

Systems Portfolio Guide

A Resource For Creating Your Systems Portfolio

Academic Quality Improvement Program

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About this Systems Portfolio Guide

This new *AQIP Systems Portfolio Guide* incorporates recommended changes in the structure of Systems Portfolios resulting from the 2011 Action Project to improve the Systems Appraisal process. The Action Project Task Force surveyed AQIP institutions and peer reviewers, and concluded that some changes in the structure of Systems Portfolios would make preparation and review of the portfolio simpler and more effective. Those recommendations include:

- Requiring that institutions respond to all questions under each AQIP Category, ending the previous practice of allowing institutions to respond to at least 1/3 of the questions in each Category.
- Raising the overall maximum length of a Systems Portfolio from 100 to 125 pages.
- Shortening the Overview from 10 to 2 pages, and specifying what it should contain.
- Requiring a one-page introduction to each AQIP Category section presenting the institution's view of its own level of development or maturity on the Category and areas in which it is seeking feedback. This eliminates the need for a separate Self-Evaluation document.
- Ending the practice of having institutions index their Portfolios to indicate where evidence relating to the Criteria and Core Components appears by specifying the AQIP questions under which evidence for each Core Components must be located.

The Systems Portfolio

The Systems Portfolio serves a number of purposes simultaneously. It is:

- a means by which your institution can get high-quality, actionable feedback on your organizational strengths and opportunities from a team of quality improvement experts and educators;
- a body of evidence to show the Higher Learning Commission that your institution is meeting its Criteria for Accreditation;
- a common reference point that lets everyone in your institution share an understanding of how it is organized, what its key processes are, what kind of performance those processes produce, and how it improves;
- a planning tool that helps your institution shape its future agenda and concentrate everyone's attention on those areas that should be the focus of scrutiny for improvement;
- evidence, over time, that AQIP is working to your institution's advantage, and that continued participation in the program makes sense; and
- a public information and relations tool that lets your institution's stakeholders understand clearly and persuasively what your institution is accomplishing with its resources.

Your institution's Systems Portfolio communicates to a variety of audiences, including the public. It isn't just for the Higher Learning Commission. Begin by envisioning the different groups of people who will read it, considering what each group knows about higher education and why they are interested in your institution.

Your institution can assume that its AQIP audience understands specialized terms relative to higher education. Other audiences, which might include prospective students, parents, employers, funding or governance bodies, state coordinating or regulatory boards, prospective faculty and staff, donors, or other accrediting agencies, may not. Some of these groups might require additional explanation of terms or concepts that peer higher educators would understand.

<p>Core Components from the Criteria for Accreditation (revised in 2011-12, and effective on January 1, 2013), appear in boxes with this background.</p>	<p>Examples of how institutions might write sections of their own Systems Portfolio appear in boxes surrounded by zigzag borders.</p>
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Providing Context

In previous Systems Portfolios, institutions provided a contextual snapshot of their organization through a 10 page Overview. This has been replaced by two separate elements: a two-page *Institutional Overview*, and nine one-page *Category Introductions*. The goal of the Overview and Introductions is to give readers of the Systems Portfolio, including Systems Appraisers, a reasonable context for understanding the institution's detailed descriptions of its processes, results, and improvement strategies.

The Institutional Overview

The Institutional Overview should be a maximum of two pages. On page one briefly describe:

- the institution’s mission, values, and/or strategic vision;
- the numbers and types of students, faculty, and staff;
- the level and scope of academic offerings;
- its campuses and additional instructional locations;
- its distance delivery programs; and
- other key campus programs and resources.

On page two, briefly describe the institution’s quality improvement journey with reflection on its key challenges, accomplishments, failures, and future opportunities. Reflect on the last 2 – 4 years (since the institution’s last Systems Appraisal), and provide illustrations (including AQIP Action Projects) of improvement initiatives that the organization has implemented to help further develop its quality program.

Some incomplete examples of what page 2 of the Reflective Overview might contain:

Excelsior! is our internal name for our overall quality improvement effort, and it has become an important and visible part of our culture. We make every new employee, before they interview, aware that the institution expects universal faculty and staff involvement in helping us increase quality performance, and we...

One of our recent successful Excelsior! projects included documenting of our student records system’s structure, variable, and reports; creating training materials and guides for users; and implementation of an ongoing evaluation system that will tell us quickly if the documentation or guides fail to...

Our Advisement project failed to achieve one of its stated goals, reducing course withdrawal rates below 10%, so we established phase 2 of the project in which we will...

Our institution began its quality improvement program eight years ago with much fanfare, energy, and success, as our first Systems Portfolio demonstrated. Three years ago, statewide budget cuts, turnover in institutional personnel, and the complacency resulting from our initial successes let the quality program languish. Although we continued to declare Action Projects, their scope was limited, and the priority attached to completing them was low. A survey last year showed that less than 40% of our employees were sure that we still had a continuous improvement program, and that fewer than 20% could name any of our three Action Projects.

The survey led to a strong and sincere effort to revitalize our commitment to quality improvement by...

The individual Category Introductions that begin each of the nine AQIP Category sections of this Portfolio show that our institution exhibits a wide variance in developmental stages among its key systems. Reacting approaches are still prevalent in processes associated with Categories 3, 5 and 9, whereas integrated approaches are clearly in place for Categories 1 and 4. The most problematic aspect of the less mature Categories is that...

Our institution began a project to systematize its approach to student retention by establishing explicit goals and developing closer coordination across academic units, student services and enrollment services. Reorganization of reporting lines and the appointment of a new Director of Retention have been implemented to increase coordination and accountability. This project is designed to move the institution from a systematic approach to a more aligned approach by...

Category Introductions

The Systems Portfolio should provide additional context through a one-page (or shorter) introduction to each Category. Each Category Introduction should describe the *maturity* of the institution’s approach to processes in that Category (using terms from the typology of four levels below). It should also detail the institution’s priorities for improvement in the Category, such as planned Action Projects. The Category Introduction will enable Systems Appraisers to provide feedback where it is most valuable — the areas where the institution currently focuses its attention.



