

**Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**  
in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

LAKE SUPERIOR COLLEGE

February 6, 2014

for

**The Higher Learning Commission**  
A commission of the North Central Association

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## Elements of Lake Superior 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 Lake Superior 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.

*Lake Superior College, an open enrollment institution, is a combined community and technical college serving over 9,000 students and employing 108 full-time and 140+ part-time and adjunct faculty. Lake Superior College awards certificates, AA, AS, and AFA degrees from 90 programs and 28% are enrolled in those programs.*

*Lake Superior College has participated in AQIP since 2001 completing 14 action projects, but Lake Superior College's planning processes have never been fully integrated with AQIP. In 2011 AQIP participation, planning and oversight was transferred from a 40-50 member Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Committee to a ten member AQIP Steering Committee. The leadership team at Lake Superior College is currently in transition yet remains committed to AQIP. Lake Superior College is very transparent about its challenges with the new leadership team educating itself about AQIP while understanding the impact on sustaining AQIP momentum.*

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

- Category 1: Within the constraints of its student demographics and mission, and based on student outcomes, Lake Superior College is educating its students and preparing them for careers and/or further educational success; however, it still needs to make considerable progress in providing a firm and systematic factual basis for measuring this success, which can also help identify processes and programs that need improvement.
- Category 2: Lake Superior College demonstrates a commitment to four non-instructional objectives that are aligned, as shown by participation of faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners. The information on the financial stability component is lacking detailed information that is found in the other listed items. While the Portfolio notes that the 24

Strategic Framework Performance Metrics were developed by the system office in consultation with campus institutional researchers, other language in the Portfolio leads to the perception of a lack of ownership by the institution (done to them, not with them sentiment). “To a considerable extent, Lake Superior College’s goals for both instructional and non-instructional objectives are set for it by the MnSCU System Office” (p. 35).

- Category 3: Lake Superior College actively maintains relationships with students and key stakeholders through effective use of communication. Although it engages in many activities aimed at meeting student and stakeholder needs, the college does not appear to have clear processes for determining the changing needs of its students and stakeholders, or for analyzing the relevant data and making decisions. The College has committed to the areas of retention, persistence, completion, and diversity as the pathway for identifying the changing needs of its student groups and has established mechanisms for measurement and evaluation. While this is appropriate, the measurements of performance are limited and the frequency and timing of survey distribution could be improved to gather a more representative sample. The College has an opportunity to show improved processes and results by expanding its viewpoint on what is included in the measurements and to develop a more robust analysis of data.
- Category 4: Many of Lake Superior College’s activities in this category appear constrained by union contracts and statewide control. Lake Superior College recognizes that trust and communication are major campus climate concerns and has chartered a Campus Climate Committee to address these and other campus climate matters. Lake Superior College has programs in place to support professional development of faculty and staff especially in the area of development of leadership skills.
- Category 5: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU) board policy frame or direct many of the institution’s actions in this category. It is important that the institution has effective processes to make decisions in the areas where there is freedom to do so and to involve the university community when appropriate. Although Lake Superior College appears effective in communication via social media with the college community, the College recognizes and acknowledges that communication remains reactive and needs further improvement. Substantial effort is needed to address and improve Lake Superior College's communication.
- Category 6: Lake Superior College has some processes in place to support the institution’s operations; however, it acknowledges there are some significant gaps. The College should

consider formalizing and documenting these processes and reviewing results from multiple sources as soon as possible to become more proactive. This has the potential to enable Lake Superior College to improve efficiencies and enable scarce resources to be allocated to the greatest identified need as opposed to a reactive allocation of resources (especially the human resource – time).

- Category 7: Lake Superior College has begun the process of increasing its institutional infrastructure for measuring effectiveness. The College has the benefit of a state system and established performance measures that can easily be compared across the state as well as out-of-state institutions. Further support of this infrastructure and the continued building of a culture of evidence, based at least in part on direct measures, may enhance the institution's capacity for efficiency and excellence. Issues with data integrity, data sharing, data analysis, and data distribution are systemic, and there is significant opportunity to address this crucial issue.
- Category 8: Lake Superior College's planning processes must occur within the framework set by MnSCU. The Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan allow the institution to set its own priorities in areas where it's permitted to do so. Developing methods to evaluate the effectiveness of its planning processes and establishing clear responsibility for continuous quality improvement planning could help the institution move forward on its quality journey.
- Category 9: Lake Superior College is aware of the importance of strong relationships with educational partners, service providers, and within the workforce and maintains numerous relationships with external partners. However, there is little evidence that there are processes to prioritize, create and maintain those relationships. Clear processes for prioritizing relationships could help Lake Superior College allocate resources most effectively and processes to build existing relationships could bring the most benefit from the investment.

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

### **Strategic Challenges for Lake Superior 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 **Lake Superior 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:

- Developing a Clear and Consistent Mission/Vision/Values (M/V/V): It is important that Lake Superior College continues efforts to align its M/V/V and other key objectives with those set by the MnSCU system. There are likely remaining unsettled feelings regarding the previously submitted M/V/V to the MnSCU system, which was seen by the system as unconventional. The College could benefit from ensuring wide representation of the college community at future M/V/V reviews to publicly discuss the differences and encourage the College to embrace the collectively approved statements.
- College Culture and Effective Communication: Internal communication needs additional attention to ensure continued development of the desired college community and culture. Shared governance opportunities appear to be in place, and leveraging these to provide for and encourage effective two-way communication could provide one process to address this issue.
- Measuring Results: In order to support a continuous quality improvement culture, Lake Superior College must continue to determine the most appropriate data to collect for reviewing and assessing their performance, and to allow comparisons over time with peer institutions. Although indirect measures can provide a level of evidence, direct measures are an important component of a comprehensive evaluation system.
- Data Analysis: The collection of data is a first step in developing a data-based decision-making culture. The development of systematic and correct data analyses has the potential to assist the institution to convert data into useful information.
- Systematic and Comprehensive Improvement and Planning Processes: The portfolio provides little evidence that the institutional planning processes for improvement are either



systematic or comprehensive. Lake Superior College should examine its processes and develop modifications that would make them demonstrably comprehensive and systematic.

- Setting Targets: Effectively setting targets is an important part of a quality improvement process. Lake Superior College should develop comprehensive and systematic processes for setting targets for its quality improvement endeavors.

### **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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 1.

*Lake Superior College has a set of Common Learning Outcomes and a Master Academic Plan produced by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council. Despite the presence of a well-established Student Academic Achievement Committee, Lake Superior College is transparent about the challenges in implementing consistent practices on assessing student learning. Lake Superior College recognizes the value of using benchmark data and appears to have such data*

*readily available, yet the institution lacks sufficient processes to gain greater consistency in measuring student learning activities and results.*

**1P1, O.** There is no process described by which Common Learning Objectives are determined. Three years after the acceptance of Common Learning Objectives, several key terms related to these have yet to be defined, raising questions regarding the level of understanding of the college community and committees involved. The institution would benefit from completing these steps in a timely fashion and outlining a process that can be replicated on a systematic basis. It is unlikely that the Common Learning Objectives can be effectively implemented without common understanding of the definition of these key terms.

