

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

February 27, 2009



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Elements of the Feedback Report	3
Strategic and Accreditation Issues	5
Using the Feedback Report	7
Critical Characteristics Analysis	8
Category Feedback	12
<i>Helping Students Learn</i>	12
<i>Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives</i>	18
<i>Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs</i>	21
<i>Valuing People</i>	24
<i>Leading and Communicating</i>	28
<i>Supporting Institutional Operations</i>	31
<i>Measuring Effectiveness</i>	34
<i>Planning Continuous Improvement</i>	36
<i>Building Collaborative Relationships</i>	39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

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

Northwest Missouri State University has identified a number of measures and processes to assess student learning at all levels and stages of their academic careers. It also has indicated that various units of the institution work together to ensure student learning. The institution has not presented the data derived from these measures or indicated the effectiveness of its processes to improve student learning. It is not clear why it has not addressed the Results and Improvements section of this Category.

The Institution describes a complex planning process to determine its distinctive objectives and their implementation. Information on how these objectives are selected and prioritized, and evidence of continuous improvement—measures of effectiveness, performance results, and improvements made—are not provided and indicate a critical area for development.

Northwest Missouri State University has systems and measures in place for collecting information on most stakeholder groups. The University does not provide evidence, however, that these processes are working to ensure stakeholder needs are identified, prioritized, and used in developing programs and services. Without this evidence, the University misses an opportunity to receive feedback on the effectiveness of these systems.

Although, the Institution has identified a number of processes for ensuring the effectiveness of its workforce and promoting its well-being, it does not provide information about the results associated with these processes in terms of their impact on student learning, workplace productivity, or employee satisfaction. It also does not provide information on how it intends to improve in these areas. The institution has an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of its systems for valuing people by providing results and describing improvements based on the feedback from those systems.

Northwest has vertical and horizontal communication systems in place both to share information and to encourage feedback. The structures are established for governance and conveying information. There is a need, however, to identify expected leadership and communication outcomes in the form of measures that will assess the effectiveness of leadership and communication, which in turn will determine quantifiable or verifiable results that can be used to drive improvements.

While Northwest has identified key student and administrative support processes; the Portfolio does not indicate substantive measures that can be used to assess the degree to which the processes are yielding expected returns, the actual results of those measures, or how the methods by which improvements are targeted, communicated, and executed based on those results.

The University has systems and processes in place for setting process and outcomes measures, monitoring performance across operational areas, and comparing results to those of other organizations. Information about the continuous improvement of those systems—measures of effectiveness, performance results, and improvements made—are not provided and may indicate an important area for development. While the University has been collecting performance data for twenty years, no data is provided as evidence of the effectiveness of these systems.

Northwest has a comprehensive and well articulated planning process in place that integrates budgeting, planning at multiple levels, and feedback loops to drive process improvement. However, the lack of results makes it difficult to know whether these systems are working and how improvement is being made in planning processes.

Although Northwest has identified a need to collaborate in an increasingly competitive environment and has a significant opportunity to document its processes for creating, prioritizing and sustaining those collaborations, the Institution does not provide sufficient information in this category to provide meaningful feedback on the effectiveness of these efforts.

Accreditation issues and Strategic challenges for **Northwest Missouri State University** are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

ELEMENTS OF Northwest Missouri State University's FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

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

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

The Systems Appraisal team has identified gaps in the evidence Northwest Missouri State University has presented to demonstrate that it complies with the Five *Criteria for Accreditation*. In the team's judgment, areas exist where Northwest has *not yet* provided evidence that the University meets one or more Core Components of the Commission's Five *Criteria for Accreditation*, or where the evidence the institution has presented suggests the University might have difficulties, now or in the future, in meeting these expectations. The team is not suggesting that Northwest Missouri State University currently fails to comply with the *Criteria*, but simply that the institution needs to present additional evidence of compliance prior to the Commission's next scheduled AQIP review of the institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. AQIP will provide Northwest with courses of action that the University can follow to provide this additional assurance. The issues regarding accreditation that the team identified are:

- A. Northwest Missouri State University has not demonstrated in its Systems Portfolio that the institution satisfies Core Component 2c of the Criteria for Accreditation which states: "The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement."

The appraisal team has concluded that while Northwest demonstrates that it employs processes for gathering and collecting data, the institution has failed to provide evidence that it sufficiently analyzes and uses the information to ensure improvement. Without a clear analysis of strengths and opportunities as presented by the data, it is unclear how goals and measurable targets are developed, and subsequently reached. Furthermore, without such evidence, the team is limited in its ability to provide external feedback on how well the University's processes are meeting stakeholder needs; consequently, the value of the Systems Appraisal is diminished.

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

Given Northwest's self-identified need to collaborate in an increasingly competitive environment, it has a significant opportunity to document its processes for creating and prioritizing those collaborations. Northwest identifies accreditation groups as a key supplier of feedback on its quality systems; without results of existing processes, it is difficult to provide meaningful feedback.

Northwest has a long history of leadership in the quality movement under the guidance of its president. A strategic challenge for the institution will be sustaining the quality efforts after the current president retires. During the recruitment, selection, and transition to a new leader

for the university, the University should be deliberate in what strategies and activities will be used to enable a change in leadership that enables the advancement of the capacity that the university has created rather than a change of course that could lead to a loss of momentum.

