the college still has room for improvement on collaboration-related items. The survey was administered at the college for the first time in 2012 and, as ICC acquires more HEIS data sets and gains experience in the interpretation and analysis of results, the college may develop targeted actions to effect desired changes. More generally, ICC may benefit from developing and deploying a more comprehensive and formal process for assessment and evaluation of all collaborative relationships.

**9I1, O.** Although ICC reports they were able to assist the Workforce Network temporarily as the fiscal agent because they had systematic processes in place, it is unclear that ICC has made overall improvements in this category, based on systematic and comprehensive processes and results.

**9I2, O.** It remains unclear as to how the college's culture specifically drives improvement efforts within the area of Building Collaborative Relationships. ICC enjoys strong relationships within its community; accordingly, the college has an opportunity to better articulate the connection between its culture and community relationships.

### **Accreditation Evidence Illinois Central College**

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components, or that it may face difficulty in meeting the Criteria and Core Components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation. No evidence issues were noted by the team.

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

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The institution has defined General Education goals that are reviewed periodically by faculty and administrators in accordance with best practices. ICC’s General Educational goals provide the curricular foundation for all programs and include goals for critical thinking, communication, creative problem solving, and information literacy, and diversity. Curriculum

mapping ensures that the general education component of each program adheres to both institutional and state distribution requirements.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC assesses curricular programs via course-level, program-level, and general education assessment processes. The college utilizes its General Education Committee, which includes administrators and faculty members from all areas of the college, to review general education learning goals and curricula on a monthly basis. In addition to the assessment of student learning, there is evidence of an institutional effort towards integrating the results into recommendations for improvement.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC's general education objectives include a goal that students demonstrate an awareness of diversity in cultures, ethics, values, or aesthetics. The college's Office of Diversity, International and Adult Education provides leadership and support for diversity throughout the college, with a focus on assuring support for a diverse student population. The college's Diversity Pledge, which articulates the values of learning in an inclusive environment, is on the college website and is included in the training process for all employees. The Access Services Office offers services for students with disabilities, underrepresented students, underprepared students, and students for whom English is a second language. The college has a history of securing grant opportunities to enhance the opportunities for retention and success of minority and first-generation college students. These include a TRIO program, a previous Upward Bound Program, and an in-house Harvesting Dreams program.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. In order to maintain the quality of ICC's curricula and programs, faculty members monitor advances in their fields of expertise and use this expertise to maintain the efficacy of program curricula. Program directors and chairs work with advisory committees and external

accrediting agencies to ensure that programs of study, and the courses within them, are current and meet stakeholder needs. New courses and programs are approved by the ICC Board, and program and course learning outcomes are the same regardless of instructional mode, class location, or class duration. The institution tracks admissions, retention, transfer success, completion rates, and employer satisfaction to assess the relevance and efficacy of its offerings.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The college uses its curriculum development system, program review, employment alignment, transfer alignment, and resource management processes to ensure the quality of its educational programs. ICC's common course syllabi communicate learning expectations for students, and placement testing, prerequisites, and recommended course sequences help students chart an appropriate academic path. Program reviews are conducted annually, and state mandated Illinois Community College Board program review documents are prepared every five years. All transcribed credit complies with ICC's Evaluation of Transfer Credit document.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC shares with prospective students and their parents information concerning the content and cost of its programs through campus visits, print catalogs, and online communications. The college catalog and website present information about the institution's accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, and the website also notes accreditation of Career and Technical Education programs. ICC identifies program requirements for each degree program, and mechanisms are in place to communicate resources and services that are available.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC provides academic advising/counseling each semester for full-time students who are undecided regarding their major and/or course of study. Comprehensive services

include financial aid counseling, advising, testing, access services, career services, childcare, and veterans' services. Students enrolling in general education coursework eligible for the Illinois transfer agreement are required to meet specific pre-requisite COMPASS scores for reading and math. Those who do not meet the required scores are supported through developmental coursework. An accessible and technologically advanced library provides support available to all students. ICC helps students select programs of study that match their needs, interests, and abilities through use of surveys and personality assessments that help them make informed career decisions and assist them in identifying their most effective study habits.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The ICC Faculty Handbook, faculty contract, and the Board of Trustees Bylaws and Policies ensure individual faculty have academic freedom within the classroom. The college recognizes this protection as a right of the faculty member in presenting issues related to coursework as well as a right of the student in the process of learning. Educational rights and responsibilities are communicated to students via the college catalog and website. The college sets expectations for its faculty to display a depth of understanding of their subject matter and to remain abreast of developments within their field of expertise.