Reacting	Systematic	Aligned	Integrated
<p>The institution views work as isolated tasks and activities rather than processes. Operations primarily respond to immediate needs or problems and don’t concentrate much on anticipating future requirements, capacities, or changes. Goals are implicit, poorly defined, or disputed. There are lots of informal, varying procedures and processes. “Putting out fires” gets more attention than preventing them.</p>	<p>The institution increasingly does its work by repeatable processes with clear, explicit goals. It designs “proactive” processes that prevent (rather than discover) problems. Processes that don’t work effectively are evaluated and improved. It promotes closer coordination among institutional units, deploying effective processes across the institution and eroding the walls separating institutional “silos.”</p>	<p>The institution groups operations into processes that are stable, consciously managed, and regularly evaluated for improvement. It strives to make sure that what it learns is shared among institutional units. Coordination among units, divisions, and departments is a major emphasis. Its processes address the institution’s key goals and strategies. People see “the big picture” and relate what they do to institutional goals and strategies.</p>	<p>Work is accomplished through stable, well-designed processes. Processes are managed by a responsible individuals or groups. Key processes are regularly monitored and improved in collaboration with other affected units. Efficiencies across units are sought and achieved through analysis, innovation, and sharing. Processes and measures track progress on key strategic and operational goals. Outsiders request permission to visit and study why the institution is so successful.</p>

Samples: A full Category Introduction, and some partial examples of what Introductions may contain.

Each Category Introduction is limited to one full page. It needs to communicate to readers a general sense of how mature the institution honestly believes its current systems and processes are; where the institution believes it should focus next within the Category; the institution's sense of the consequences it faces if it does or does not invest in improving the Category; etc. The more detailed an institution's understanding of its own sense of the urgency and need for improvement within a Category, the better the Systems Appraisal review team will be at providing useful feedback and commentary.

Category 1 Introduction

Processes for **Helping Student Learn** exhibit a range of maturity levels. Processes related to common learning and developmental outcomes (1P1, 1P16, 1P17) are well *aligned* and *integrated* at ABC University (ABCU). General education outcomes are supplemented with shared developmental outcomes in the areas of teaming, ethical reasoning, global awareness, and leadership. The combined set of learning and developmental outcomes is explicitly *aligned* with the outcomes required for accreditation by our various specialized program accreditation agencies (listed in 1P13). Student Affairs works closely with Academic Affairs to catalog all student activities, clubs, and organizations in relation to the campus's shared developmental outcomes. An internally developed online assessment is taken by all students upon enrollment and in the senior year to measure and track developmental progress. This online instrument generates results (accessible by faculty and staff) that can be filtered by year, class level, outcome, etc., and used in program-level reviews, accreditation reports, and planning. An initiative is underway to integrate student swipe-card technology with the database so that a student's participation in activities designed to address specific developmental outcomes can be captured and aggregated via the same online interface used with the assessment results.

Processes for designing new academic programming and monitoring the effectiveness of current programming (1P3, 1P13, 1P14) are *aligned*, but the coordination between academic programs remains fragile. In 2005, an Action Project created structures whereby the academic, industrial, or professional advisory boards associated with every four-year program is surveyed using common questions about employers' needs and about developments in the marketplace or discipline. Results are aggregated and fed into yearly environmental scanning analyses generated for Executive Council. When possible, results from the alumni and employer surveys used by most academic programs are also fed into a yearly review of program array; however, these surveys are not yet standardized and not all programs employ them.

Processes for determining and assessing learning outcomes at the program level (1P2, 1P9, 1P18) are *systematic* insofar that every academic program implements its own assessment plan; however, university wide, the processes must be considered *reacting* in that results cannot be aggregated and instruments cannot be used in common. Faculty Senate has appointed a representational group of faculty leaders to study opportunities for creating a few common practices or the use of a common instrument that might facilitate the movement toward greater integration.

An area of attention for ABCU is maturing the integration of processes related to identifying and supporting student needs (1P5, 1P6, 1P7, 1P8, 1P10, and 1P18). Work dating back to 2004 (on our First Year Experience, and with *Worldclass Consultants, Inc.*) has resulted in campus consensus that our retention and graduation rates cannot be significantly improved unless we find ways to integrate the *systematic* (yet still isolated) efforts of the following groups: tutoring, peer mentoring, supplemental instruction, faculty advisors, career services, testing, the Early Alert Committee, university counseling, and the ADA Accommodation Office. Offering these services through individual offices worked while total enrollment remained under 2,000 students. Now that enrollment is double that, and consensus on the need for integration has been achieved, a multi-year Action Project is underway to study solutions and efficiencies (See Category 1 Action Project declaration for “Building Institutional Capacity for a Student Success Center”).

Category 3, Understanding Students’ and Stakeholders’ Needs. We have no explicit processes to generate information about the courses and programs students need. As a small, cohesive institution, we believe that our faculty and staff know our students and their families, and that more elaborate research and information-gathering techniques are unnecessary. Our values dictate our curriculum and services; when it becomes clear that we need to change them, we react by...

Overall, our institution operates primarily with systematic approaches in **Category 6, Supporting Operations**. Most support units have defined explicit goals for key processes, using a common model for short term and long term planning. Support units with clear goals and processes include accounting, payroll, purchasing, risk management, maintenance, public safety, and...

A few units are still in a reactive approach with poorly defined goals and few or no measures, but institutional leaders are actively working with those units to rectify this. Different campus constituencies expect Alumni and Development to provide...

The institutional planning committee has been redefined with new objectives and broader membership and has begun to work on closer coordination across organizational units. To accomplish this, the committee has...

Category 5, Leading and Communicating, is a system where we believe we can make significant improvements. Our institution has declared an AQIP Action Project to address leadership succession. The institution has been in a reactive mode in the past and has been challenged to address sudden changes in several leadership positions in recent years. The project is designed to move the institution to a systematic approach. Components of the Action Project include the implementation of task force to identify key positions where leadership succession needs to be defined and development of a consistent process for developing a leadership succession plan. The primary outcome of the project will be the development of a succession plan for key leadership positions. Useful feedback on our plans might include...
Communication continues to be a challenge...

Category 5 • Leading and Communicating

The College has made some progress in Category 5 since its last Systems Portfolio submission and is moving into the developmental level of the Aligned Approach. We recognized the lack of diverse measures for our processes in Category 5 as the HERI benchmarked survey was the only cyclic measure of performance employed. In the past year, the University implemented an action project addressing the campus climate. Following research of best practices, a campus climate survey was created and deployed early in the spring semester. The results have been analyzed and disseminated widely on campus. Follow-up has occurred pertaining to the one survey item that was lower than the institutional benchmark including a discussion at the Faculty Senate, College Faculty and in the Cabinet meetings. The survey item will receive further attention in the fall and is anticipated to be included in the next Strategic Plan 2013-2016. Additionally, the University has a new president who could advance opportunities for improvement particularly in the areas of effective communication with various constituents, a documented succession plan, and further development of systematic measures for Leading and Communicating.

