

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

August 27, 2013



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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ELEMENTS OF NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary: In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of North Iowa Area Community College and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also

the team's overall judgment regarding North Iowa Area Community College's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback; and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that each AQIP Category covers. Since North Iowa Area Community College is complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

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

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

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

Quality of Report & Its Use: As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the organization by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the North Iowa Area Community College's current state as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with North Iowa Area Community College following this review, AQIP expects every North Iowa Area Community College to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

- *Overall: NIACC has been accredited since 1919 and recently was approved as an AQIP school, leading to the formation of the AQIP Quality Council, completing its first strategy forum in 2010.*

NIACC serves over 3,700 students each year at its main campus and six education centers. NIACC offers AA, AS, AAS, AS in Business, and General Studies and has 40 formal articulation agreements with four-year colleges and universities. NIACC employs 227 full-time employees, including 81 full-time faculty.

Seven campuses with a total of 3,700 students suggest there are some very small campuses/education centers. NIACC has over 40 articulation agreements with 4-year institutions to ensure smooth transfers and nearly all technical programs are transferable. The items listed in the "Keeping NIACC First In...Education, Leadership and Partnership" are very forward thinking.

The institution quickly identified areas for improvement and developed actions plans for a variety of “quick fixes,” putting the institution in the position of posting some easy wins in the area of quality improvement. The institution’s commitment to its continuous improvement is noted in its sequence of action projects (for enrollment management and General Education assessment) that are logical next steps to work already completed.

The team noted on NIACC’s website that there is a presidential search underway.

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight **North Iowa Area Community College’s** achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

- Category 1: NIACC’s eight learning objectives (Communication and Interpersonal Skills, Quantitative Skills, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Technological Skills, Global Awareness, Aesthetics, and Scientific Inquiry) are addressed in each program. NIACC requires each course to address two or more of the identified eight General Education outcomes. The eight General Education learning objectives are then aligned with various program accreditation requirements.

The institution identifies areas for improvement consistent with efforts already underway. Of note are plans to implement a Foundations of Excellence course and a review of its foundational reading, writing, and math sequences. Noted is the institution’s awareness of the opportunity to develop systems for monitoring its effectiveness through access to readily retrievable data which would support data-driven decision-making. A system does exist to review two General Education outcomes each year. NIACC recognizes the need for data dashboards so that data is readily available and change is easy to visualize. NIACC has also identified the need for an institutional researcher, as well as the need to have more accessible data to drive improvement processes.

- Category 2: The institution is mission-driven and emphasizes economic development as a key component of its commitment to the community it serves. The strategic plan and budgetary resources are aligned with this mission. The institution is positioned to be a significant partner in their community and region with a focus on economic development through entrepreneurship and small business development. NIACC has established recognized processes in their Continuing Education and Economic Development branches and the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC).

NIACC was rated 16th in the nation for having the largest community college endowment.

NIACC recognizes that it must collect input from its stakeholders in a consistent manner and then analyze this input to plan positive change. Opportunities exist to improve the decision-making process through development of effective means for data and feedback collection. The addition of an institutional researcher is intended to meet this need.

- Category 3: NIACC does use assessment tools (internal and third-party) to measure the changing needs of its stakeholders. Data retrieved from those assessments are used to drive the decision-making process for the College. NIACC also has close relationships with high schools, businesses and industry partners. The College aligns needs identified through the assessments with the strategic plan and to direct resource allocation.

Although NIACC administers annual satisfaction surveys, the College is not able to access the survey results due to lack of a repository for the data which prevents the use of the survey data. The institution's effort to develop systems supporting this process remains an opportunity for improvement.

- Category 4: NIACC maintains an annual negotiation process for all employee categories and administration. NIACC employees' annual evaluations are directly linked to the institutions' strategic goals. Employees' position descriptions are reviewed and updated annually.

The institution's commitment to Valuing People is evidenced by its recognition in 2010 by The Chronicle of Higher Education as a great place to work. Indications are that positive systems are in place at the human resources level; however, opportunities for developing methods to measure the effectiveness of those systems exist.

- Category 5: NIACC has aligned leading and communicating at all levels of the College through a system of department goals, action strategies, and budget. Initiatives are purposeful and linked to the College's overall vision and strategic priorities.

NIACC acknowledges an attempt to shift from communicating reactively to leading proactively from a position that reflects an alignment of its mission, goals, and values. The shared governance of the College provides many opportunities for employees to engage in setting the direction of the College and seeking future opportunities. Shared governance and employee meetings facilitate employee engagement; however, the opportunity to develop systematic, transparent, and effective

communication strategies is on the institution's agenda. NIACC may improve internal communication through the creation and use of an intranet system.