**1P2, S.** Lake Superior College states that it has identified learning outcomes for all certificates, diplomas and degrees. Program faculty (or faculty in a related discipline in consultation with the Division Dean) and, if applicable, the program advisory committee determine specific program learning objectives taking into account national accreditation standards and potential articulation partners.

**1P3, S.** Lake Superior College's faculty and Divisional Deans design new programs and courses to facilitate student learning. These programs and courses are reviewed through the curriculum process and the Faculty Association, followed by approval by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council. The MnSCU also has approval authority for new programs. The competitiveness of the programs is assumed to be established by meeting external norms for their areas and those of MnSCU.

**1P4, S.** The Lake Superior College advisory committee process assists in the development and design of new programs to ensure that curriculum meets current industry standards and labor market needs. In addition to this, Lake Superior College stays informed on current economic conditions through the use of a labor market tool developed by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

**IP5, S.** Lake Superior College program and discipline faculty, along with stakeholder feedback, identify prerequisite knowledge and skills needed for courses and programs. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council, through the curriculum approval process, reviews these prerequisites. Lake Superior College has standard policies and procedures in place to appropriately place students in courses.

**1P7, S.** Students receive advising at open house events, health fairs, job fairs and other

campus-wide activities. As part of the Student Orientation, Accuplacer, and Registration (SOAR) process, new students meet with a professional advisor who assists them in reviewing their educational goals. They may also be advised into a Career and Life Planning course to assist in identifying viable careers and programs of study to pursue.

**1P8, OO.** Lake Superior College has processes in place guided by MnSCU policies to establish if a student should be placed into college-level work and offers a variety of programming for prospective students to improve their college readiness prior to placement testing. However, the Portfolio is unclear on the options available to students who do not assess at the college level. The College states that exceptions or partial exceptions are made for certain students but does not describe the policy or process to explain how these determinations are made. Therefore, the institution has an opportunity to develop a clear set of processes to assist developmental students in undertaking the remediation needed to enter college-level work or plan other career options. As an open enrollment university, this could promote more student success. Lake Superior College's failure to implement such a program should be corrected immediately, especially considering that this was an AQIP Action Project from 2007.

**1P9, O.** While faculty development opportunities with regard to different learning styles are available and classrooms have equipment conducive to different learning styles, it is unclear how different learning styles are addressed in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Lake Superior College may see greater retention, persistence and completion in its student population by creating a formal process to ensure all faculty actively address different learning styles and assist students in gaining awareness of their own learning style and study techniques that facilitate learning.

**1P10, S.** Lake Superior College addresses the special needs of its students through Disability Services, TRiO – Student Support Services, the Intercultural and Veterans Centers, and its Affirmative Action Plan.

**1P11a, S.** Lake Superior College clearly articulated the expectations for effective teaching and learning in support of its Mission and Vision through the values of the pursuit of excellence, innovation and initiative, and academic freedom and free inquiry. These values are reinforced through policy governing Student Rights and Responsibilities for the Freedom to Learn and the Freedom of Expression; and in the collective bargaining agreement, Academic Freedom.

**1P11b, O.** Lake Superior College does not provide information regarding how

expectations for teaching and learning are established. Lake Superior College should have a clear process for determining expectations which is understood and agreed upon by all community members. This has potential to assist in continuity and provide guidance as criteria are modified.

**1P12, S.** An AASC-approved course outline governs the course regardless of where it is offered, by whom it is taught, or how it is delivered. Course schedules are constructed to offer a variety of courses at a variety of times, formats (block, classroom, flex-lab, hybrid, online) and start/end dates.

**1P13a, S.** Lake Superior College has a detailed and extensive system for identifying needs for and developing new programs, program accreditation, and tracking placement of graduates, as well as standard policies for insuring faculty are properly credentialed.

**1P13b, O.** Advisory committees and accreditation standards provide mechanisms to ensure programs and courses are up-to-date and effective as far as content is concerned. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop processes to assure that courses employ the most effective pedagogy. As students and technology change, methods to most effectively present content to enhance student learning also change. Incorporation of demonstrably effective pedagogy into courses has the potential to improve student learning.

**1P14, O.** Lake Superior College admits that it has not ended any programs in recent years, and has only closed admission to one for lack of staffing rather than for an analysis of the market need for graduates. This does not suggest a system is in place for evaluating and discontinuing programs. Given the changing nature of the employment market, it is important to have processes to examine existing programs to assure that they still are producing graduates to meet the current economy. In addition, closure of programs that are no longer vital has the potential to free up resources to support programs that better meet current employment environment.

**1P15, O.** Lake Superior College provides resources appropriate to the scale and scope of its learning support needs; however, an opportunity exists for the institution to identify or articulate processes used to determine learning support needs and priorities of the College. Understanding the needs of current students might assist the College in developing the proper mix of support services and most effectively allocate resources in this area.

**1P16, O.** Lake Superior College has a wide range of co-curricular activities and organizations for its student body. Without alignment with academic programs, they are extra-curricular in effect. The institution would benefit from more effective alignment of its programs and activities with its academic programs. Such alignment could help students maximize learning from their time spent in activities related to the College.

**1P17, S.** Lake Superior College faculty have the determinative voice in assessing student learning and development, as is appropriate and to be expected. As part of their regular program reviews, both occupational programs and academic departments are expected to report assessment of student learning data and how they make use of it to improve teaching and learning.

**1P18, O.** The Student Academic Achievement (SAA) Committee oversees all aspects of assessment of student learning, but it is unclear from the Portfolio what processes and philosophy or framework it uses to design assessment processes. An underlying philosophy of assessment and defined processes for designing assessments have the potential to support a coherent culture of assessment crossing institution. Given the technical character of Lake Superior College programming, Lake Superior College could also benefit from seeking input from employers to determine if whether student learning outcomes are relevant to today's employment environment.

**1R1, O.** Lake Superior College has the opportunity to identify more direct measures of learning for all students in addition to the licensure exams and the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) Knowledge Assessments which are taken by selected students. This could include establishing rubrics, etc. for the evaluation of the artifacts mentioned. Since student learning is the main function of the institution, the use of direct measures could provide better evidence that the institution is reaching its quality performance goals.

**1R2, O.** Though Lake Superior College included the results for several assessment measures of student learning, it did not include the results for the measures that were identified in 1R1 including the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute Knowledge Assessments, Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and course evaluations. Full examination of all measures may provide a more comprehensive review of student learning and assist the College in identifying areas that need improvement. Results that are provided are inadequate for making a positive assessment about the success of

Lake Superior College in educating its students in light of its learning objectives.

**1R3, O.** Program effectiveness is not clear based on the Lake Superior College portfolio. Despite the contention that all programs have program learning outcomes, none are reported. Clear reporting and analysis of assessment data could assist the institution in establishing which program learning outcomes are being achieved and inform development of activities to address deficiencies.

**1R4, S.** The College demonstrated evidence of its performance results for students completing programs and degrees, and acquiring the expected knowledge through licensure and certification exams, graduate placement surveys, and articulation agreements.

**1R5, O.** The portfolio documents student services provided to students but 'effectiveness' could be documented better by showing results-oriented data rather than numbers served. A better understanding of which services are meeting student needs and which ones require improvement could assist the institution in allocating both financial and human resources in this area in a manner that will best support student success.