**IP11. HLC Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.***

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The college sets expectations for students regarding academic integrity and outlines these expectations in the Student Handbook, including definitions of academic misconduct and violation of academic integrity. The college's library guides are available 24 hours a day to help students conduct research according to proper standards. An anti-plagiarism segment appears in the student handbook. ICC evaluations of tenure-track and tenured faculty provide several areas for faculty to demonstrate effective teaching, continuous preparation through scholarly study and service to the college. Structured reviews of course evaluations provide consistent procedures across all disciplines for formative and constructive feedback, allowing department chairs and deans to participate in the faculty evaluation process.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC's Campus Life Office coordinates the creation and operation of student clubs and organizations that support curricular study and ensure their goals align with the mission of the college. Student organizations allow the student to explore their career and areas of interest informally outside of the classroom. Service learning is integrated into course offerings, providing students with the ability to expand their academic experience into the real world. ICC has three active honors programs and students are encouraged to participate in student government.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. A strategic priority of the college is to enhance student retention and, to that end, the college regularly collects and analyzes student retention, persistence and completion rates. This information is incorporated into the institution's program planning processes, and, as illustrated by the Emerging Leaders Program, the college implements improvement strategies to address gaps in student success. ICC analyzes student course success as a proactive method of determining achievement gaps and implementing a necessary course of action for improvement. ICC analyzes data from the Student Satisfaction Inventory to determine student behaviors and needs in order to identify methods by which retention and graduation rates can be improved.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear, and well presented. The college's mission reflects a commitment to the community, which is evidenced in the credit and non-credit programming ICC offers to the community. ICC partners with area businesses, industries, and other organizations to ensure that its programs remain responsive to community needs. The college provides educational opportunities for the general public by offering lecture and art series as well as a variety of enrichment programs aimed at attracting community learners. In addition, the college has developed a broad and varied course schedule and means of communicating with all students in an effort to address the varied life and learning styles of its constituents. The college demonstrates its commitment to the public good by

providing a lecture arts series to the public, offering community courses, and coordinating with businesses to provide necessary training for employment demands.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear, and well presented. Full-time faculty are responsible for 54.7% of credit hours taught, which places ICC at the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile of the National Community College Benchmarking Project in terms of credit hours generated by full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty members, who bring real world experience into the classroom, generate the remainder of credit hours taught and are used for flexibility in responding to fluctuations in enrollment. ICC follows ICC Board and HLC guidelines to determine faculty qualifications. All dual-credit instructors must meet the same qualifications that are required of full-time and other adjunct faculty. Faculty members serve on all of the college's major committees and are involved in assessment of student learning. In every class in fall and spring semesters, faculty members are evaluated by students using a third-party source.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The College's financial accounts are examined and verified by an external auditor on an annual basis, in compliance with ICC Board rules. The Board of Trustees has policies in place regarding conflict-of-interest, gifts, discrimination, nepotism, and harassment, and all employees complete diversity, ethics, and prevention of harassment training as part of the new employee orientation. In addition, the Board has an Ethics Advisor and Ethics Commission that offer interpretations to officers and employees about the Board's rules and policies. A grievance process is explained in the faculty and staff handbooks as well in appropriate contracts.

**4P7. HLC Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.***

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC has an Institutional Review Board that ensures policies and procedures adhere to the Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations. ICC has a policy of academic misconduct that is outlined in both the College Catalog and the Student Handbook. ICC has a staff member that oversees matters relating to copyright services and fair use of material.