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Communication continues to be a challenge...

Organizing the Content: The nine Category sections

In each Category, address *each* of the P, R, and I items. A Systems Portfolio should include references (item numbers, at a minimum) for all Category items. Skipping questions could lead an institution to fail to present data showing how it meets the five Criteria for Accreditation. Items not addressed in depth and thus recognized as future opportunities for improvement may be answered briefly and honestly:

“We have no measures of the effectiveness of support services at this time.”

“Our institution has not yet developed processes for leadership succession.”

“We began gathering student retention and persistence data two years ago, but have yet organized and analyzed the data so that it can inform our actions.”

Since it is obvious that such answers reflect opportunities for improvement, Appraisal teams may choose not to respond with comments, but merely with Os or OOs. Whether or not teams provide such feedback, the institution should, of course, realize these areas represent serious challenges.

Remember: institutions *must* answer every AQIP P, R, and I question.

Items that represented significant strengths in earlier Systems Portfolios can similarly be answered with a short response rather than lengthy discussion: “Our processes in this area are robust and well

designed (SS), as our last Systems Appraisal recognized.” (An institution could provide a hyperlink in a statement like this, giving readers who want more information about these “robust and well-designed” processes a means of reading the details.)

However if the response to a particular item must also provide evidence that the institution meets a Core Component, then an abbreviated answer or reference to an earlier Portfolio may be counterproductive, and lead the Appraisal Team to conclude that evidence for the Component is insufficient. (See p. 10, “Using the Systems Portfolio to Document the Criteria for Accreditation,” for more on this issue.)

No matter what the institution’s current stage of development or mix of priorities, Category 1 should occupy at least 15% of the total space in its Portfolio (about 20 pages in a 125-page Portfolio). But within the sections devoted to each of the Categories, institutions have much latitude to focus on what is most important to them now. As a higher education institution begins to look at itself through AQIP’s process-focused Categories, it will realize that there are developmental stages through which it will pass (or has passed) for each Category. These stages occur at different points in different areas of an institution. In each Category Introduction, the institution will estimate its current stage of development in each Category—appraisals of its strengths and opportunities that the institution can use to propel itself to the next developmental level. The second, and subsequent versions of an institution’s Systems Portfolio should clearly document how the benefits of improving processes is paying off, and where the evidence shows it.

Further, AQIP expects experienced institutions to become more skilled at telling their stories effectively — describing processes succinctly, presenting significant results clearly, and explaining systems for operations and improvement vividly. Subsequent versions of an institution’s Portfolio ought to reflect growth in these skills.

Although AQIP requires Systems Appraisers to review and analyze *everything* in the maximum 125 pages of an institution’s Systems Portfolio, institutions may also embed in the Portfolio links (if the document is web-based) and references (if it is print-based) to additional resources. These optional links can refer readers to other web pages, electronic documents, or even print documents that provide additional explanation and evidence. Creating your institution’s initial Systems Portfolio is a task that can be taken on in pieces, one Category at a time.

Here are some tips to get you started.

- Begin by creating the sections that deal with the Categories that relate directly to current (or proposed) Action Projects. Understanding the systems that underlie Action Projects will make their success more likely.
- Construct each Category Introduction first, and discuss each Introduction with all of those who will be involved in writing responses to the individual items in the Category.
- Educate your colleagues on the notion of process and system maturity; don’t let them assume that making progress automatically equates with maturity. If needed, do some research on the topic. (Google “process maturity model” for a wealth of information.)
- Don’t use up valuable Portfolio space explaining the model or rubric that informs your institution’s Category Introductions; instead, compose your Introductions in a manner that exhibits your understanding of process and systems maturity.

- Be concise! Given limited space, focus on the *key processes* and *key results* related to each Category. Don't waste words on unessential details, future plans, or apologies.
- When faced with a multipart process question, break down the question into its singular parts and write to each. In this way, the entire question will be answered and a segment of the question will not be missed.
- In order to provide ease of reading for the appraisal team and the stakeholders who will use the portfolio, consider designating someone in your institution as the portfolio editor who will be responsible for merging the category responses and present them in one voice.
- If providing links (e.g., to items on your institution's website) to supply more details for curious readers, assume that AQIP Systems Appraisers will read *only* what is in the Portfolio itself, not the linked materials.
- To make certain you have provided reasonable evidence that each Core Component is met, review — collectively — your responses to the designated AQIP questions related to each Core Component.
- Reference other Category descriptions when responding to Category items to illustrate how processes are aligned and linked at the institutional level.

Processes (P)

Whether called activities, tasks, or procedures, *processes* are the methods by which faculty and staff do their work — both academic and administrative. In higher education, many processes are implicit and unwritten: people do them without questioning why, without clear goals in mind, and without any way to measure how effectively the processes achieve their objectives. Begin by describing clearly what a process exists to achieve: whom it serves, what it does, why it is necessary. Where possible, show how a process operates by using tables and flowcharts, providing needed explanation in text. Describe how broadly a key processes is deployed across your institution. Do not hesitate to reference other Category descriptions when responding to process items – to illustrate how an institutional process is aligned with other institutional processes and goals.

Process items allow your institution to:

- make clear and public the goals for which key processes exist;
- identify processes that need redesign, elimination, or greater understanding;
- describe those processes now in use distinctly and precisely;
- connect separated activities and operations by explaining how they are parts of a larger process;
- determine whether the most effective processes are deployed throughout the institution; and
- stress the institutional value of focusing attention on how processes affect results.

When a higher education institution first begins to work on continuous improvement by becoming conscious of its own processes, it may find that:

- many of its processes are informal, and no one thinks about them consciously;

- its many independent activities, offices, and procedures have shared, common goals, but are not perceived as parts of a single process;
- many of its processes evolved, and were never thoughtfully designed to achieve their goals;
- many processes are cumbersome and involve steps that add little value and produce delays and errors;
- many processes have multiple conflicting goals — or no clear goal that everyone agrees on;
- key processes are not actively managed by an individual or group charged with responsibility for improving them;
- the effectiveness of processes at accomplishing desired goals is not measured; and
- improvement of processes is sporadic, unplanned, and unpredictable.