- Category 6: The institution relies on its strategic planning process to organize the means by which it supports its operations, aligns its resources, and measures its progress. NIACC employs several surveys for more than one year including CCSSE and IPEDS to incorporate data for comparisons to previous years.

NIACC holds Cracker Barrel open meetings four times a year allowing faculty and staff to meet with the President to learn about current happenings around campus. However, it is not clear if these Cracker Barrel meetings occur at each of the seven campuses.

NIACC reviews facilities and infrastructure to ensure the development of progressive classrooms and provide resources to students and the public. A review of services and their quality is continually assessed. A systematic process is in place to continue to develop the alignment of institutional and department goals.

- Category 7: NIACC developed Key Performance Indicators and performance benchmarks in 2012. The institution's commitment to Measuring Effectiveness is evidenced by its recent contractual relationship with Ellucian Colleague, a data service company.

NIACC now links AQIP, Foundations of Excellence, and the Student Success and Completion Plan to their strategic plan. A systematic approach to the use of data, accessibility to data, and transparency of data are opportunities for improvement in this category.

- Category 8: The philosophy of continuous quality improvement has been embraced by the institution as evidenced by its move to AQIP and subsequent development of action projects. NIACC established a new quality improvement committee, the AQIP Quality Council, which is charged with integrating CQI throughout the institution. NIACC feels that it has progressed to a maturity level of aligning improvement initiatives with the strategic plan and AQIP Categories.

Formerly, decisions were reactive and the commitment to an integrated, aligned approach to decision-making represents a more strategic response to the institution's progress. Management of multiple, and competing, priorities serves as the institution's main opportunity in this area. NIACC has focused previous attention on improving at the college level, now it should give attention to guiding individual employees toward improving personal outcomes.

- Category 9: NIACC has a long history of building collaborative relationships. As a rural, relatively small community college with limited resources, building collaborative partnerships is one of the ways NIACC can meet the ever-changing needs of the communities it serves. The institution values collaborative relationships as evidenced by the inclusion of partnerships in both the mission statement, to “enhance the quality of life for people of North Iowa” and their strategic planning process that calls for NIACC to be first in partnerships.

The institution views itself as mature in this category and plans to integrate its commitment to collaborative relationships throughout its operations.

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

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

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

- As NIACC searches for a new president the College will need to reaffirm its commitment to AQIP.

- Evidence concerning success of transfer students is lacking. The articulation agreements mentioned in the Systems Portfolio provide NIACC an opportunity for collecting data on the success of its graduates.
- Enrollment goals are not clear at the institution and program level. Targets for retention and completion are not evident, even though there was an Action Plan to identify them. The College's program review process also provides an opportunity for reporting of enrollment and retention results.
- Commitment to a multi-cultural perspective is not clear in the curriculum or strategic plan. There is no mention of the work of the Diversity and the Global Diversity Committees even though they are mentioned in Category 8.
- Assessment results for general education are not provided for each of the general education outcomes. The portfolio mentions a general education outcomes assessment process, but no results were provided.
- Results for each category are lacking. Data are collected, but not presented. Disaggregated data for student and external stakeholder groups are also not provided. The institution needs to show ongoing commitment for providing results and analysis of comparisons and trends. The addition of an institutional researcher mentioned throughout the portfolio may help with this commitment. The portfolio suggests that the College is data rich and information poor.

AQIP CATEGORY FEEDBACK

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

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

NIACC has established general education learning outcomes and each program has learning outcomes with the Education Effectiveness Committee responsible for assessment and reporting results. However, assessment results are not reported for the general education or program learning outcomes. Identifying benchmarks or targets for learning outcomes results may help with the reporting of assessment results and identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement in the processes for Helping Students Learn. Communicating the results of the College's involvement with the Gardner Institute of Excellence may help the College identify evidence for opportunities for improvement.

1P1, S. Faculty developed the eight general education learning outcomes requiring 40 semester hour credits. The general education program is aligned with the College's mission, vision, and core values and was approved by the Board of Directors. NIACC established the Educational Effectiveness Committee (EEC) which instituted faculty measuring two College learning objectives each year and piloting an undergraduate research conference to elevate outcomes.

1P2, S. NIACC has a strong process in place to ensure that specific program learning objectives reflect the requirements of a variety of stakeholders. NIACC developed a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative that oversees the College Assessment Plan including the faculty's voluntary use of their "Classroom Research Outcomes Report" that describes the Deming cycle for each course.