**1R6, O.** Lake Superior College is one of 25 public two-year colleges that are part of the MnSCU which provides a broad range of directly comparable data. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to more effectively use this and other comparative data by considering the length of time included when mean data is considered, and by ensuring the sample is consistent with the data set to which its results will be compared when it uses samples. Effective benchmarking and use of comparative data might be useful for determining success as well as for planning for the future. Failure to do so can lead to under- and over-estimation of levels of success and/or concern.

**1I1, S.** Lake Superior College's experience in Helping Students Learn has brought several areas of improvement since the last portfolio bringing a more comprehensive and direct application to the processes and support services that impact this category. Added plans and programs include the Strategic Plan, the Master Academic Plan, the College in the Schools Program, the Student Success Seminar, and providing Training in Technology and Online Pedagogy.

**1I2, O.** Lake Superior College characterizes itself as student-centered, but is unclear how this helps the institution to select specific processes to improve and to set targets

for improved performance results in Helping Students Learn. Effective target setting could assist Lake Superior College in understanding if quality goals are being met.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 2.

*Lake Superior College has focused its attention on and made substantial process improvements with respect to four specific non-instructional objectives: (1) Customized Training and Continuing Education, (2) the Lake Superior College Foundation, (3) Environmental Sustainability, and (4) Financial Stability. Financial Stability has been of particular interest as steadily declining state appropriations, mandated caps on tuition increases and a one-time overspending that required Lake Superior College to draw down its reserves and borrow funds to balance the budget resulted in chronic financial stress.*

**2P1, S.** Lake Superior College has focused on four non-instructional processes: customized training and continuing education, the Lake Superior College Foundation, environmental sustainability, and financial stability. These priorities are supported in its academic and strategic plans.

**2P2, O.** The portfolio states that Lake Superior College's "goals for both instructional and non-instructional objectives are set for it by the MnSCU System Office.... Culminating in mid-2013, a set of 24 Strategic Framework Performance Metrics was developed by the System Office." However, the four non-instructional processes cited in 2P1 do not appear to be directly related to this list. Therefore, Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop a process to determine its major non-instructional objectives for its external stakeholders. A clear process could provide a mechanism to select the non-instructional objectives that would best serve Lake Superior College while working, as necessary, within the framework provided by MnSCU.

**2P4, S.** Lake Superior College's President's Cabinet and the Administrative Council

review non-instructional objectives to ensure alignment with the areas of greatest importance and those areas for the most potential improvement. The College is held accountable for its progress through the MnSCU Chancellor's review process.

**2P5, O.** While staff and faculty are included in Lake Superior College's committee structure and process, there does not appear to be a formalized way to determine and report specific staff and faculty needs. The key step of identifying needs may serve the College in not overlooking important and critical items such as training, equipment needs or realignment of duties.

**2P6, O.** It is unclear how Lake Superior College meets faculty and staff needs beyond their inclusion in the evaluation and planning process for non-instructional objectives.

**2R1, S.** Lake Superior College has identified performance measures for each of the four non-instructional objectives.

**2R2, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to provide data that would better demonstrate its results in accomplishing its other distinctive objectives including limiting data to the years covered by the Portfolio. Proper analysis of said data would provide a better evaluation of the current situation and provide a firmer foundation for data-based decision making.

**2R3, O.** Lake Superior College would benefit from establishing additional comparative performance indicators for assessing relative progress in other distinct objectives.

**2R4, O.** It is not clear how the results listed in 2R2 and 2R3 strengthen the institution or enhance its relationship with the community. Identifying how the achieved results strengthens the institution and enhances relationships may add understanding and a stronger commitment to improvements for the College.

**2I1, S.** Lake Superior College's portfolio articulates systematic and comprehensive improvement to the four non-instructional processes: customized training and continuing education, the Lake Superior College Foundation, environmental sustainability, and financial stability.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 3.

*Lake Superior College utilizes various means to gather data (e.g. SSI, CCSSE, Gateway Course Inventory, Early Alert Warning System, and Strategic Framework Performance Metrics) relevant to Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs and considers data on students' and stakeholders' needs when making decisions. However, significant challenges remain in analyzing data and in using data analysis to shape and direct planning and strategy for improvement.*

**3P1, O.** Lake Superior College recognizes that its student retention, persistence, and completion rates should be higher and has taken steps to improve them. However, the Portfolio is not clear how the college identifies the changing needs of its students with respect to these or other issues, nor does it indicate how it analyzes relevant information to select a course of action. Since many factors in and outside of the classroom influence retention, persistence, and completion, clear processes to determine changing student needs could provide a basis for improvement in these areas.

**3P2, S.** Lake Superior College builds and maintains relationships with its students by striving to provide them with information and services that are offered in a variety of ways. Individual and group communication as well as surveying students to incorporate their feedback in decision-making processes add value while strengthening a culture of trust and respect.

**3P3, O.** Lake Superior College seeks to serve stakeholders through customized training and continuing education activities for local and regional employers and their employees, and by making facilities available for a wide range of community-based activities. However, the Portfolio is not clear on how the college identifies the changing needs of its key stakeholders with respect to these or other issues, nor does it indicate how the College analyzes relevant information and selects courses of action. The use of information on actual needs of key stakeholders could help the institution offer the most beneficial services and support effective use of limited resources.

**3P4, S.** Lake Superior College maintains relationships with key stakeholders through communication including regular updates to regional legislators, legislative committee

chairs, and representatives of the Minnesota Governor's office, and meetings between administrators and their counterparts at other institutions.

**3P5, O.** The portfolio discusses what Lake Superior College is planning to do but does not indicate how it decides if it should target new student and stakeholder groups. Defined processes in this area could assist the new Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) committee to optimize the institution's pool of potential students.

**3P6, S.** Lake Superior College has a formalized complaint and grievance procedure to address not only individual issues, but also to identify recurring themes for continuous improvement.

**3R1, S.** Lake Superior College uses the Noel-Levitz SSI and CCSSE to identify student needs and expectations. In addition, the College surveys its advisory board members and its alumni to ascertain satisfaction.

**3R2, O.** The data presented to represent performance results for student satisfaction represents only summary data for CCSSE and two items from the Noel-Levitz SSI. This brief representation of the data does not clearly demonstrate performance results for the institution, nor is it inclusive of other measures. The use of only summary data or of very few data points and the lack of effective analysis could mislead the College. Including all data points from all sources may better serve the College in being data-informed and to be able to identify areas that need improvement.

**3R3, O.** Lake Superior College is transparent in recognizing a potential weakness from relying on indirect survey data to assess satisfaction levels. Other possible points of consideration might include those of engagement, participation, satisfaction, and persistence. Taking a broader and more comprehensive approach to building relationships may inform the College and help identify areas for improvement.

**3R5, S.** Survey data from key stakeholders is incorporated in the Lake Superior College's decision-making and curriculum improvement processes to respond to marketplace demands.

**3R6, O.** Lake Superior College is holding steady in its own Community College Survey of Student Engagement results, but it is lagging behind its peer MnSCU institutions. An opportunity exists to study the reason for the performance gap between Lake Superior College and peer institutions, which could lead to future action projects.

**3I1, O.** The Lake Superior College portfolio identifies a process improvement plan on

assessing student complaints which requires better tracking and accountability. The College does not specify a clear goal for improvement as it relates to better understanding student needs.