Given this common situation, the place for most institutions to begin improvement is by accurately capturing current practice in key areas — documenting the *who, when, where, how, and why* for key institutional processes. The AQIP **P** (for **Process**) items under each Category are helpful in stimulating inquiry about key processes. But as it begins its quality journey, the typical college or university may find it impossible to focus equal attention on *all* of the numerous key processes suggested by the Category questions. To be of maximum value to an institution, the Systems Portfolio must focus attention on those processes most essential for the next stages in the institution's quality improvement efforts and on processes that demonstrate compliance with HLC Criteria and Core Components.

Results (R)

When responding to results items, understand your institution can only present *key* results that are aligned to defined processes. If a process is informal, haphazard, or unsystematic, it is unlikely that your institution can track and measure its effectiveness.

Results items allow you to:

- Develop measures that indicate a process's successful operation and achievement of its goals;
- Identify processes that are not accomplishing their goals or purposes;
- Identify waste — activities and resources that accomplish nothing worthwhile;
- Gather data that shows the operation of a process over time and allows understanding of the causes of variation in its performance; and
- Obtain data from other peer institutions on similar processes that allow comparisons for determining the level of effectiveness of processes.

Before an institution can measure results meaningfully, it must stabilize its processes and understand them well enough to use measurement productively. Even when the goals of a process are ill-defined, an institution could measure the process's cost, cycle time, and gross productivity (e.g., number of students enrolled, number of forms processed, number of applications distributed,

etc.). But these measures have limited value without the context provided by clearly understanding the goals of a process and aligning them to appropriate measures. Not having results that document the performance of many key processes is normal in an institution's first Systems Portfolio. Institutions serious about doing quality work will demonstrate an increasing level of maturity in responding to Results items in their second and subsequent portfolios.

Improvement (I)

Responses should illustrate a clear pattern of how your institution is improving its processes (and therefore its results) and what specific improvements are being targeted.

Improvement items allow your institution to:

- Examine results to evaluate whether its processes and activities are performing up to expectations;
- Benchmark to discover and adapt the best practices of outstanding organizations;
- Build regular mechanisms that create predictable cycles for improving all processes; and
- View systematic improvement as a challenge worth working for.

Systematic, continuous improvement is a challenging goal that requires most institutions to *first* master the art of designing and measuring key processes. It is only when performance is known and can be analyzed that true continuous improvement becomes possible. Therefore, most institutions will find that their first Systems Portfolio may have little to say in response to the **I2** items, while the **I1** items allow for anecdotal reporting of Action Projects and other strategic initiatives.

Using the Systems Portfolio to document the Criteria for Accreditation

AQIP functions *both* as a quality improvement program *and* a quality assurance program. To maintain accreditation, colleges and universities need to demonstrate clearly that they continue to meet the Higher Learning Commission’s *Criteria for Accreditation*.

Specific Category items are aligned to the Criteria and Core Components and thus provide evidence through an institution’s thorough response to the item. If the Systems Appraisal identifies gaps in an institution’s documentation that it meets accreditation requirements, the institution will have opportunities (via paper or through a *Checkup Visit*) to provide the needed evidence prior to AQIP’s seven-year *Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.

The Systems Portfolio provides an institution an opportunity to demonstrate it meets each of the Core Components of the Criteria for Accreditation, and to do so well before the Higher Learning Commission judges it for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. If its presentation of a Core Component in its Portfolio is inadequate, the institution will get from AQIP an early alert that it needs to strengthen its argument before Reaffirmation. Thus the Systems Portfolio and Systems Appraisal helps

an institution prevent situations in which it discovers itself out of compliance with accreditation requirements.

Figure 1 shows under which AQIP Category P (Process) questions an institution must demonstrate that it meets each of the 21 Core Components. In some cases, an institution’s entire argument for a Core Component must be incorporated in a single P answer; in others, the institution can argue that it meets the Core Component in answering two different P questions (typically within the same AQIP Category), but can decide how to distribute the evidence across its two answers.

The presentation that the institution makes for each Core Component can be woven through its answer(s), but must in total address *all* of the Core Component’s subcomponents. In reviewing a Systems Portfolio to check an institution’s compliance with the Criteria, these P answers will be the specific locations that reviewers will check for each Core Component, so it is unwise for an institution to place relevant or important information elsewhere in its Portfolio. It is critical for an institution to “make its case” that it meets a Core Component

AQIP Categories Process Question	Core Components
1P1	3B
1P2	3B, 4B
1P4	1C, 3A, 4A
1P6	2B
1P7	3D
1P10	1C
1P11	2D, 2E
1P12	3A
1P13	4A
1P15	3D
1P16	3E
1P18	4B
3P1	4C
3P3	1D
3P5	1D
4P2	3C
4P7	2A, 2E
4P10	3C
5P1	1A
5P2	1A, 2C, 5C
5P3	1B
5P5	5B
5P6	5C
5P8	1B
5P9	5B
7P2	5D
7P4	5D
8P6	5A

Figure 1

Core Component	AQIP Categories Process Questions	
	1A	5P1
1B	5P3	5P8
1C	1P4	1P10
1D	3P3	3P5
2A	4P7	
2B	1P6	
2C	5P2	
2D	1P11	
2E	1P11	4P7
3A	1P4	1P12
3B	1P1	1P2
3C	4P2	4P10
3D	1P7	1P15
3E	1P16	
4A	1P4	1P13
4B	1P2	1P18
4C	3P1	
5A	8P6	
5B	5P5	5P9
5C	5P2	5P6
5D	7P2	7P4

Figure 2

clearly and concisely within its answers to the specified P questions. Figure 2 presents the same correspondences as Figure 1, but shows them from the Systems Appraisers' viewpoint — where Appraisers will look for evidence of each Core Component.

Below is a chart that will be completed by Systems Appraisers during the Appraisal process

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

Provide Convincing Evidence. Providing *evidence* means more than simply *making claims*. The Systems Portfolio needs to present the facts and logic upon which your institution's claims rest. Portfolios that offer the strongest evidence reveal items that have been subject to the institution's analysis, the results of these analyses, and subsequently how the information is used to improve and communicate effectiveness. The Systems Appraisal team will trust that your institution's descriptions of institutional practices, activities, and systems are accurate and therefore provide trustworthy evidence that your institution meets the Commission's *Criteria*, but the team cannot make this determination unless the Portfolio presents or summarizes evidence that is derived through careful and demonstrable analyses that ultimately support the institution's claims

Remember that the comprehensive review of your institution's Systems Portfolio is **NOT** AQIP's review of its accreditation. If, after the Systems Appraisal is over, there remain questions about how

your institution meets any of the Criteria for Accreditation, it will have an opportunity to fill any gaps and show that all is well — long before AQIP determines reaffirmation of accredited status.