All programs are reviewed on a rotating basis every five years to determine specific program learning objectives. Occupational programs also receive guidance from local advisory

committees. The data collected from these two sources is used to change pedagogy, revise curriculum, deliver and support learning systems, revise admission requirements as needed, and develop budgets.

1P8, S. NIACC has a systematic process to identify and support underprepared students in programs and courses. NIACC incorporates a number of proficiency assessments and evaluations to assess and address the needs of underprepared students. Additionally, NIACC has developed a variety of resources for underprepared students to include formal programs on adult literacy, remedial writing, reading, math, computer and study skills, career counseling, advising, and tutoring exemplifying a focus on student learning.

1P10, O. NIACC recognizes that a majority of its students are commuters, yet does not provide a ride-share board, or electronic method that would allow commuting students to engage in conversation or provide input (to administration) for additional services that could support retaining this diverse group of students. NIACC has the opportunity to expand their definitions of subgroups beyond students with disabilities, seniors and commuters so that curriculum and co-curricular program planning and learning outcomes may be enhanced for many students in alternative subgroups.

1P11, S. NIACC has established processes and procedures that communicate the expectations for effective teaching and learning to faculty and staff. These procedures include specific training and mastery demonstration in pedagogy and contextual knowledge for faculty. An annual Quality Faculty Plan for full-time and adjunct faculty documents effectiveness in teaching methodology and student learning, content expertise, and College and community service. Faculty development is supported through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Career and Technical programs utilize specialized accrediting agencies' criteria to define, document and communicate teaching effectiveness and learning. Faculty and student research is encouraged and an IRB reviews research proposals to ensure protection of human subjects.

1P16, OO. NIACC has the opportunity to expand processes to demonstrate how it aligns co-curricular activities with the College's mission. Table 1.3 is not clear as to the alignment between learning outcomes and the clubs and student organizations. A better alignment provides an opportunity for NIACC to develop an assessment process to determine if the clubs and student organizations are contributing to NIACC's learning outcomes.

1R1, OO. NIACC has the opportunity to include the posters and other measures from 1P1 in the description of which data types are collected and analyzed for student learning. Although grades are compiled and reviewed regularly, it is not clear how this analysis is coordinated with the assessment process described in 1P1 and 1P2. It is also not clear how the analysis of grades or other alternative assessments (e.g. job placement, external licensure and certification pass rates, etc.) are integrated into the assessment culture.

1R2, OO. NIACC has the opportunity to report detailed data on student learning and development outcomes. Although an assessment process for general education is outlined in 1P1 and 1P2, no results are reported. It is also not clear how the results of student learning for general education outcomes are assessed by the VALUE rubrics.

1I1, OO. Though NIACC reports improvements for transfer degree seeking students, NIACC has the opportunity to elaborate upon the improvement plan from the Foundation for Excellence and general planning ideas for alternative methods of student engagement in learning. NIACC has identified the need to improve communication of assessment results for the general education learning outcomes. The EEC has the opportunity to improve the assessment process by considering the alignment of the communication with professional development activities and the institution's strategic planning. Although the process described in 1P2 is relatively recent, establishing time frames across an academic year may help EEC determine the timing for communicating the assessment results. The EEC also has the opportunity to develop a formal evaluation process for the learning outcomes embedded in co-curricular programs.

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

NIACC has identified five primary objectives for non-instructional processes. The College ties improvement for other distinctive objectives to the annual operational planning, implementation, assessment, and improvement process by examining the success of internal processes and performance through the ongoing review of goals, strategies, and measures. External stakeholders are involved in the review of the primary objectives and the review is integrated into the strategic planning process. Results are positive for fund raising and job training although continuing education enrollment indicates a decline. Comparing results to benchmarks or best-in-class institutions may help NIACC identify high performing processes and stretch targets for processes needing improvement to assure the continuous quality improvement culture.

2P1, S. NIACC has a well-designed approach to meet non-instructional needs of internal and external stakeholders through a process that resulted in operationalized objectives supporting the College's strategic plan. Table 2.1 outlines five primary objectives for non-instructional processes and the supporting activities or departments responsible for meeting the objectives. Plans are reviewed each fall for progress and each spring to determine if outcomes are being met.

2P2, S. External stakeholders are engaged in determining NIACC's non-instructional other distinctive objectives through advisory boards and councils and the College's Business Partnership consortium. Each division has boards and councils that include external stakeholders as members.