Northwest has been an active participant in state and national quality award programs. While AQIP is based on many of the same principles and concepts, there are key differences that the University will need to reflect and act on as it continues its AQIP efforts. The current portfolio systematically lacks responses to results and improvement questions, which severely limits effectiveness and value.

Northwest now has an excellent opportunity to institutionally go the next step in its efforts to maintain and foster continuous quality improvement efforts. This new opportunity will move it past the process and systems stages, toward the results stage, and finally toward the improvement stage. These next steps should be relatively easy; everything seems institutionally in place (as evidenced by their systems portfolio). It would appear that the data are available for compilation, analysis, review, and reporting to stakeholders and that the leadership of the school is ready, through their shared governance systems, to use the results of their inquiries to make improvements across the institution.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

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

An organization needs to examine its Report strategically to identify those areas that will yield greatest benefit if addressed. Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of the Report may be: How do the team's findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate

lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned?

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

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

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

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

Item Critical Characteristics

- O1a Northwest is a comprehensive, coeducational, public, regional university offering undergraduate and graduate programs.
- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of performance, providing Northwest a key competitive advantage.
- O1c Mission: to serve as a learning centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. The University is committed to preparing broadly educated and engaged citizens for a world of constant change, applying information technology to improved learning processes, and promoting continuous improvement to enhance performance in all its activities. Northwest seeks to expand access to learning and promote research designed to address the needs of its students and shareholders.
- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest align across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard with indicators of the institution's progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.
- O1e Northwest won its fourth consecutive Missouri Quality Award in October 2008 (through the Excellence in Missouri Foundation). Enculturation of Cultural Core Values emphasizes a focus on students and stakeholders; caring about each other; continual academic improvement; collaboration with the intention of accomplishing shared goals; mastering details; being united and ethical; and maintaining leadership in the field. Other honors include the Higher Education Funding Council for England (e.g., benchmarked Northwest's quality approach), Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and multiple Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visits.
- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision making. Shared governance is embedded in the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-

functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.

- O1g The University prides itself as being a family-type atmosphere with an emphasis on the development of systematic processes and use of data to facilitate ongoing improvement and innovation.
- O2a Northwest's focus is on undergraduate education. Currently, Northwest offers 139 undergraduate majors, a concurrent high school-college degree program that awards a high school diploma and an associate's degree with completion of the two-year program in the Missouri Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Computing, 40 master's programs, three specialist degrees, and a cooperative doctorate in Educational Leadership through the University of Missouri.
- O2b Northwest also offers on-campus and off-campus courses, the latter including satellite campuses, online delivery, and video delivery.
- O3a Of a total of 6903 students enrolled during the fall 2008 trimester, 5782 are undergraduates and 1,121 graduates. Of these students, 5266 (91%) undergraduates and 285 (25%) graduates are full-time. More than 88% of undergraduates are traditional-aged (18-24 years old). Approximately 40% of the undergraduates live on campus. More than one-half (56%) of the undergraduates are female. Approximately 45% of incoming first-year students are first-generation college students.
- O3b Northwest is the largest provider of postsecondary education in a 15 county area of rural northwest Missouri. The University is an institution of choice for many students from the Kansas City metropolitan area, southwest Iowa, and southeast Nebraska.
- O4a The University has articulation agreements with 48 post-secondary institutions, and agreements with 22 community colleges for 2+2 programs; it collaborates with 160 universities in 39 countries and institutions outside the United States that provide opportunities to study/teach, and with community associations.
- O4b Outreach programs in education and business include a number of centers throughout Missouri. Northwest's outreach programs offer alternative certification, professional development, and dual-credit courses.

- O5a Over 1,800 faculty, staff, and student employees comprise Northwest's workforce, including 256 (74%) full-time and 92 (26%) part-time faculty. Additionally, the University employs 478 staff and 994 student employees. Reflecting regional demographics, five percent of the workforce is from underrepresented groups. Collective bargaining units do not exist at Northwest.
- O6a To offset the cost of fuel prices, Northwest has developed an alternative fuel program by which its paper and other waste products are pelletized and converted to energy to heat and cool campus buildings. The University is the only agency in the state to have such an alternative fuels program, and has saved itself and the state nearly \$12.5 million in fuel costs.
- O6b The main Northwest campus is 320-acre with more than 70 major buildings and support structures. The University also manages off-campus centers in St. Joseph and Kansas City, Missouri; a laboratory farm near campus; a K-6 laboratory school; and a lakefront recreational area. The University has invested \$225 million in renovations over the last 15 years.
- O6c The Northwest Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, located on the main campus, is a business incubator. The facility will also serve as an academic research facility housing the newly formed Graduate Applied Research Center.
- O8a A key national vulnerability for Northwest is increased demand for accountability to which it has responded through the Voluntary System of Accountability and dashboards.
- O8b A key state vulnerability facing Northwest is decreased state funding. The institution is responding with efforts to identify and grow alternative sources of funding like fundraising.
- O8c Key regional vulnerabilities include population declines and increased competition from within the service area. The institution is responding with new programming, and increased coordination (e.g. Building Bridges, Missouri's Coordinated Plan for Higher Education).
- O8d Key local vulnerabilities include demands for more academic and living space and a significant number of impending retirements, including the President. The University is

responding with increased planning (e.g. Academic Space Group, implementation of Residential Life master plan) and a new presidential search.