To satisfy a Criterion for Accreditation, an institution must meet *all* of its Core Components, if one or more is not met, the Criterion is not met. To meet a Core Component, an institution must address *all of the subcomponents*. This can be documented within the process response in a number of ways:

Example:

(AQIP provides direction for responding to Criterion 5, Core Component B on pages 31-32)

Address Core Component 5B under 5P5 and 5P9

5.B. The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

- The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.
- 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.
- The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

In the example provided below on writing to each subcomponent, please note the following structure:

- The first four paragraphs address *decision making*. This is the first part of the category question, which breaks down the process to address strategic, operational, and day-to-day decisions.
- The fifth paragraph addresses the second part of the category question, *carrying out decisions*. This paragraph also provides a transition to the general theme of the core component. The figure has been removed in consideration of space.
- The sixth paragraph begins the segment to address the core component. The first sentence in the paragraph points to the first subcomponent (bullet) being addressed, *Policies and Procedures*. Evidentiary statements are provided along with cross-referencing to other category questions which contain evidence to help make the case.
- The seventh paragraph addresses the second subcomponent (bullet). Evidentiary statements are provided with a cross reference to the content in a previous category question. The rest of the paragraph builds the case as to how the evidence provided in that question supports meeting the subcomponent.

- The eighth paragraph addresses the third subcomponent (bullet). Evidentiary statements demonstrating the subcomponent are provided.
- 5P9 provides further evidence of compliance with the third subcomponent in 5.B. In this category question response, the leadership educational training and leadership participation is discussed. In 5P9, the first two sentences address the first part of the category question *development of leadership abilities* and refer the reviewer to a previous category question in which the leadership educational process is defined. The rest of the paragraph is dedicated to addressing the second part of the category question, *sharing of leadership knowledge and skills*.

Here are sample responses to 5P5 and 5P9 that, *together*, address Core Component 5B well:

5P5. The university's decision-making processes are divided into three main categories: strategic decisions, operational decisions, and daily decisions needed to direct the course of normal business practices.

Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees and the Cabinet with input from all areas of the College. Strategic decisions are normally made during the strategic planning process with input from appropriate stakeholders and by the analysis of appropriate data. As needs and circumstances change, strategic decisions may need to be made to address budgetary issues, to discuss the emergence of a key programming decision, or to evaluate a new student service or retention practice. A major criterion of all strategic decisions is how the decision aligns with the university's *Strategic Plan*. The university uses project teams to conduct root cause analysis and to make recommendations regarding strategic decisions; a project team would include employees from all levels of the institution.

Operational decisions during the course of a year are made by teams, focus groups, and committees that analyze data and input from stakeholders. The Cabinet reviews data on a regular basis to ensure that the institution is tracking toward accomplishing its goals in the areas of enrollment, retention, budget, fundraising, graduation, placement, assessment, and stakeholder satisfaction. A cross-functional university team of administration, faculty, staff, and students assembles to attain a given annual operating plan objective by making decisions regarding that objective. The team includes a process owner, who collects information from stakeholders, and a project manager. The team may use quality tools such as fish-bone diagrams and process mapping to analyze the situation, to identify a root cause, and to make decisions to improve the process or issue. The team meets for a specific purpose and then dissolves when the objective is met.

Day-to-day decisions are made by the appropriate directors, managers, and/or staff for the specific area involved. These decisions are based on stakeholder input data, organizational policies, personnel experience, and training.

Figure 5-4, Managerial Organizational Chart reveals that the Board of Trustees has entrusted the university president with the daily operation of the university. The president has developed operational departments and an overall organizational structure that effectively attain the institution's mission. Dependent upon the nature of the work process, employees within a

department work together to attain the operational goals, and employees work across departments to collaborate and attain the strategic goals established in the *Strategic Plan*.

Policies and procedures are in place that engage internal constituencies in the governance process. Cross-functional participation on standing committees (administration, faculty, staff, and students) is defined by committee charters. The description of the committees of the Board of Trustees (5P2), the strategic planning process (5P1, 5P2), and the formulation of operational decisions in this section (5P5) indicate the engagement of internal constituencies through structured processes defined by policy and procedure.

The descriptions of the committees of the Board of Trustees (5P2) are consistent with the *Articles of Incorporation, Article VI, Committees*. The structure of the Board's policy committees provides oversight of the institution's financial policies by the Finance Committee and of the academic policies and practices by the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. The Institutional Advancement Committee and the Executive Committee ensure that the Board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

Cross-functional representation is described in the membership section of each academic committee charter. This, for example, is true of the university's Learning Team, Curriculum Quality Council (CQC), and Continuous Learning Improvement Committee (CLIC). Students are also included in decisions that affect them directly and where student success and satisfaction are paramount. An example of this would be the Baccalaureate Progression Program Steering Committee.

5P9. As described in 4P9, the university provides a formal academic leadership educational program every academic year for twelve to fifteen employees from any area of the institution. The accomplishment of attaining leadership educational goals is celebrated at the all-personnel meeting at the end of the academic year. Leadership knowledge and skills are also emphasized at managers' retreats where topics such as effective communication skills are the focus of group activities. Leadership skills are encouraged for every employee by the provision of leadership opportunities such as process owner or team leader.

Communication and participation in the functioning of the university support leadership at all levels of the organization. Professional development plans provide the opportunity for employee-specific training in leadership and management.

Below is an example of an institution providing a chart in its response to AQIP item 5P2 that addresses aspects of Core Components 1A, 2C, 5C (figure 1 on page 13 for the locations of evidence for these Core Components). With the responses to the other AQIP items that address these Core Components, this might be *one element* of a full response to each Core Component.