**3I2, O.** Lake Superior College self-identifies that its ongoing improvements tend to be reactive and products of necessity rather than through deliberate analysis. Processes to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results have the potential to foster more effective use of resources.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 4.

*Communication at Lake Superior College remains a challenge. Lake Superior College was created by the merger of two smaller institutions, and the ensuing rapid growth and major reorganization of the administration made it difficult to maintain the closely-knit collegial atmosphere that many long-time employees valued. Some employees and units were quite vocal about their unhappiness with Lake Superior College's organizational structure and the adequacy of communication to and with employees. A Campus Climate Committee has been created and tasked with addressing employees' concerns regarding the College's culture and climate.*

**4P2, S.** Lake Superior College follows well-established state guidelines to confirm that employees are properly credentialed to perform their jobs while allowing flexibility in course assignments.

**4P3, S.** Lake Superior College's hiring processes include specific methods for recruiting diverse and qualified populations. The institution describes a sampling of benefits available to employees and offers a service-based recognition program that rewards employees in increments of five years.

**4P4, S.** New employees must complete a new employee orientation checklist and return it to Human Resources (HR) within 30 days of hire. The checklist walks new employees through a process that includes mandatory training, a departmental orientation, and HR processing.

**4P5, O.** Recognizing that the institution operates within the constraints of union contracts and MnSCU, Lake Superior College does not appear to have a succession planning process, and its processes for changes in personnel are largely reactive. A modest level of succession planning will provide opportunities for identified individuals to participate in professional development.

**4P6, S.** Lake Superior College offers employees ample opportunity to engage themselves in diverse projects and committees ultimately designed to improve the student experience. These practices are supported from the top leadership and embedded in the working culture at Lake Superior College.

**4P8a, S.** Faculty needs for training and professional development are determined through the faculty-led Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL Coordinator surveys the faculty each semester to evaluate past programming and determine unmet professional development needs and desires. Training needs for non-instructional employees are evaluated on an annual basis.

**4P8b, O.** All tenured and tenure-track faculty members submit an annual professional development plan and non-faculty employees establish training needs as part of the annual performance evaluation. It is unclear how Lake Superior College aligns employee training needs derived from these plans with short- and long-range organizational plans to strengthen its instructional and non-instructional programs and services. Alignment has the potential to support the effective use of resources when choosing professional development opportunities.

**4P9, S.** Lake Superior College uses both internal and external activities to train and develop faculty and staff. Employees receive support to attend professional conferences related to their work and interests. Lake Superior College also makes a concerted effort to provide career paths for valued employees. Lake Superior College has sent two employees most years to the MnSCU-sponsored Luoma Leadership Academy, a leadership development program designed to nurture leadership talent. It should be noted that despite the need to act within the constraints of the collective bargaining environment, Lake Superior College has established its own intensive two-year

leadership development program.

**4P10, S.** Lake Superior College has an established and systematic process for the evaluation of personnel that includes a self-evaluation, an evaluation against the responsibilities as listed in the position description, evaluation against performance competencies, and the development of goals.

**4P11, O.** It is unclear how employee recognition, reward, compensation, and benefit systems align with the institutional objectives. Identifying this alignment may assist the College in establishing a more comprehensive and systematic process that addresses these areas.

**4P12, O.** Lake Superior College uses surveys and focus groups to determine key issues related to employee motivation. It is unclear how the institution analyzes the data and information it collects and selects courses of action. Careful analysis has the potential to assist the institution in effectively targeting areas for improvement and maximizing return for resources invested.

**4P13, S.** The portfolio indicates collaborative processes in responding to the health, safety and well-being of its employees and students.

**4R1, O.** The portfolio lists a few sources of data including the PACE survey and staff development concerning student, administrative and organizational support services. However, there is no mention of how the data is analyzed and turned into usable information. Small differences noted on visual examination can be significant while large differences can be insignificant which can lead to misinterpretation and potentially misuse of the data.

**4R2, O.** Lake Superior College shares data on assessing perception levels of the institutional climate from the recently conducted PACE Survey. It would be informative to know what benchmarks are used to determine when action must be taken and what types of motivating actions are used to strengthen campus culture initiatives.

**4R3, S.** Lake Superior College's portfolio provides evidence of productivity and effectiveness as it relates to the cost study analysis conducted on a regular basis which indicates more is being done with less while keeping tuition affordable.

**4R4, O.** Lake Superior College's scores were lower than the norm on the PACE survey climate factors (Institutional Structure, Supervisory Relationships, Teamwork and Student Focus). Lake Superior College has an opportunity to address these through the

new Campus Climate Committee.

**4I1, O.** The portfolio describes the Campus Climate Committee as an improvement but the extent to which the improvement is systematic and comprehensive is not clear. Improvements that are systematic and comprehensive have the potential to provide opportunities for synergy and minimize the possibility of antagonistic processes.

**4I2, O.** Lake Superior College indicates that the findings from the Campus Climate Committee coupled with the results from the PACE survey should complement strategies to be executed to improve the campus culture. Lake Superior College acknowledges that these efforts are in early formative stages; therefore, more effort is warranted to produce intended results.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 5.

*There is currently a heightened sensitivity to communication challenges, both perceived and real, among employees. Lake Superior College's communication processes still tend to be reactive. There is an emerging consensus that Lake Superior College must improve in this area.*

**5P1, O.** As a result of a 2010 Institutional Effectiveness Committee review submitted to the MnSCU system concerning the Lake Superior College mission, vision and value statements, feedback deemed the proposed M/V/V statements 'unconventional.' This suggests that incongruity may still remain between Lake Superior College and MnSCU in these foundational matters.

**5P2, O.** Lake Superior College recognizes potential for misalignment and inconsistent priorities between the College and MnSCU's planning and priorities.

**5P3, S.** Memberships on committees involved in the planning and decision making processes provides opportunities to take into account the needs and expectations of

current and potential students and key stakeholders.

**5P4, S.** Lake Superior College staff members and faculty actively participate in local and regional advisory boards and workforce development efforts to ascertain potential future needs.

**5P5, S.** The policy review and approval process appears comprehensive and inclusive, ensuring any person or unit has an opportunity to comment or suggest revisions prior to approval by the president.

**5P6, O.** Lake Superior College explains the utilization of data and information as it relates to enrollment management which complements the study on retention, persistence and completion rates cited earlier in the Portfolio. It is evident throughout the Portfolio that Lake Superior College collects data. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to build on the work in admissions and course scheduling to develop processes to analyze all data and information to inform a greater range of decision-making activities. This has the potential to improve the effectiveness of these decisions.

**5P7a, SS.** Lake Superior College uses multiple means to communicate to the College community. Its extensive use of social media appears very effective and robust.

**5P7b, OO.** Lake Superior College, especially given its history of employees reporting poor communication, has an opportunity to distinguish between disseminating information (via multiple media) and actually communicating effectively to its community.

**5P8, O.** As with 5P7, simply posting a long mission statement is not the same as communicating a shared mission. This section provides no evidence that the latter is occurring, at least in an effective and systematic manner.

**5P9, O.** All newly hired administrators and supervisors are required to complete MnSCU's Frontline Leadership Supervisory Training. The fact that this is a requirement providing a structured process is commendable. However, an opportunity exists to further develop leadership abilities of all faculty and staff. It would also be informative to see data on effectiveness of existing training.