CATEGORY FEEDBACK

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

AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northwest Missouri State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1a Northwest is a comprehensive, coeducational, public, regional university offering undergraduate and graduate programs.
- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of performance, providing Northwest a key competitive advantage.
- O1c Mission: to serve as a learning-centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. The University is committed to preparing broadly educated and engaged citizens for a world of constant change, applying information technology to improved learning processes, and promoting continuous improvement to enhance performance in all its activities. Northwest seeks to expand access to learning and promote research designed to address the needs of our students and shareholders.
- O2a Northwest's focus is on undergraduate education. Currently, Northwest offers 139 undergraduate majors, a concurrent high school-college degree program that awards a high school diploma and an associate's degree with completion of the two-year program in the Missouri Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Computing, 40 master's programs, three specialist degrees, and a cooperative doctorate in Educational Leadership through the University of Missouri.
- O2b Northwest also offers on-campus and off-campus courses, the latter including satellite campuses, online delivery, and video delivery.
- O3b Northwest is the largest provider of postsecondary education in a 15 county area of rural northwest Missouri. The University is an institution of choice for many students from the Kansas City metropolitan area, southwest Iowa, and southeast Nebraska.

04b Outreach programs in education and business include a number of centers throughout Missouri. Northwest's outreach programs offer alternative certification, professional development, and dual-credit courses.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northwest Missouri State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 1, Helping Students Learn.

Item	S/O	Comment
1P1a	SS	While Northwest follows general education curriculum guidelines set by the State of Missouri, discipline-specific objectives are determined and proposed by the academic department responsible for the delivery and administration of a program. By using their SSPP, the discipline-specific objectives utilize a variety of stakeholders in the process such as advisory groups, external accrediting agencies, information from students and a rigorous faculty review.
1P1b	SS	Northwest has identified ten Strategic Educational Key Quality Indicators and has aligned its general education requirements with those indicators. Processes and committees for reviewing learning objectives are in place at the institutional and departmental levels. Institutional requirements like the six hours of intercultural and information technology coursework represent educational priorities identified through its planning process.
1P2	S	Prospective changes to or additions of new programs and courses are identified through a continuous improvement process – the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) to design new programs as well as balance market issues with student needs. By reviewing national trends, academic departments identify external factors that influence their programs. The University has established a process to adopt proposed changes or additions in programs that is initiated at the department level, reviewed at various levels within the institution, with final submittal to the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

- 1P3a O While standards for admission of new and transfer students are well defined, it is unclear how these prerequisites are determined or how they are evaluated to ensure effectiveness.
- 1P3b S Academic departments determine prerequisites and minimal performance standards for student programs of study.
- 1P4a S Primary sources for communication of expectations to prospective students are its website, admission publications, campus visits, interactions with high school counselors and articulation agreements. Communication of expectations with enrolled students is accomplished through orientation and registration programs, academic catalogs, academic advising, the Building Bridges Program.
- 1P4b O Although the University uses a variety of strategies through which it communicates its expectations to students, it is unclear from the examples provided how the institution communicates to students what its learning outcomes are for General Education and the level of preparation students need to achieve those outcomes.
- 1P5a S Before beginning their coursework, students participate in a comprehensive orientation program that matches the student's individual skills, interests, and academic history to the student's major requirements. Advising professionals then develop an appropriate course schedule for each student. Once students are enrolled, faculty take on the role of academic advising. The Office of Career Services and Advisement Assistance Office cosponsor the Exploring Majors event for student wishing to change majors to meet with various academic departments in one location.
- 1P5b O While the institution has described a detailed process to help students select programs of study that match their needs and interests, other than the Senior Deficiency Statement, the Institution does not appear to have a systematic process for how discrepancies are addressed between the necessary and actual preparation of students and their learning styles.

- 1P6a S Northwest has a comprehensive evaluation system, of both formative and summative data, for teaching and learning that includes student evaluation, as well as results from in-class observations by the chair, a peer review of teaching, and/or faculty self-evaluation. Results are communicated in a variety of ways. Students also are assessed with the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress exam by ETS. (MAPPs)
- 1P6a O While the University appears to have an effective process for determining whether teaching expectations for faculty in the third and fifth years have been met, it is not apparent whether a similar process exists for tenured faculty. Consider a post-tenure development process for faculty.
- 1P6b O Northwest has two opportunities to further enhance its teaching and learning evaluation systems. First, it is not apparent whether faculty teaching evaluation exists beyond the third and fifth years; this may limit a source of professional feedback for faculty. Second, it is unclear how individual course and teaching evaluations are aligned with institutional and discipline-specific assessments of learning. For example, do course evaluations measure levels of student engagement, so that course-level performance might be viewed in the context of NSSE's institutional-level performance?
- 1P7 O With the increased demand for distance learning, it is not clear what process the institution uses to balance the needs of students for online courses with the institution's needs for quality in student learning, limited class sizes and face-to-face interaction.
- 1P8 S Northwest uses a number of outside accrediting and professional organizations for setting minimum standards, which the institution meets or exceeds. Departments conduct a review of the curriculum every five years using the SSPP. Students' performance is measured by using the data from senior assessments. Alumni surveys are used to follow-up with students as a source of areas needing improvement.