Policies are available to all faculty and staff on the ICC website

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. In 2008, ICC's Board of Trustees adopted a new mission statement that incorporated input from faculty, staff, administration, students, and community. Every year, Board members review the college's mission statement at their retreat, where they either adopt the statement or recommend a process for its revision. Annual program planning is aligned with the Strategic Planning process to assure that the mission is understood and reflected in programs and policies. The college mission is deployed through new employee and new student orientations, Strategic Forums, and the annual Celebration of Learning, and is part of the employee and faculty evaluation systems.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. Strategic decisions are driven by the mission of the college, and planning and budgeting priorities flow from, and support, the mission. A monthly Strategy Forum that involves 60-70 managers meets to keep managers updated on strategic issues. All annual program planning is fed into the Strategic Planning process, which in turn links to budgeting requests that are mission-driven. Course-level assessment encourages faculty to keep in mind that the results connect to budget planning and requests. ICC engages in SWOT analysis and environmental scanning annually to be sure that they are aware of their challenges and opportunities. The college maintains a fund reserve between 25% and 50% of its annual operating budget so as to be prepared to respond to any fluctuations in revenue in the future.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. ICC's Board of Trustees is comprised of seven elected persons that represent District 514 of Illinois. There is also a student member that is elected by the Student Body.

All members of the Board of Trustees of ICC adhere to the conflict of interest statute for public employees of the State of Illinois. In addition, Board members adhere to Board of Trustees

Affirmative Action Policy Statement set forth in the Board Bylaws. All new technical and career programs are approved by the Board of Trustees before being sent to the Illinois Community College Board.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The college operates as a community college to meet post-secondary needs of citizens in District 514 and to supplement the area schools and four-year colleges. The college's mission is articulated on its web-site and in its academic catalog, as well as in many other print and electronic publications. The mission is highlighted annually at the Strategic Forum and the Annual Celebration of Learning, is on screen savers at the institution, and is part of the staff and faculty annual evaluation.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The Board of Trustees meets monthly where they receive updates from all departments. The Board also assigned a Cabinet Liaison to aid in communication. College-wide committees comprised of faculty, staff, and students approve ICC's policies, processes, and requirements. Faculty and staff participate on joint advisory committees that encourage participation in shared governance as they deal with cross-departmental and cross-program issues. ICC implements clear and fair policies about rights and responsibilities of all internal constituencies, which are communicated via a wide array of vehicles.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The college works to systematically improve through its use of AQIP action projects, which address opportunities identified in prior Higher Learning Commission feedback reports. The college's quality journey also benefits from utilization of ICC's Six Sigma quality improvement processes. The annual program planning process utilizes longitudinal data to identify patterns and monitor initiatives, and the college administers nationally benchmarked surveys to identify strengths and challenges upon which to improve. The college's willingness to compare itself with national benchmarks is indicative of ICC's systematic approach to

continuous improvement.

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

Evidence that Illinois Central College meets this core component is strong, clear and well presented. The college's budgeting process is closely tied to institutional and program plans, and the college maintains a healthy reserve fund, with the fund balance at the end of FY13 exceeding its goal of 50% of the annual operating budget. When the fund balance exceeds 50%, the college considers re-investing reserves into capital projects that are mission critical or that generate financial return to the college. Expenditures are monitored by each department manager and by the college's business office. Financial reports are provided to the Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings, and an independent firm audits finances annually.

### **Quality of Systems Portfolio For Illinois Central College**

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

Illinois Central College's Systems Portfolio reflects an institution that is committed to continuous improvement and is responsive to feedback from the Higher Learning Commission. The successful use of AQIP Action Plans is apparent and appears to have provided direction over time for addressing and improving processes. However, the team found the results sections to be not as comprehensive as the process sections. Clearly articulating measures of performance in the first results question followed by charts that show baselines, trends, comparative data, targets, and sample sizes would greatly enhance the college's ability to demonstrate a commitment to measuring performance. Another area for consideration would be to include specific examples of how quantitative results are used to inform and monitor an improvement initiative. Providing examples of how results are used in the decision making process could enhance the college's ability to demonstrate and illustrate a culture and infrastructure of continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness. References to ICC's 2010 Systems

Portfolio were most helpful when accompanied by a brief description of the process. Finally, compliance evidence for the HLC sub-components was highlighted and easy to locate.

### **Using the Feedback Report**

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

Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of this report may include: How do the team's findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned? How an organization interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP's core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration, and integrity.

The Commission's goal is to help an institution clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.