**5P10, O.** Although there are challenges presented by the level of control exerted by MnSCU governance, Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop a formal succession plan for administrators. This provides opportunities for professional development for identified future leaders so that they could be better positioned to step into the designated role.

**5R1, O.** Lake Superior College gathers data on the use of its website and the Wave. The institution has an opportunity to investigate more direct measures of leading and communicating which could provide a stronger foundation for database decision-making in this area. In addition, there is no mention of how the data is analyzed and turned into usable information.

**5R2, O.** Lake Superior College shares the results of the website performance measures on leading and communicating. However, what is unclear is how the statistical data relates to the specific performance measures.

**5R3, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to investigate additional direct comparative data in the area of leading and communicating to provide a fuller picture of its activities in this area than is provided by the mention of awards from the District 5 of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations. The use of comparative results may serve to inform Lake Superior College on its performance and may shed light on areas that need improvement.

**5I1, O.** Lake Superior College senior leadership recently decided to pursue a data-driven SEM approach embarking on a two year planning and data gathering period after which it will operationalize the SEM plan. This appears to be an excellent opportunity to better inform those making key enrollment strategy decisions for the institution. The portfolio describes the SEM plan and web-site rebuild as improvements but how systematic and comprehensive these improvements are is not clear. Improvements that are systematic and comprehensive have the potential to provide opportunities for synergy and minimize the possibility of misaligned processes.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 6.

*A self-identified challenge in this category is the decentralization of the support processes. Since these processes are the responsibility of multiple areas, there is greater likelihood that*



*they are overlooked in planning and typically receive little attention except when they do not work well. Despite this opportunity for improvement, CCSSE and SSI results return favorably for the institution.*

**6P1a, SS.** Lake Superior College is strongly committed to providing the necessary support services for student success. This is evidenced through its understanding of the student demographics and ability to respond to diverse needs such as offering placement testing, personal advising, life skill resources, early alert system, disability services, student complaint process, including the Student Success Seminar and the Intercultural Center.

**6P1b, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop processes to identify the support service needs of other key stakeholder groups. This has the potential to enhance the institution's relationship with these groups.

**6P2, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop processes to identify support service needs of faculty staff and administrators. Attention to support needs has the potential to allow faculty, staff and administrators to spend their time doing what they were trained to do and presumably do most efficiently, thus making better use of human resources.

**6P3, S.** Lake Superior College has well established processes in place for ensuring and maintaining physical safety and security including using a private security company to provide day-to-day security services on campus, strategically placed automated external defibrillators (AED's), a comprehensive Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plan, VOIP and an "e-Panic Button" system. This suggests that the security and safety of students and employees are well considered and are an integral part of the college's mission, vision and values.

**6P4a, S.** Lake Superior College has several measures in place for improving support services including technology upgrades, optimizing hours of operation for support services, streamlining response times on complaints, incorporating survey results from the SSI conducted annually, cross-divisional "critical dates" calendar, the Technology Support Center, and e-Campus Help Desks.

**6P4b, O.** The Campus Climate Committee is an important part of addressing persistent morale problems. It should be very carefully monitored to see that organizational structure issues are recognized and addressed effectively.

**6P5, OO.** Lake Superior College acknowledges that many support processes remain undocumented, at least formally even after a Process Review Manual was developed as part of an AQIP Action Project. Effective documentation of processes has the potential to support continuity in times of transition and increase in process understanding, utilization, and efficiency.

**6R2, O.** The data presented by Lake Superior College does not include all the student service measures identified in Table 6-1. Levels, trends, or interpretation of the data are not presented. The College has an opportunity to improve by applying an intensive review of all data and data analysis processes, which may serve them in the identification of areas for improvement that might otherwise go unnoticed.

**6R3, OO.** Lake Superior College acknowledges that it has no formal performance results for administrative support service processes. Documenting processes and procedures may assist the College in ensuring continuance of service during times of transition; help provide needed resources for its staff, faculty, and administration; and serve to improve internal service quality.

**6R4, S.** The College is in the beginning stage of applying SSI results to drive improvement of services. It is encouraged to continue the application of results and broaden the sources and types of measurements used, for example, in an employee satisfaction survey.

**6R5, S.** Lake Superior College's results for student support services compare favorably with other MnSCU institutions and other two-year institutions nationally on selected CCSSE items.

**6I1, O.** The portfolio lists improvements in this category; however, there is no indication if these improvements are systematic and comprehensive. Quality improvement activities may effectively create change in one area; however, changes that are planned to be systematic and comprehensive may produce greater overall change using the same resources and help assure that changes in one area do not create problems in another.

**6I2, O.** Lake Superior College acknowledges that it does not have a formal process in place for selecting specific processes to improve performance results in Supporting Institutional Operations. Identifying and formalizing these processes and measurements, along with targets may assist the College in identifying areas for improvement and

support the efficient use of resources.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 7.

*A new position, Director of Accreditation, Research and Assessment, reporting directly to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs was created in 2011, and a new Research Analyst with a stronger set of database research and analysis skills was hired to increase the Lake Superior College's capacity for research and data analysis. The new Director position has substantially increased the interaction between the Institutional Research office and the Lake Superior College administrators.*

**7P1, O.** Several sources of data and the distribution are listed in the Portfolio; however, Lake Superior College does not clearly identify the process and state how it selects, manages, and distributes data and performance information to support its instructional and non-instructional programs and services. Identifying the processes involved with the data and distribution of key data may help the College identify areas for improvement that might otherwise go unnoticed.

**7P2, O.** Lake Superior College identified several uses for various data sources; however, the college did not clearly identify the process and state how it selects, manages, and distributes data and performance information to support planning and improvement efforts. The institution acknowledges a need to increase data integrity and consistency of analysis. Processes that guide selection of data to support planning and improvement efforts have the potential to help the institution collect data that will inform data-based decision-making.

**7P3, O.** Lake Superior College acknowledges that it does not have a clearly defined process to determine the data collection, storage, and data accessibility needs of its

departments and units and has identified an opportunity to use the capacity of its new institutional research office to help with this. Such assistance has the potential to move departmental efforts from reactive to proactive. Defining the related processes may enable Lake Superior College to systematically and comprehensively build a culture of evidence.

**7P4, O.** Lake Superior College has established patterns for data sharing but is unclear from the Portfolio how that data is analyzed before it is shared. For example, what is the role of trends and comparative data and is data just evaluated visually or are statistics calculated? Analysis is an important step in turning data into useful information and helps assure that conclusions drawn from the data are accurate.

**7P5, S.** Membership in the MnSCU provides both a need for and source of comparative data. The institution has also developed an AQIP peer group and an out-of-state peer group as sources of comparative data.

**7P6, O.** Lake Superior College reports that it has an ‘informal’ process established to rely on Institutional Research Office data but also use departmental or area data to inform decisions. The institution could benefit from a clearer and more aligned process to attain and use needed data, and this could potentially keep contradictory data from being considered.

**7P7, S.** All of Lake Superior College’s administrative information systems are part of the Integrated Statewide Record System which has business rules and frequent data integrity queries to help maintain the integrity of ISRS data, firewalls, and processes to protect ISRS from unauthorized access.