- 1P9 O While the institution offers a variety of learning support to students such as tutoring, supplemental instruction and Learning Assistance Providers, the process for identifying students needing such support is not clear.
- 1P10 S Co-curricular goals are integrated with curricular learning objectives. Each department in Student Affairs develops and uses student learning outcome (SLO) objectives for all programming, services, activities, and events. Each SLO objective must demonstrate linkage to University Key Quality Indicators, Student Affairs Divisional Key Quality Indicators, and Academic Department/Division Key Quality and Performance Indicators. The evaluation of each SLO objective is measured through pre- and post-assessments. The data from the SLO objectives, along with other normalized institutional data (e.g., Noel Levitz, NSSE, Residential Life Survey) are used to evaluate departmental seven step planning progress via an annual report.
- 1P11 S The Director of Assessment, Information and Analysis coordinates university-level assessment activities and provides logistical support to departments/units. A cross section of the institution is involved in this process. Northwest has been recognized for its work in this area. Additionally, the assessment arm of the Professional Education Unit (PEU), the Teacher Education Student Services (TESS) office has been recognized by officials at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as one of the more progressive in the state. TESS officers have routinely provided assessment system and metrics seminars to many of the state's education programs at both public and private institutions. The PEU has, for more than five years, used Teacher Work Sample methodology to establish and evaluate the level of achievement elicited by teaching candidates in their varied field placements. Other useful data and trends are available by intranet to University faculty regarding candidate performance, dispositions, etc.
- 1P12 S The institution makes use of a variety of national instruments as the student progresses from a freshman to a graduate including student

assessment data (e.g., MAPP, C BASE) and capstone courses that engage students in a major project and in which students must complete a senior assessment or project (e.g., Major Field Test/ACAT, PRAXIS, creative project, portfolio). This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of student learning than a single approach would provide.

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| 1R1a | S | Over the past 10 years, student performance has increased significantly without a correlative change in incoming student ability as measured by MAPP. |
| 1R1b | O | Northwest describes significant improvement in MAPP scores, but there are no trend data provided that support this description. |
| 1R2-1R4 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |
| 1I1-1I2 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |

AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northwest Missouri State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:

Item Critical Characteristic

- | | |
|-----|---|
| O1c | Mission: to serve as a learning-centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. The University is committed to preparing broadly educated and engaged citizens for a world of constant change, applying information |
|-----|---|

technology to improved learning processes, and promoting continuous improvement to enhance performance in all its activities. Northwest seeks to expand access to learning and promote research designed to address the needs of its students and shareholders.

- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest align across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard with indicators of the institution’s progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.

- O2a Northwest’s focus is on undergraduate education. Currently, Northwest offers 139 undergraduate majors, a concurrent high school-college degree program that awards a high school diploma and an associate’s degree with completion of the two-year program in the Missouri Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Computing, 40 master’s programs, three specialist degrees, and a cooperative doctorate in Educational Leadership through the University of Missouri.

- O4b Outreach programs in education and business include a number of centers throughout Missouri. Northwest’s outreach programs offer alternative certification, professional development, and dual-credit courses.

- O6c The Northwest Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, located on the main campus, is a business incubator. The facility will also serve as an academic research facility housing the newly formed Graduate Applied Research Center will serve.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northwest Missouri State University’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.

Item	S/O	Comment
2P1a	S	The institution determines other distinctive objectives through its Northwest Quality Systems Model (NQSM). The model facilitates systems thinking and data-informed decision making and involves all levels within the college, key suppliers/partners/collaborators, and

- community members. External validation for goal setting is sought through a Baldrige-based assessment process.
- 2P1b O While Northwest identifies the groups responsible for determining distinctive objectives, information is not provided to evaluate how leaders determine which distinctive objectives are viable and how the University adjusts institutional focus among the many institutional goals.
- 2P2 S Northwest's Quality Systems Model provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring distinctive objectives are communicated throughout the organization. Feedback from implementation is communicated back to the Strategic Planning Council and cabinet to inform revisions to the mission, values, vision, and strategic priorities. Northwest also uses cross-functional teams to manage processes, helping to ensure other distinctive objectives are communicated.
- 2P3 S Faculty and staff needs are addressed through Phase 2 of the Northwest Quality Systems Model. Human Resources planning is articulated in the action development and deployment where each team specifies workforce capability and capacity.
- 2P4 S Strategic initiatives are integrated into the work system through the Seven Step Planning Process (SSPP), utilized by all departments. Ownership of initiatives is given to an appropriate academic or service department to ensure sustainability.
- 2P5a S The University identifies measures of performance in its distinctive objectives, the office or group responsible for performing the assessment, and the measurement cycles.
- 2P5b O Northwest has specified measures for accomplishing most of its distinctive objectives, but it is unclear what the ultimate outcome of the objective might be. Two of the distinctive objectives—REEP and the Missouri Academy—have clear measurements that will impact the objectives, but it is less clear how numbers enrolled, trainings offered, deadlines met, or funding levels will ensure results for students.

- 2R1-2R2 No reportable data from the institution at this time.
- 2I1-2I2 No reportable data from the institution at this time.