Changes to the Budgeting Process

Prior Budgeting Process to quality Initiative	Present Budgeting Process
<p>Started with a roll-over budget (carried the current year's budget into the next operating year)</p>	<p>Starts with institutional priorities as defined by the Strategic Plan, external threats and strategic opportunities. Examples are below.</p> <p><i>Strategic Plan priority:</i> increase faculty salaries to the median of peers</p> <p><i>External threat priority:</i> increase institutional aid to offset the decline in the state grant program</p> <p><i>Strategic opportunity priority:</i> purchase adjacent residential home to increase institutional footprint</p>
<p>Added an incremental across the board increase (when possible); Cabinet members made individual cases to the President for additional funds above the general increase; the President and financial officers prioritized requests.</p>	<p>President's Cabinet shares information about divisional needs and works as a group to consensus on how to fund institutional priorities and unit needs that require new funding.</p>
<p>Little opportunity for line shifting within budgets. New needs could not be met with existing resources.</p>	<p>Departments use zero-based budgeting to justify expense lines and to make the case for the internal shifting of resources to address new needs.</p>
<p>Expenses were capped by projected tuition revenue. If there was no surplus beyond the operational budget, then the strategic initiatives could be met.</p>	<p>Cabinet is engaged in the equal process of identifying and developing revenue targets and strategies as well as contributing to the expenses budgets. When efficiencies are identified the cost savings may be retained by the Cabinet member to offset new needs.</p>

The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation: locations for evidence

The Higher Learning Commission *Criteria for Accreditation* were revised, effective January 1, 2013, to state the following expectations for all institutions that the Commission accredits:

Criterion One: Mission. The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

Criterion Two: Ethics and Responsible Conduct. The institution fulfills its mission ethically and responsibly.

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning–Quality, Resources, and Support. The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning– Evaluation and Improvement. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environment, and support services and evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Each Criterion is further delineated and detailed by the expression of Core Components; to meet a Criterion, an institution must meet all of the Core Components that it includes. The listing of AQIP Categories that follows indicates where, in its responses to P(rocess) questions in its Systems Portfolio, an institution should present the evidence that it meets each Core Component. In reviewing how effectively an institution has amassed the evidence it fulfills the *Criteria for Accreditation*, AQIP Systems Appraisers will center their attention on these specific locations.

AQIP Category One, HELPING STUDENTS LEARN, focuses on the design, deployment, and effectiveness of teaching-learning processes that underlie your institution’s credit and non-credit programs and courses, and on the processes required to support them.

Processes (P)

- 1P1. How do you determine which common or shared objectives for learning and development you should hold for all students pursuing degrees at a particular level? Whom do you involve in setting these objectives?

Address Core Component 3B under 1P1 and 1P2

3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

- The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
- The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
- 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.
- The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
- The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

1P2. How do you determine your specific program learning objectives? Whom do you involve in setting these objectives?

Address Core Component 3B under 1P1 and 1P2

Address Core Component 4B under 1P2 and 1P18

4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

- The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
- The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
- The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

1P3. How do you design new programs and courses that facilitate student learning and are competitive with those offered by other organizations?

1P4. How do you design responsive academic programming that balances and integrates learning goals, students' career needs, and the realities of the employment market?

Address Core Component 1C under 1P4 and 1P10

1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

- The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
- The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Address Core Component 4A under 1P4 and 1P13

4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

- The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
- The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.
- The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
- The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
- The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
- The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and AmeriCorps).

Address Core Component 3A under 1P4 and 1P12

3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

- Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
- The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

- The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

- 1P5. How do you determine the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses, and learning they will pursue?
- 1P6. How do you communicate to current and prospective students the required preparation and learning and development objectives for specific programs, courses, and degrees or credentials? How do admissions, student support, and registration services aid in this process?

Address Core Component 2B under 1P6

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

- 1P7. How do you help students select programs of study that match their needs, interests, and abilities?

Address Core Component 3D under 1P7 and 1P15

3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

- The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
- The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
- The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
- The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
- The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

- 1P8. How do you deal with students who are underprepared for the academic programs and courses you offer?

- 1P9. How do you detect and address differences in students' learning styles?

1P10. How do you address the special needs of student subgroups (e.g., handicapped students, seniors, commuters)?

Address Core Component 1C under 1P4 and 1P10

1P11. How do you define, document, and communicate across your institution your expectations for effective teaching and learning?

Address Core Component 2D under 1P11

2.D The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Address Core Component 2E under 1P11 and 4P7

2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
- Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
- The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

1P12. How do you build an effective and efficient course delivery system that addresses both students' needs and your institution's requirements?

Address Core Component 3A under 1P4 and 1P12

1P13. How do you ensure that your programs and courses are up-to-date and effective?

Address Core Component 4A under 1P4 and 1P13

1P14. How do you change or discontinue programs and courses?

1P15. How do you determine and address the learning support needs (tutoring, advising, placement, library, laboratories, etc.) of your students and faculty in your student learning, development, and assessment processes?

Address Core Component 3D under 1P7 and 1P15

1P16. How do you align your co-curricular development goals with your curricular learning objectives?

Address Core Component 3E under 1P16

3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

- Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
- The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

1P17. How do you determine that students to whom you award degrees and certificates have met your learning and development expectations?

1P18. How do you determine that students to whom you award degrees and certificates have met your learning and development expectations?

1P19. How do you design your processes for assessing student learning?

Address Core Component 4B under 1P2 and 1P18

Results (R)

1R1. What measures of your students' learning and development do you collect and analyze regularly? [1P13]

1R2. What are your performance results for your common student learning and development objectives?

1R3. What are your performance results for specific program learning objectives?

1R4. What is your evidence that the students completing your programs, degrees, and certificates have acquired the knowledge and skills required by your stakeholders (i.e., other educational institutions and employers)? [1P12, 1R2]

1R5. What are your performance results for learning support processes (advising, library and laboratory use, etc.)?

1R6. How do your results for the performance of your processes in Helping Students Learn compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, where appropriate, with results of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 1I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Helping Students Learn*?
- 1I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Helping Students Learn*?

AQIP Category Two, ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES, addresses the key processes (separate from your instructional programs and internal support services) through which you serve your external stakeholders — the processes that contribute to achieving your major objectives, fulfilling your mission, and distinguishing yours from other educational institutions.