**7R1, OO.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop direct measures, replacing the proxy measure currently in use for the performance and effectiveness of its systems for information and knowledge management. Data-based decisions are no better than the data upon which they are based. Monitoring the effectiveness of the systems that provide the data is key to effective data-based decision-making. In addition the Portfolio does not provide an indication of how Lake Superior College analyzes the data it collects. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to obtain valuable information from the data by developing procedures for analysis appropriate to each of its data sets. The review and use of analytical data on information systems may assist the College in improving capability and functionality for the security and availability of data.

**7R2, O.** While Lake Superior College appears to be in relatively sound financial health, the data lacks interpretation such as a CFI of 2.67 on a scale of “X”. In addition, there is an opportunity to explain how the college managed to reduce instructional expenditures while maintaining class sizes. An explanation is needed here to ensure that academic standards are being upheld.

**7R3, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to develop comparison data sources for direct measures of the performance and effectiveness of its systems for information and knowledge management. Benchmarking might be useful for determining success as well as for planning for the future. Failure to do so can lead to under- and over-estimation of levels of success and/or concern.

**7I1a, S.** Lake Superior College has made key improvements that have the potential to support increased research capacity and improve data quality thus fostering effective use of the data the institution collects and supporting its goal to be an institution with an effective culture of data-based decision making. Improvements of note include creation of a data analyst position, establishment of an office of Accreditation, Research, and development of an Assessment and Data Integrity Action Project.

**7I1b, O.** The portfolio lists improvements in this category; however, there is no indication that they are systematic and comprehensive. Quality improvement activities may effectively create change in one area; however, changes that are planned to be systematic and comprehensive may produce greater overall change using the same resources and help assure that changes in one area do not create problems in another.

**7I2, O.** It is unclear how targets for improvements are established and communicated to the College community at Lake Superior College primarily due to the recently established Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Task Force. This task force could benefit from clearly defining its purpose and target assessments that continuously improve systems, rather than individual functions, and then communicate how those assessments that impact student learning will improve institutional effectiveness.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 8.

*The institution relies on multiple planning processes which focus on the short- to medium-range timeframe. Decentralization of planning does not allow for optimum long-term planning or integration of similar projects for purposes of efficiency. Currently, the institution is developing a more integrated institutional planning process. There is an opportunity for the planning process itself to be regularly evaluated for effectiveness.*

**8P2, O.** Lake Superior College states that short- and long-term strategies are selected through the identified planning processes; however, it is not clear how the selections are made. Being intentional in identifying the processes that surround the selection of key strategies may assist the College in achieving those strategies, ensuring that those that are selected align with the mission and vision, and are supported by current resources and capabilities.

**8P3, O.** Lake Superior College states that key action plans are developed at the individual and unit levels; however, the process that is undertaken is not clear. In addition, there is no institutional action plan. Identifying the processes involved in the selection of key action plans may assist with ensuring alignment with the institutional strategic plan, allow for integration and broad-based deployment and support the allocation of resources across the organization once key priorities are identified.

**8P4, OO.** Lake Superior College recognizes that it has an opportunity to develop processes to coordinate and align its planning processes across the organization. The challenge appears compounded by the necessity to incorporate MnSCU's processes. Effective coordination could assist the institution in responding to the requirements of the Higher Learning Commission, the US Department of Education and MnSCU.

**8P5, S.** Many of Lake Superior College's objectives, measures and performance targets are established by MnSCU. The Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan are used to define objectives and set performance targets in areas where Lake Superior College has control. Performance measures of the institution are also now a component of the president's annual review.

**8P6a, S.** Lake Superior College has balanced its budget for three years and operated without layoffs or program discontinuance. In anticipation of variability in state

appropriations and potentially declining enrollments, Lake Superior College has increased its fund balance and reserves. In addition the institution has a good Composite Financial Index (CFI).

**8P6b, O.** Due to the large number of MnSCU Performance Metrics, the institution has recognized an opportunity to develop a process to prioritize and allocate resources toward those performance goals that align most closely with its Strategic Plan and offer the greatest opportunity for meaningful improvement while making efficient use of the College's resources. Continuation of its efforts to develop this process has the potential to strengthen its financial position.

**8P7, O.** Lake Superior College recognizes it has an opportunity to develop processes to assess and address risk in its planning processes outside of uncertain enrollment, and state appropriations. It is easy to become narrowly focused on these two aspects of risk which can create opportunity for unanticipated factors to impact the institution. Developing a sound risk assessment strategy with contingency plans will help Lake Superior College weather potential financial challenges by allowing for costs inherent in risks to be appropriately assessed during the planning and budgeting processes.

**8P8, S.** Duty days for professional development that relate to the major issues and challenges facing each work group are split between administration and faculty. This allows for each group to determine professional development activities that pertain to each area of concern. Faculty and staff development is also supported by the MnSCU system.

**8R1, OO.** Lake Superior College recognizes that it currently has no direct measures to determine the effectiveness of its planning processes. It also recognized that no formal evaluation of the overall progress on the Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan, that might provide indirect measures, has been conducted. Given the complexity of the planning processes necessitated by the relationship with MnSCU, direct and/or indirect measures of the effectiveness of the processes have the potential to assist the institution to systematically and comprehensively evaluate and effectively modifying its planning processes for continuous improvement.

**8R2, S.** The institution provides evidence of results based on actions taken to achieve goals of its strategic and academic plans.

**8R3, S.** Projections/Targets for performance of strategies and action plans based on

Lake Superior College's strategic plan or dictated by MnSCU are clearly stated, providing the College with direction and expected levels of achievement.

**8R4, O.** Lake Superior College recognizes that it has an opportunity to compare its results for the performance of its processes for planning continuous improvement with those of other higher education institutions. Benchmarking, or the use of comparisons, might be useful for determining success as well as for planning for the future. Failure to do so can lead to under- and over-estimation of levels of success and/or concern.

**8R5, O.** Lake Superior College provides no evidence that its process for planning for continuous improvement is effective. Establishing a process to systematically review effectiveness will lead to a better understanding of its effectiveness and more direct alignment with MnSCU goals and priorities.

**8I1a, S.** Development of Lake Superior College's Master Academic Plan resulted in more 'buy-in' from faculty and other Lake Superior College units and led to a renewed focus on academics. This plan appears to serve the College well in its quality journey as a beginning step to align and integrate the associated processes, and data collection and analysis.

**8I1b, O.** There is no indication if the development was systematic and comprehensive. Quality improvement activities may effectively create change in one area; however, changes that are planned to be systematic and comprehensive may produce greater overall change using the same resources and help assure that changes in one area do not create problems in another.

**8I2, O.** The selection of specific processes to improve and the setting of targets for improved performance results in Planning Continuous Improvement appear to be accomplished by a variety of groups, but no one group has clear-cut responsibility. Given the complexity of planning continuous improvement within the constraints of MnSCU, delegation of responsibility for the planning process has the potential to lead to more effective interaction with MnSCU and realization of Lake Superior College's unique goals.

**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 **Lake Superior College** for Category 9.

*Lake Superior College's mission to benefit diverse learners, employers, and the community cannot be achieved without partnerships which have always been valued, yet the college recognizes that greater attention is required to support effective relationships. Participation in the Higher Education Partnership Survey has institutionalized a process of seeking and analyzing feedback from its valued partners, and there is renewed effort amongst different departments and programs to join efforts at building collaborative relationships.*

**9P1, S.** Lake Superior College has relationships with numerous organizations from which it receives students. The creation and maintenance of these relationships is built into the institution's regular planning processes. Noteworthy is the College's relationships with the military and National Guard.