AQIP CATEGORY 3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS

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

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

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1c Mission: to serve as a learning-centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. The University is committed to preparing broadly educated and engaged citizens for a world of constant change, applying information technology to improved learning processes, and promoting continuous improvement to enhance performance in all its activities. Northwest seeks to expand access to learning and promote research designed to address the needs of its students and shareholders.
- O1e Northwest won its fourth consecutive Missouri Quality Award in October 2008 (through the Excellence in Missouri Foundation). Enculturation of Cultural Core Values emphasizes a focus on students and stakeholders; caring about each other; continual academic improvement; collaboration with the intention of accomplishing shared goals; mastering details; being united and ethical; and maintaining leadership in the field. Other honors include the Higher Education Funding Council for England (e.g., benchmarked

Northwest's quality approach), Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and multiple Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visits.

- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision making. Shared governance is embedded the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.
- O1g The University prides itself as being a family-type atmosphere with an emphasis on the development of systematic processes and use of data to facilitate ongoing improvement and innovation.
- O3a Of a total of 6903 students enrolled during the fall 2008 trimester, 5782 are undergraduates and 1,121 graduates. Of these students, 5266 (91%) undergraduates and 285 (25%) graduates are full-time. More than 88% of undergraduates are traditional-aged (18-24 years old). Approximately 40% of the undergraduates live on campus. More than one-half (56%) of the undergraduates are female. Approximately 45% of incoming first-year students are first-generation college students.
- O3b Northwest is the largest provider of postsecondary education in a 15 county area of rural northwest Missouri. The University is an institution of choice for many students from the Kansas City metropolitan area, southwest Iowa, and southeast Nebraska.
- O6c The Northwest Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, located on the main campus, is a business incubator. The facility will also serve as an academic research facility housing the newly formed Graduate Applied Research Center will serve.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northwest Missouri State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
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- 3P1a, 3P3 S The University has a comprehensive Listening and Learning System for collecting feedback from students and stakeholders. The system uses a variety of tools and processes for collecting quantitative and qualitative data on perceptions, satisfaction, and needs. Findings are fed to departments, the Strategic Planning Council, and other groups for planning and continuous improvement.
- 3P1b O The institution gathers copious amounts of data, but it is not always clear what objectives are being met or what questions inform the process.
- 3P2a, 3P4 S Northwest has several mechanisms in place for building relationships and communicating with stakeholders. Departments and key process owners determine, deliver, assess, and improve those mechanisms. This approach allows Northwest to provide aligned and integrated strategies to meet stakeholder needs. Student segments are also divided by the type of service provided, ensuring resources and measurement systems are aligned toward results.
- 3P2b, 3P3 O Northwest is a significant provider of educated workers for rural northwest Missouri. The University has acknowledged a need to improve its market position relative to competitors. It has an opportunity to articulate more fully the differentiated needs of employers and build relationships and feedback systems beyond the periodic Eggs and Issues meetings. For example, information from the Professional Advisory Teams could be aggregated to provide a more comprehensive description of how the University serves the regional workforce.
- 3P5 S The University identifies new student and stakeholder groups through a variety of processes. Cross-functional groups (e.g. Enrollment Management LEADS team) analyze trend data obtained through internal and external scanning processes to identify factors likely to influence educational offerings. These processes help ensure the University continues to serve the changing needs of its communities.

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| 3P6 | S | The University emphasizes the importance of stakeholder feedback by handling feedback through the Comment Card system at the presidential level and having processes in place to provide a timely response to the feedback. The system itself has undergone cycles of analysis and improvement. |
| 3P7 | S | Northwest uses a variety of instruments like surveys, comment cards, focus groups, and exit interviews to understand stakeholder satisfaction. Additionally, the University identifies indicators and measures of dissatisfaction, which are also analyzed. This data is utilized through the SSPP to improve existing programs and services. |
| 3R1-3R5 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |
| 3I1-3I2 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |

AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE

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

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

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been

continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of performance, providing Northwest a key competitive advantage.

- O1e Northwest won its fourth consecutive Missouri Quality Award in October 2008 (through the Excellence in Missouri Foundation). Enculturation of Cultural Core Values emphasizes a focus on students and stakeholders; caring about each other; continual academic improvement; collaboration with the intention of accomplishing shared goals; mastering details; being united and ethical; and maintaining leadership in the field. Other honors include the Higher Education Funding Council for England (e.g., benchmarked Northwest's quality approach), Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and multiple Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visits.
- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision making. Shared governance is embedded the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.
- O1g The University prides itself as being a family-type atmosphere with an emphasis on the development of systematic processes and use of data to facilitate ongoing improvement and innovation.
- O5a Over 1,800 faculty, staff, and student employees comprise Northwest's workforce, including 256 (74%) full-time and 92 (26%) part-time faculty. Additionally, the University employs 478 staff and 994 student employees. Reflecting regional demographics, five percent of the workforce is from underrepresented groups. Collective bargaining units do not exist at Northwest.
- O8d Key local vulnerabilities include demands for more academic and living space and a significant number of impending retirements, including the President. The University is responding with increased planning (e.g. Academic Space Group, implementation of Residential Life master plan) and a new presidential search.