Processes (P)

- 2P1. How do you design and operate the key non-instructional processes (e.g., athletics, research, community enrichment, economic development, alumni affairs, etc.) through which you serve significant stakeholder groups?
- 2P2. How do you determine your institution's major non-instructional objectives for your external stakeholders, and whom do you involve in setting these objectives?
- 2P3. How do you communicate your expectations regarding these objectives?
- 2P4. How do you assess and review the appropriateness and value of these objectives, and whom do you involve in these reviews?
- 2P5. How do you determine faculty and staff needs relative to these objectives and operations?
- 2P6. How do you incorporate information on faculty and staff needs in readjusting these objectives or the processes that support them?

Results (R)

- 2R1. What measures of accomplishing your major non-instructional objectives and activities do you collect and analyze regularly?
- 2R2. What are your performance results in accomplishing your other distinctive objectives?
- 2R3. How do your results for the performance of these processes compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

- 2R4. How do your performance results of your processes for Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives strengthen your overall institution? How do they enhance your relationships with the communities and regions you serve?

Improvement (I)

- 2I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives*?
- 2I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives*?

AQIP Category Three, UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS, examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs.

Processes (P)

- 3P1. How do you identify the changing needs of your student groups? How do you analyze and select a course of action regarding these needs?

Address Core Component 4C under 3P1

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

- The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
- The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
- The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
- The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

- 3P2. How do you build and maintain a relationship with your students?
- 3P3. How do you analyze the changing needs of your key stakeholder groups and select courses of action regarding these needs?

Address Core Component 1D under 3P3 and 3P5

1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

- Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
- The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
- The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

3P4. How do you build and maintain relationships with your key stakeholders?

3P5. How do you determine if you should target new student and stakeholder groups with your educational offerings and services?

3P6. How do you collect complaint information from students and other stakeholders? How do you analyze this feedback and select courses of action? How do you communicate these actions to your students and stakeholders?

Results (R)

3R1. How do you determine the satisfaction of your students and other stakeholders? What measures of student and other stakeholder satisfaction do you collect and analyze regularly?

3R2. What are your performance results for student satisfaction?

3R3. What are your performance results for building relationships with your students?

3R4. What are your performance results for stakeholder satisfaction?

3R5. What are your performance results for building relationships with your key stakeholders?

3R6. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

3I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*?

3I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*?

AQIP Category Four, VALUING PEOPLE, explores your institution's commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators.

Processes (P)

- 4P1. How do you identify the specific credentials, skills, and values required for faculty, staff, and administrators?
- 4P2. How do your hiring processes make certain that the people you employ possess the credentials, skills, and values you require?

Address Core Component 3C under 4P2 and 4P10

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

- The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including e.g., oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
- All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
- Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
- The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
- Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
- Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

- 4P3. How do you recruit, hire, and retain employees?
- 4P4. How do you orient all employees to your institution's history, mission, and values?
- 4P5. How do you plan for changes in personnel?
- 4P6. How do you design your work processes and activities so they contribute both to organizational productivity and employee satisfaction?
- 4P7. How do you ensure the ethical practices of all of your employees?

Address Core Component 2A under 4P7

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

Address Core Component 2E under 4P7

2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
- Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
- The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

4P8. How do you determine training needs? How do you align employee training with short- and long-range organizational plans, and how does it strengthen your instructional and non-instructional programs and services?

4P9. How do you train and develop all faculty, staff, and administrators to contribute fully and effectively throughout their careers with your institution? How do you reinforce this training?

4P10. How do you design and use your personnel evaluation system? How do you align this system with your objectives for both instructional and non-instructional programs and services?

Address Core Component 3C under 4P2 and 4P10

4P11. How do you design your employee recognition, reward, compensation, and benefit systems to align with your objectives for both instructional and non-instructional programs and services?

4P12. How do you determine key issues related to the motivation of your faculty, staff, and administrators? How do you analyze these issues and select courses of action?

4P13. How do you provide for and evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being?

Results (R)

4R1. What measures of valuing people do you collect and analyze regularly?

4R2. What are your performance results in valuing people?

- 4R3. What evidence indicates the productivity and effectiveness of your faculty, staff, and administrators in helping you achieve your goals?
- 4R4. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Valuing People compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 4I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Valuing People*?
- 4I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Valuing People*?

AQIP Category Five, LEADING AND COMMUNICATING addresses how your leadership and communication processes, structures, and networks guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and communicating decisions and actions to your internal and external stakeholders.

Processes (P)

- 5P1. How are your institution's mission and values defined and reviewed? When and by whom?

Address Core Component 1A under 5P1 and 5P2

- 1.A The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.
- The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
 - The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
 - The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C1)

- 5P2. How do your leaders set directions in alignment with your mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance?

Address Core Component 1A under 5P1 and 5P2

Address Core Component 2C under 5P2

- 2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best

interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

- The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
- The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
- 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.
- The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Address Core Component 5C under 5P2

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

- The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
- The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
- The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
- The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
- Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

5P3. How do these directions take into account the needs and expectations of current and potential students and key stakeholder groups?

Address Core Component 1B under 5P3 and 5P8

1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

- The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
- The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution’s emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
- The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

- 5P4. How do your leaders guide your institution in seeking future opportunities while enhancing a strong focus on students and learning?
- 5P5. How do you make decisions in your institution? How do you use teams, task forces, groups, or committees to recommend or make decisions, and to carry them out?

Address Core Component 5B under 5P5 and 5P9

5.B. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

- The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
- 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.
- The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

- 5P6. How do you use data, information, and your own performance results in your decision-making processes?

Address Core Component 5C under 5P2 and 5P6

- 5P7. How does communication occur between and among the levels and units of your institution?
- 5P8. How do your leaders communicate a shared mission, vision, and values that deepen and reinforce the characteristics of high performance organizations?

Address Core Component 1B under 5P3 and 5P8

- 5P9. How are leadership abilities encouraged, developed and strengthened among your faculty, staff, and administrators? How do you communicate and share leadership knowledge, skills, and best practices throughout your institution?

Address Core Component 5B under 5P5 and 5P9

- 5P10. How do your leaders and board members ensure that your institution maintains and preserves its mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance during leadership succession? How do you develop and implement your leadership succession plans?

Results (R)

- 5R1. What performance measures of Leading and Communicating do you collect and analyze regularly?
- 5R2. What are your results for leading and communicating processes and systems?
- 5R3. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Leading and Communicating compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 5I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Leading and Communicating*?
- 5I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Leading and Communicating*?

AQIP Category Six, SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS, addresses the institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.