**9P2, O.** Lake Superior College provides a list of educational organizations and employers that depend on a supply of its students and graduates to meet their requirements. However, there is no description of how the college prioritizes, creates and builds those relationships. Clear processes for prioritizing relationships could help them allocate resources most effectively. Processes to build existing relationships could bring the most benefit from the investment.

**9P3, O.** Lake Superior College provides a limited list of organizations that provide services to its students; however, there is no description of how the college prioritizes, creates and builds those relationships. Clear processes for prioritizing relationships could help them allocate resources most effectively. Processes to build existing relationships could bring the most benefit from the investment.

**9P4, O.** It is not evident through the Portfolio how Lake Superior College builds relationships with the organizations that supply materials and services to the College. Establishing a formal process may help improve the services and their delivery to the institution.

**9P5, O.** It is not evident through the Portfolio how Lake Superior College builds relationships with the external agencies, partners and the community. Establishing a

formal process may help improve the services and their delivery to the institution as well as Lake Superior College's value to the community and external agencies.

**9P6, O.** The Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey provides a tool to measure partnership satisfaction. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to use the results of the survey to inform actions to assure that partnership relationships are meeting the needs of those involved. This has the potential to maximize the return on the invested personnel and monetary capital.

**9P7, S.** Lake Superior College provides many opportunities for creating and building relationships between departments of the College. Through diverse representation on the president's cabinet, administrative council, and numerous college committees and councils, the College has established processes that lead to more effective relationships and inclusive governance. Given the previously cited communication issues, the institution is encouraged to ensure that all departments and levels within the College have engaged representation on the various councils and committees.

**9R1, S.** Lake Superior College utilizes the Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey to create measures and benchmarks for partnership satisfaction. Lake Superior College also has a process for gathering feedback from advisory boards, its Foundation, the high schools it serves, as well as customized training.

**9R2, O.** Lake Superior College has an opportunity to present trend data from the data sets mentioned in 9R1. Single year snapshot data does not provide an indication of quality improvement nor does the mere listing of articulation agreements with no indication of when they were developed. Multi-year results from the Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey and Advisory Board Survey have the potential to provide information that could assist the institution in data based decision-making for building external relationships.

**9R3, O.** Lake Superior College has an important tool for comparison of results with other selected institutions in the Higher Education Partnership Satisfaction Survey. However, the effectiveness of that tool relies on the proper analysis of the raw data. Lake Superior College has an opportunity to examine its processes to ensure correct statistical analysis. For example the Portfolio states, "The survey was revised for 2013 to change the Likert scale from four to five responses, so a direct comparison of mean scores for change was not possible." It is not statistically proper to average Likert scales.

**911, O.** There is no indication that Lake Superior College's processes for building collaborative relationships are systematic and comprehensive. As a result, problems may not be recognized or addressed until they reach crisis level. The institution could benefit from identifying and addressing problems sooner, when more options for solutions may be present which may not require as many resources.

**912, O.** It is unclear from the Portfolio how Lake Superior College sets targets for improved performance. This is not an area of improvement but a restatement of processes already in place, which would benefit from meaningful analysis and more rigorous metrics. Effective target setting could assist Lake Superior College in understanding if quality goals are being met.

### Accreditation Evidence Lake Superior 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.

Lake Superior College presents evidence that it meets all of the components of the core criteria. However additional evidence for a number could provide a much stronger case that the institution is in compliance.

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

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

**5P1 & 5P2 evidence for Core Component 1.A:** During 2013, Lake Superior College's Administrative Council revisited the current mission, vision, and values statements and re-affirmed them, deciding to defer any further consideration of changes for the time being. Lake Superior College's mission and values are also reflected in its academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile. At the operational level, processes for allocating resources are expressly tied to the priorities set in the Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan. The evidence would benefit from more information on the connection between planning and budgeting.

**5P3 & 5P8 evidence for Core Component 1.B:** Lake Superior College's vision, mission, purpose, and values are publicly posted on its web site and referenced in important documents, such as the Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan. The Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan are both intentionally aligned with the College's mission, constantly reinforcing it. Lake Superior College's Statement of Values: "The Lake Superior College community affirms the worth and dignity of each individual and promotes equity of access and opportunity." These principles form the foundation of our values. Its mission is to provide high quality, affordable education that benefits diverse learners, employers, and the community. The College achieves its mission through a wide variety of academic, technical, customized training, and workforce development offerings.

**1P4 & 1P10 evidence for Core Component 1.C:** Lake Superior College has a standing Diversity Committee that meets monthly during the academic year. The mission of the Committee is to foster a culture that is inclusive and welcoming, to promote awareness and appreciation of diversity, and to address equity issues through advocacy and education. At all times, Lake Superior College has a current Affirmative Action Plan that is required and

approved by the State of Minnesota. The Plan commits the College to conducting all personnel and educational activities without regard to race, sex, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership in a local commission as defined by law.

**3P3 & 3P5 evidence for Core Component 1.D:** As a state institution of higher learning, education is Lake Superior College's sole responsibility. The College has no other purposes and devotes 100% of its resources to fulfilling its educational mission. Lake Superior College's mission is to provide "affordable higher education that benefits diverse learners, employers, and the community." Therefore, the College values and actively embraces opportunities to serve its local community and region. There is emphasis on community, civic, workforce and economic development initiatives. In addition, facilities are used by the public for many events and activities that are community-based.

**4P7 evidence for Core Component 2.A:** All current employees were required to complete a mandatory training session on the Employee Code of Conduct. There is no mention of the Governing Board also completing this training.

**1P6 evidence for Core Component 2.B:** The program planners for all programs are also made available to current and prospective students online through the College's web-based online academic database. A searchable directory of Lake Superior College's faculty and staff is publicly available on the College's web site. Faculty credentials are published in the Lake Superior College Catalogue. Lake Superior College's affiliation with MnSCU is disclosed on the College's home page and on all promotional materials. The College's HLC Mark of Affiliation also appears on Lake Superior College's home page. Additional information regarding the College's accreditation is publicly posted. Specialized program accreditations are listed and posted publicly online as well.

**5P2 evidence for Core Component 2.C:** MnSCU is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor of the State of Minnesota and confirmed by the State Senate. Under the authorizing statute, the Board of Trustees has authority to "govern the state colleges." It has the power and duty to "prescribe conditions of admission, set tuition and fees, approve programs of study and requirements for completion of programs, approve the awarding of appropriate certificates, diplomas, and degrees, enter into contracts and other agreements and adopt suitable policies for the institutions it governs. The authorizing statute also directs that "to the extent practicable in protecting statewide interests, the board shall provide autonomy to the campuses while holding them accountable for their decisions." The

evidence would benefit from discussing how the governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

**1P11 evidence for Core Component 2.D:** The collective bargaining agreement covering the College's faculty contains provisions guaranteeing instructors academic freedom.