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

Item	S/O	Comment
4P1	S	Northwest has a well designed process to identify credentials, skills and values for all employees involving each department that not only focuses on credentials, but service interest, core values and willingness to use technology. Applicable certificate/license, characteristics and skills requirements are determined by the professionals in each department. These requirements are written into job postings and used for applicant screening.
4P2	S	Northwest recruits, hires and retains faculty and staff through a well-defined bottom-up process that includes a thorough orientation to the culture and SSPP. Faculty are recruited nationally, while staff are recruited regionally or locally. That faculty retention has been sustained above the national average, and most turnover is precipitated by retirements rather than relocation, indicates that processes related to faculty hiring and development are effective.
4P3a	S	It is an institutional core value that all stakeholders of the organization will collaborate to accomplish Northwest's goals. The University uses a process of shared governance and cross-functional teams to make decisions and disseminate information. Additionally, the Leadership Forum provides for information dissemination and idea sharing.
4P3b	O	While the institution is clearly committed to compliance with a variety of regulations and mandate and has processes in place to disseminate the information to faculty and staff, a more comprehensive discussion of the Leadership Forum and other venues promoting organizational learning may clarify how the information the institution disseminates translates into a high performing ethical institutional culture. It would also be helpful to have a more concrete description of the relationship of the cross-

functional teams to the operational units and what shared governance means in practice.

- 4P4 SS Northwest engages in a significant number of activities, including the Baldrige and Missouri Quality Award applications, to ensure that all faculty, staff and administrators have the skills to contribute fully and effectively to the school. The institution has an extensive orientation process that focuses on organizational knowledge and ethical practice. It promotes professional development through leadership training, job shadowing, mentoring, support for degree completion, workshops, symposia and planning days as well as through regularly scheduled staff and faculty evaluations and satisfaction surveys.
- 4P5 S The University utilizes a variety of methods to systematically identify training needs of staff and faculty. This includes a formal workforce needs assessment as well as needs identified at the departmental level in SSPP and informal networks to exchange information.
- 4P6 S The institution evaluates faculty through a flexible system that assigns weights in four performance areas. These can be adjusted from year to year as changing circumstances require.
- 4P7 S Northwest has a recognition and reward system that focuses on aligning rewards with the objectives in Categories 1 and 2. The system includes annual service awards, teaching awards, quality awards, and student awards. Of special note is its Commitment to Quality Awards given to selected individuals and teams. Additionally, the institution's compensation and benefit programs appear to be effective in meeting the goal of retaining faculty and staff.
- 4P9 S Northwest provides extensive opportunities to enhance the health, safety and well-being of its employees through a variety of programs.
- 4R1-4R4 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 4I1-4I2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.

AQIP CATEGORY 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northwest Missouri State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of performance, providing Northwest a key competitive advantage.
- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest align across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard with indicators of the institution's progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.
- O1e Northwest won its fourth consecutive Missouri Quality Award in October 2008 (through the Excellence in Missouri Foundation). Enculturation of Cultural Core Values emphasizes a focus on students and stakeholders; caring about each other; continual academic improvement; collaboration with the intention of accomplishing shared goals; mastering details; being united and ethical; and maintaining leadership in the field. Other

honors include the Higher Education Funding Council for England (e.g., benchmarked Northwest's quality approach), Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and multiple Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visits.

- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision making. Shared governance is embedded the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.
- O1g The University prides itself as being a family-type atmosphere with an emphasis on the development of systematic processes and use of data to facilitate ongoing improvement and innovation.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northwest Missouri State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 5, Leading and Communicating.

Item	S/O	Comment
5P1	SS	Northwest has established leadership processes that enable a high performance organization. As detailed in 5C2, The Culture of Quality provides Northwest an ongoing venue for setting and deploying foundational statements – Mission, Vision, Cultural Core Values, Decision Drivers, and KQIs. The five methods listed in 5C2: Orientations, external feedback, the Seven Step Planning Process (SSPP), Annual Department Visits, and individual Performance Evaluations describe how the foundational statements are linked to performance, individual development and initiative and organizational learning. The SSPP is the tool used to create an environment that fosters high expectations, performance improvement, and innovation at the departmental level. All departments have been through three full cycles of process improvement.

- 5P2 SS Northwest's Culture of Quality Model (NQSM) incorporates mechanisms for transmitting organizational values, for stimulating improvement, for succession planning, and for collecting feedback. The process provides alignment for environmental scanning through to strategy execution including support for necessary individual and departmental learning and development. Leaders use Baldrige-based self-assessment processes to improve performance.
- 5P3 S Northwest employs both formal delegation of authority from the board to the president to the cabinet and *Ad hoc* teams, task forces, groups, and committees that are created as necessary to complete tasks or for initiatives. The composition of those groups is always cross-functional in nature, consistent with Northwest's Culture of Quality and the concepts of shared governance.
- 5P4 S Data concerning results are broadly communicated and used to review performance as well as support decision making in strategic planning and day-to-day operations. This is accomplished through the SSTP, the University Dashboard, the Department Visits, Comment Cards, and External Feedback.
- 5P5 S The University has mechanisms in place for communicating downward through the organization, and upward, both at designated times and ad hoc through the comment card system. These processes help to ensure employees have ways to communicate both within and outside of established hierarchies.
- 5P6 O Northwest has a well constructed social responsibility program. However, it is not clear how the institution determines the effectiveness or appropriateness of its approaches to ethics and equity, community service and involvement.
- 5P7 O While the leadership development activities for faculty seem adequate, there was no specific mention about how staff leadership abilities are encouraged, developed, and strengthened. It is not clear if opportunities

exist for faculty, staff and administrators to participate in opportunities relative to their professional leadership development needs and interests.