Processes (P)

- 6P1. How do you identify the support service needs of your students and other key stakeholder groups (e.g., oversight board, alumni, etc.)?
- 6P2. How do you identify the administrative support service needs of your faculty, staff, and administrators?
- 6P3. How do you design, maintain, and communicate the key support processes that contribute to everyone's physical safety and security?
- 6P4. How do you manage your key student, administrative and institutional support service processes on a day-to-day basis to ensure that they are addressing the needs you intended them to meet?
- 6P5. How do you document your support processes to encourage knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment?

Results (R)

- 6R1. What measures of student, administrative, and institutional support service processes do you collect and analyze regularly?
- 6R2. What are your performance results for student support service processes?

- 6R3. What are your performance results for administrative support service processes?
- 6R4. How do your key student, administrative, and institutional support areas use information and results to improve their services?
- 6R5. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Supporting Institutional Operations compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 6I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Supporting Institutional Operations*?
- 6I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Supporting Institutional Operations*?

AQIP Category Seven, MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS, examines how your institution collects, analyzes, distributes, and uses data, information, and knowledge to manage itself and to drive performance improvement.

Processes (P)

- 7P1. How do you select, manage, and distribute data and performance information to support your instructional and non-instructional programs and services?
- 7P2. How do you select, manage, and distribute data and performance information to support your planning and improvement efforts?

Address Core Component 5D under 7P2 and 7P4

5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

- The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
- The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

- 7P3. How do you determine the needs of your departments and units related to the collection, storage, and accessibility of data and performance information?
- 7P4. How, at the institutional level, do you analyze data and information regarding overall performance? How are these analyses shared throughout the institution?

Address Core Component 5D under 7P2 and 7P4

- 7P5. How do you determine the needs and priorities for comparative data and information? What are your criteria and methods for selecting sources of comparative data and information within and outside the higher education community?
- 7P6. How do you ensure department and unit analysis of data and information aligns with your institutional goals for instructional and non-instructional programs and services? How is this analysis shared?
- 7P7. How do you ensure the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of your information system(s) and related processes?

Results (R)

- 7R1. What measures of the performance and effectiveness of your system for information and knowledge management do you collect and analyze regularly?
- 7R2. What is the evidence that your system for Measuring Effectiveness meets your institution's needs in accomplishing its mission and goals?
- 7R3. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Measuring Effectiveness compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 7I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Measuring Effectiveness*?
- 7I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Measuring Effectiveness*?

AQIP Category Eight, PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, examines your institution's planning processes and how your strategies and action plans help you achieve your mission and vision.

Processes (P)

- 8P1. What are your key planning processes?
- 8P2. How do you select short- and long-term strategies?
- 8P3. How do you develop key action plans to support your organizational strategies?

- 8P4. How do you coordinate and align your planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans across your institution's various levels?
- 8P5. How you define objectives, select measures, and set performance targets for your organizational strategies and action plans?
- 8P6. How do you link strategy selection and action plans, taking into account levels of current resources and future needs?

Address Core Component 5A under 8P6

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

- The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
- The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
- The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
- The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
- The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

- 8P7. How do you assess and address risk in your planning processes?
- 8P8. How do you ensure that you will develop and nurture faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities to address changing requirements demanded by your organizational strategies and action plans?

Results (R)

- 8R1. What measures of the effectiveness of your planning processes and systems do you collect and analyze regularly?
- 8R2. What are your performance results for accomplishing your organizational strategies and action plans?
- 8R3. What are your projections or targets for performance of your strategies and action plans over the next 1-3 years?
- 8R4. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Planning Continuous Improvement compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

- 8R5. What is the evidence that your system for Planning Continuous Improvement is effective? How do you measure and evaluate your planning processes and activities?

Improvement (I)

- 8I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Planning Continuous Improvement*?
- 8I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Planning Continuous Improvement*?

AQIP Category Nine, BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS, examines your institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission.

Processes (P)

- 9P1. How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the educational institutions and other organizations from which you receive your students?
- 9P2. How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the educational institutions and employers that depend on the supply of your students and graduates that meet those organizations' requirements?
- 9P3. How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the organizations that provide services to your students?
- 9P4. How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the organizations that supply materials and services to your institution?
- 9P5. How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the education associations, external agencies, consortia partners, and the general community with whom you interact?
- 9P6. How do you ensure that your partnership relationships are meeting the varying needs of those involved?
- 9P7. How do you create and build relationships between and among departments and units within your institution? How do you assure integration and communication across these relationships?

Results (R)

- 9R1. What measures of building collaborative relationships, external and internal, do you collect and analyze regularly?

- 9R2. What are your performance results in building your key collaborative relationships, external and internal?
- 9R3. How do your results for the performance of your processes for Building Collaborative Relationships compare with the performance results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, of organizations outside of higher education?

Improvement (I)

- 9I1. What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for *Building Collaborative Relationships*?
- 9I2. How do your culture and infrastructure help you to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in *Building Collaborative Relationships*?

Systems Portfolio Style

- Your Systems Portfolio can be no longer than 125 pages (with no pictures, or white space). If your Portfolio contains flowcharts or tables, count each as using up the words it would displace.
- Do not expect AQIP to appraise a Portfolio that exceeds 125 pages. (The 125-page limit includes the Institutional Overview).
- Fonts should be easy to read (Times or Arial), and sized at a minimum of 11 points.
- Footers with the page number and Category, and Headers with the organization's name and current date (month & year) should be included.
- All tables and graphics should be labeled, easy to read and the data clearly marked; text should refer to tables by their labels.
- Use a single voice — “we,” or “the University”; avoid passives.
- Be brief, succinct and direct.
- Check spelling and grammar.

Web-based

If a Systems Portfolio (using MnSCU's eFolio or another platform) is web-based, you must provide AQIP with a 125-page PDF version as well as a link to the online version.

Submitting Your Systems Portfolio

1. As the deadline for submitting your Systems Portfolio to AQIP comes closer, please use this reference to make sure that all the submission requirements are met. Doing this will help insure that the Appraisal process can begin on time and your Feedback Report will be delivered in a timely manner.
2. **Portfolios are due on either June 1st or November 1st.** Reminders will be sent out at least a month before the portfolio is due. Failure to submit your portfolio on time will delay the start of the review process, cause the Feedback Report to be late, and trigger a reexamination of your AQIP participation.
3. Email a PDF of your Systems Portfolio to AQIP@HLCommission.org