**1P11, 1P16 and 4P7 evidence for Core Component 2.E:** Lake Superior College is primarily a teaching institution. Therefore, its faculty, staff and students do not undertake original research except for course projects, generally in the natural or social sciences. Instructors monitor such projects in accordance with generally accepted standards in their disciplines. The Student Conduct Code, which is contained in Policy 3.6 and Procedure 3.6.1, addresses academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined and expressly proscribed. The Lake Superior College Library has collected and publicly posted resources on the ethical use of information resources.

**1P4 & 1P12 evidence for Core Component 3.A:** Lake Superior College offers a variety of academic awards typical to a community and technical college. By Board of Trustees and Lake Superior College policy, academic awards must have certain attributes including every Lake Superior College degree, diploma, and certificate program has its own unique program learning outcomes. There is an AASC approved course outline for each course that is offered. The course outline governs the course regardless of where it is offered (e.g. high schools), by whom (e.g. adjunct instructors) it is taught, or how (e.g. online) it is delivered.

**1P1 & 1P2 evidence for Core Component 3.B:** Lake Superior College subscribes to the philosophy that general education provides a foundation of educational experiences, designed to provide breadth in general areas of study. Lake Superior College's general education curriculum prepares all students with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives required to communicate effectively, think critically, and participate in society as informed, responsible citizens. The evidence would benefit from a more complete explanation of how every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

**4P2 & 4P10 evidence for Core Component 3.C:** Faculty credentials are controlled by MnSCU Board of Trustees' policies and procedures intended to ensure that qualified individuals perform faculty work at the System's two-year colleges. Faculty evaluations are conducted by the Academic Deans using a process developed in consultation with the faculty

and spelled out in a faculty evaluation manual. There are three components of each faculty evaluation: a professional portfolio, student evaluations, and classroom observations. Because the regular process did not work well for evaluating instructors teaching online, a special process and evaluation criteria. Collectively, faculty needs for training and professional development are determined through the faculty led Center for Teaching and Learning. The evidence would benefit from an explanation of how the College's student to faculty ratio of 24:1 provides sufficient numbers of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, and a discussion of faculty continuity

**1P7 & 1P15 evidence for Core Component 3.D:** As part of the Student Orientation, Accuplacer, and Registration (SOAR) process, new students meet with a professional advisor who assists them in reviewing their educational goals. Lake Superior College's main campus consists of five buildings with nearly 350,000 square feet of space. Instructional spaces include approximately 35 classrooms, 35 teaching labs, and 14 computer labs. Support spaces include a student services center, library, learning center, book store, wellness center, and cafeteria. The evidence would benefit from additional discussion of how the institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources beyond information on plagiarism.

**1P16 evidence for Core Component 3.E:** Lake Superior College has an active, self-governed Student Senate that advocates for students through Lake Superior College's shared governance processes. Over 30 student clubs and organizations are available to students, including 19 related to academic programs. Students have the opportunity to play on a variety of recreational sports teams, including curling, volleyball, basketball, and hockey. Festival of Nations, blood drives, open microphone events, student art shows, bouldering wall climbs, free movie nights, campus-wide book reads, health fairs, field trips, cultural excursions and immersions, and other similar activities give students opportunities to become actively involved in campus life and learn outside the classroom.

**1P4 & 1P13 evidence for Core Component 4.A:** All academic programs undergo program reviews on a three year cycle. Transfer evaluations are conducted using Lake Superior College's Undergraduate Course Transfer Policy. TABLE 1-5, page 17 of the Portfolio has a list of accredited programs. Lake Superior College participates in the annual MnSCU Graduate Placement Survey following a strict protocol prescribed by MnSCU.

**1P2 & 1P18 evidence for Core Component 4.B:** As part of their regular program reviews, both occupational programs and academic departments are expected to report assessment of

student learning data and how they make use of it to improve teaching and learning. In addition, many programs, primarily in the Health Division, regularly submit assessment data to their specialized accreditors (1P17). Assessment of student learning at Lake Superior College is intentionally faculty driven. Therefore, the faculty is the ultimate judge of whether students have met the learning outcomes associated with the awards they have earned. The evidence would benefit from clear documentation of a feedback loop between student learning and program revision and a discussion of rigor.

**3P1 evidence for Core Component 4.C:** Lake Superior College collects and uses data (see Tables 3-1 through 3-5) but the evidence would benefit from a more thorough explanation of how data are collected analyzed. A formal commitment to substantially improve retention, persistence, and completion rates is reflected in Lake Superior College's FY12-15 Strategic Plan. The evidence would benefit from a clear explanation of how the goals are derived. Based on past performance it is not clear that they are realistic.

**8P6 evidence for Core Component 5.A:** Lake Superior College seems to be effectively managing its financial resources and responsibly utilizing them to fulfill its mission. Lake Superior College has balanced its budget over the past three years, without layoffs or program closures. Lake Superior College's recent CFI score of 2.67 (FY2012) is well within the 1.1 to 10.0 range that is considered acceptable. The evidence would benefit from documentation that the institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

**5P5 & 5P9 evidence for Core Component 5.B:** At the policy and major decision making level, the President's Cabinet (four members) and the Administrative Council (eleven members) are the main administrative decision-making bodies. Their members represent all units on campus. Generally, day-to-day operating decisions are made by deans, supervisors, directors, and their staff. Faculty members make operational decisions for their programs and departments under the supervision of their deans. Regularly scheduled faculty shared governance meetings and similar regular meetings with other bargaining units on campus facilitate communication and provide campus stakeholders input into major decisions affecting them. The evidence would benefit from a more thorough documentation that the governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

**5P2 & 5P6 evidence for Core Component 5.C:** Lake Superior College's planning and budgeting processes are intentionally conservative and aligned with its Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan. At the operational level, processes for allocating resources are



expressly tied to the priorities set in the Strategic Plan and Master Academic Plan. The College is well aware that demographic trends, including declining enrollment in area high schools, make it unlikely that enrollment of more traditional students will continue to grow. The evidence would benefit from a direct explanation of how the institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

**7P2 & 7P4 evidence for Core Component 5.D:** While data are increasingly integrated into the College's decision making and many processes for managing and using data are defined, Lake Superior College has work to do in this area especially in analytic consistency and data integrity.

### **Quality of Systems Portfolio for Lake Superior 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 Lake Superior College with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the Portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

- Processes: Lake Superior College could improve its Portfolio by clearly stating its processes, identifying HOW it performs and accomplishes the stated item rather than just giving episodic examples of what happens on the campus.
- Data Reporting: The presentation of data throughout the Portfolio consistently lacked needed detail such as the number of individuals or items involved, what rating was considered a high rating, visual representation, and interpretation. Much was left to the interpretation of the reader, which could lead to false conclusions.
- Time Frame: The portfolio covers a specific timeframe so it is important that activities claimed as new activities were initiated in this time frame. In addition when data is provided, only data from the current timeframe should be included (see 1R2) with the exception of a survey given every three or so; years when additional years are included to establish a trend. This could provide better information for data-based decision-making since it would represent both current students and current classroom experiences.

- Answering the Entire Question: A number of the questions have multiple parts. For example, several questions in category nine ask, “How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships?” To answer completely, the institution should address all three parts.
- Highlighting the Core Criteria: Although not required, incorporating a method of highlighting which statements the institution thinks address the core criteria could be mutually beneficial to the readers and the institution. This would assure that all appropriate statements are reviewed in the context of institutions providing evidence of meeting the core criteria.

### **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.