- 5P8 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 5P9 O It is not clear what measures of leading and communicating are collected within the various instruments that the University lists for review.
- 5R1-5R2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 5I1-5I2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.

AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

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

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

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest align across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard with indicators of the institution's progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.
- O1e Northwest won its fourth consecutive Missouri Quality Award in October 2008 (through the Excellence in Missouri Foundation). Enculturation of Cultural Core Values

emphasizes a focus on students and stakeholders; caring about each other; continual academic improvement; collaboration with the intention of accomplishing shared goals; mastering details; being united and ethical; and maintaining leadership in the field. Other honors include the Higher Education Funding Council for England (e.g., benchmarked Northwest's quality approach), Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and multiple Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visits.

- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision-making. Shared governance is embedded the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.
- O6a To offset the cost of fuel prices, Northwest has developed an alternative fuel program by which its paper and other waste products are pelletized and converted to energy to heat and cool campus buildings. The University is the only agency in the state to have such an alternative fuels program, and has saved itself and the state nearly \$12.5 million in fuel costs.
- O6b Northwest has 70 major buildings located on 370 acres, a 448-acre laboratory farm two miles north of campus, 315-acres of rural lakefront land designed for student and community use and off-campus centers in St. Joseph and Kansas City, Missouri. The University has invested \$225 million in renovations over the last 15 years.
- O8b A key state vulnerability facing Northwest is decreased state funding. The institution is responding with efforts to identify and grow alternative sources of funding like fundraising.
- O8d Key local vulnerabilities include demands for more academic and living space and a significant number of impending retirements, including the President. The University is responding with increased planning (e.g. Academic Space Group, implementation of Residential Life master plan) and a new presidential search.

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

Item	S/O	Comment
6P1, 6P2	S	Northwest utilizes various methods to identify student and administrative support service needs as included in the comprehensive Listening and Learning System. Information is fed to the departments through the SSPP as well as information submitted into the annual environmental scan.
6P3a	SS	Northwest has developed and executed the Seven Step Planning Process (SSPP). The SSPP model is used to document, streamline and improve support service processes. The model includes the setting of key quality indicators, goal setting, formulation of assessment strategy, the development and implementation of an action plan and deployment strategy, tracking trends, a search for improvement and the setting of performance targets and/or stretch goals.
6P3b	O	The institution outlines in broad terms its SSPP planning process. It is not apparent how this process functions at this institution and who participates on a day-to-day basis. It would be helpful to know, for example, who the stakeholders are, what needs and expectations have been identified, what key performance indicators are considered significant, what assessment measures have been determined, who has the primary responsibility for deploying the plan, who carries out the activity analysis and what benchmarks are used.
6P4a	S	Information gathered from various input sources is stored on the Dashboard that in turn is used to update/modify departmental SSPPs as appropriate.
6P4b	O	While the institution indicates that it stores data in the Dashboard, it would be helpful to know the nature of the information and how it is used on a day-to-day basis.

- 6P5a O The University utilizes an array of data collection instruments, which provide a comprehensive view of stakeholder needs and requirements. From the perspective of measuring effectiveness, though, the University may find it productive to identify and report a subset of key, representative indicators from this large set.
- 6P5b See 6P1 and 6P2 above.
- 6R1-6R3 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 6I1-6I2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.

AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

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

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

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of
- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest align across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard

with indicators of the institution's progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.

- O1g The University prides itself as being a family-type atmosphere with an emphasis on the development of systematic processes and use of data to facilitate ongoing improvement and innovation.
- O8a A key national vulnerability for Northwest is increased demand for accountability to which the University has responded through the Voluntary System of Accountability and dashboards.

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

Item	S/O	Comment
7P1, 7P4-7P5	S	Northwest has established a comprehensive infrastructure to support methods to select, manage and use information through the University's KQIs, the SSP and the Data Dashboard. Selection of process measures is integrated into the planning process and aligned with strategic quality indicators to provide both formative and summative feedback. The dashboard system permits decision makers at all levels to monitor performance data related to student learning, strategic initiatives, and institutional effectiveness.
7P2	O	The institution does not address how the information technology infrastructure to support information and data collection, storage, and accessibility is provided. While the University has developed a sophisticated structure of KQIs and dashboards, the process for how this framework is supported is not presented.
7P3	S	The University has a methodology in place for identifying institutions with which it can compare performance and drive improvements.

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| 7P6 | SS | The Computer User's Group and Information Systems area act jointly to ensure the accuracy, maintenance, relevance, and effectiveness of information systems and processes. The focus of this effort is on processing data needed to make the best decisions possible and ensuring accuracy and usefulness of the data. |
| 7P7 | O | It is not clear what measures are used to determine the effectiveness of the system for collecting and analyzing data. The measures that are provided in the Portfolio appear to be data that are collected to measure institutional performance, not measures for determining effectiveness of the system for collecting and analyzing data. |
| 7R1-2 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |
| 7I1-7I2 | O | No reportable information from the institution at this time. |

AQIP CATEGORY 8: PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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

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

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The University considers itself a leader in its field as a result of a culture that is embedded throughout the organization. Known as the **Culture of Quality**, it has been continuously revised for nearly 25 years and has consistently produced high levels of performance, providing Northwest a key competitive advantage.

- O1c Mission: to serve as learning centered community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. The University is committed to preparing broadly educated and engaged citizens for a world of constant change, applying information technology to improved learning processes, and promoting continuous improvement to enhance performance in all its activities. Northwest seeks to expand access to learning and promote research designed to address the needs of our students and shareholders.
- O1d Systems thinking and data-informed decision making at Northwest aligns across the University through the Seven-Step Planning Process (SSPP) and interconnected dashboards. The SSPP is linked to various educational, service, enrollment, and financial key quality indicators (KQIs), and the dashboards provide a balanced scorecard with indicators of the institution's progress toward set targets. The dashboards communicate information across units and hierarchies within the institution.
- O1f Indicative of Northwest's Culture of Quality is the practice of shared governance, which is characterized by shared responsibility, collaboration, and open communication. Northwest values long-term considerations over expediency in decision making. Shared governance is embedded the culture as evidenced by the pervasiveness of cross-functionality into committee and *ad hoc* task force design. All university-level committees include faculty, staff, and in many cases student representation.
- O8c Key regional vulnerabilities include population declines and increased competition from within the service area. The institution is responding with new programming, and increased coordination (e.g. Building Bridges, Missouri's Coordinated Plan for Higher Education).
- O8d Key local vulnerabilities include demands for more academic and living space and a significant number of impending retirements, including the President. The University is responding with increased planning (e.g. Academic Space Group, implementation of Residential Life master plan) and a new presidential search.

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

Item	S/O	Comment
8P1	S	The University employs a comprehensive system for its strategic planning process as evidenced through the <i>Northwest Quality Systems Model</i> with a two-pronged approach to include both Institutional-level planning and Department-level planning. The planning process includes a multitude of stakeholders and ensures that a process is followed to analyze results from various sources. Extensive data is used in Phase 1 and Phase 2 through the environmental scan, which includes six major areas of study.
8P2, 8P4	S	As needs are identified through environmental scanning, strategies are developed through a multi-functional Strategic Initiative (SI) team. Each team develops and utilizes deployment, resource, measurement, and communication plans that provide a road map for implementation of the strategy. Once an SI is complete (i.e. major goals have been met), ownership is given to an appropriate academic or service department for integration into the campus environment. In other words, it becomes a work process.
8P3	S	Northwest has an extensive process to develop action plans, which are aligned with and support institutional strategies. The quality improvement cyclical process provides for review, results, revision and monitoring. Departmental plans are aligned to institutional goals. These plans and alignments are validated annually through the annual review process and annual department visits.
8P5	S	For each SI, the measurement action plan and performance projections are discussed and agreed upon within the cross-functional SI planning team. Each SI has a unique set of measures and performance projects. When available, competitive comparisons from Peer institutions are used to gauge future performance.
8P6	S	Resource needs are an integral part of the planning process and are an integral part of each and every action plan. The Cabinet allocates funds to SIs during a series of budget-focused Cabinet meetings. During each

budget cycle, Northwest keeps a cash reserve in case extra funds are needed for emergency planning. Because of the SPC's broad representation, academic and service departments play an important role in action plan development and eventually gain ownership of completed SIs. Therefore, the Deans' Council and Cabinet members are empowered to add or reallocate funds accordingly to ensure sufficient support for SI and action plan development.

- 8P7 No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 8P8 Planning process effectiveness is measured only indirectly through accreditation and quality award feedback, satisfaction surveys, and results of individual strategic initiatives. These measures do not lend themselves to be used to guide improvement in the planning process itself. The University could consider identifying measures of the planning process such as efficiency, speed, or other qualities that could be used for more direct analysis and process improvement.
- 8R1-8R4 No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 8I1-8I2 No reportable information from the institution at this time.

AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northwest Missouri State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O4a The University has articulation agreements with 48 post-secondary institutions, and agreements with 22 community colleges for 2+2 programs; it collaborates with 160 universities in 39 countries and institutions outside the United States that provide opportunities to study/teach, and with community associations.
- O4b Outreach programs in education and business include a number of centers throughout Missouri. Northwest's outreach programs offer alternative certification, professional development, and dual-credit courses.
- O6c The Northwest Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, located on the main campus, is a business incubator. The facility will also serve as an academic research facility housing the newly formed Graduate Applied Research Center will serve.
- O8c Key regional vulnerabilities include population declines and increased competition from within the service area. The institution is responding with new programming, and increased coordination (e.g. Building Bridges, Missouri's Coordinated Plan for Higher Education).

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

Item	S/O	Comment
9P1	O	No reportable information from the institution at this time.
9P2	S	Northwest integrates partners into its internal processes and structures as a mechanism for assuring that the needs of both parties are being met. Cross-functional teams provide groups with input and feedback. Comment cards and surveys also are utilized to provide additional feedback.
9P3	O	There does not appear to be a systematic process to effectively measure the various relationships between and among the institution's

constituencies. It is not clear how relationships within the institution are created and maintained or how its family-type atmosphere is sustained.

- 9P4 O While the institution has instruments and processes in place for collecting qualitative and quantitative information on partnerships, other than the Advisory Board for the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship there do not appear to be measures in place to determine the success of external collaborative relationships. The institution may benefit from process measures that directly assess the effectiveness of these relationships.
- 9R1-9R2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.
- 9I1-9I2 O No reportable information from the institution at this time.