2P3, S. NIACC communicates regularly with their stakeholders through a variety of methods, i.e. mailed written communication, email, social media, advisory board meetings (such as the JPEC Advisory Board, the Foundation Board and the Alumni Board), community forums, the InTouch magazine published by the College, and the Entrepreneurial Edge newsletter. NIACC noted their work with the City Council in Mason City as an example in this area. NIACC is doing a great job in meeting business and industry needs through programs such as this as well as the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center.

2P4, S. Assessment and review of the objectives listed in Table 2.1 occurs through the College's operational planning process for all areas of the College. The goals are also reviewed to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan. Advisory Boards and other external stakeholders are involved in the review process and the goals are approved by the President's Council and the NIACC Board of Directors.

2P5, S. NIACC employs a process for determining faculty and staff needs to address objectives including staff observations and JPEC designing a plan to determine resource needs. The areas of the College responsible for corporate training, continuing education, institutional advancement, and the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center bring forward objectives, strategies, and desired outcomes through the annual operational planning process in support of the strategic plan.

2P6, S. Administrators responsible for other distinctive objectives review plan progress regularly with staff and the President every six weeks. If there is a question of faculty or staff needs, these changes are reviewed with the president at that time.

2R1, O. NIACC has collected many data elements related to category 2, however, there is no explanation as to what the data is telling them and what improvements are being made based on the data provided in relationship to the objectives defined in 2P1. For example, an opportunity exists to fine-tune the reporting of results for exemplary customer service, program dollar utilization maximized, grants and foundation objectives, and other measures. Then NIACC could indicate how data is used to make improvements and provide more of an analysis. It is also unclear how NIACC incorporates the needs of external, business partners into their strategic and operational planning or what data are used to readjust the course of action if needed.

2R2, O. Although there are three years of results reported, NIACC has the opportunity to identify trends for key performance indicators. Fund raising and job training trends are positive for the four years while Continuing Education Division numbers indicate a decline since FY 2008 suggesting an opportunity for improvement. The number of e-partnerships produced by the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center dropped by over 1,000 from 2008 to 2012. Results for Institutional Advancement reveal a drop in overall dollars but an increase in the number of scholarship offered; the New Donor goal was exceeded for this past year; and the number of new businesses created with JPEC exceeded the previous year, by one for a total of 43.

2R3, O. NIACC has been recognized for high performance in entrepreneurship, amount of endowment, community involvement, and workforce development. Although NIACC indicates that there is comparative data with other Iowa institutions, none of these results are provided. The Annual Condition of Iowa's Community College published by the Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Adult, Career and Community College Education provide comparative data,

but these data are not reported. Using these comparative data may help the College identify stretch targets for non-credit enrollments as this is one area showing a decline in 2R2.

2I1, O. NIACC has undertaken several improvements in its processes to Accomplish Other Distinctive Objectives. Using benchmarks and comparisons to identify improvement targets may help NIACC complete the continuous quality improvement cycle. The JPEC and Foundation are two operations that may serve as models for other departments at NIACC.

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

NIACC uses several national survey instruments to understand students and stakeholders needs. These instruments provide comparisons with peer institutions and best-in-class institutions, but these comparisons were not reported. Although the College writes that data retrieved from these assessments are used to drive decision making, it not clear what decisions were made (from the results), or how these instruments are systematically scheduled for administration. Developing a schedule of survey administration and using comparisons in reporting results may help NIACC in its analysis of results and therefore enable the College to assess whether improvements were made to improve student or stakeholder needs.

3P1, O. NIACC has a number of surveys that it administers to students, community members, employees, and employers to identify potential needs of student groups. Based on some of the survey results that are available, NIACC has developed 20 “Immediate Actions” to improve student retention, persistence and completion, but these are still under consideration (to act upon). An opportunity exists for a deliberative methodology to be put in place that allows for strategic use of materials in the decision-making process. The potential addition of an institutional researcher may help NIACC continue to grow in their data analysis.

3P3, O. Although NIACC uses a variety of surveys, focus groups, and listening processes, it is not clear how they are administered and analyzed systematically to identify changing needs of key stakeholders. NIACC says it will prioritize needs through a needs assessment, but does not describe what this encompasses. It is also not clear how results of surveys and other listening methods are integrated into the College's strategic planning process. A systematic process may help identify changing needs in a timely manner and better align data analysis with strategic and operational planning.

3P4, S. NIACC builds and maintains relationships with key stakeholders to identify regional needs and industry trends by the President, Vice Presidents, Academic Chairs, faculty and staff meeting regularly with their peers from other Iowa community colleges to share information, service on community boards, participation in civic and business organizations, involvement with government and industry boards and committees, and continuous work with Iowa Works in the identification, development, and expansion of training and educational resources for business, industry, and human services initiatives. NIACC may want to consider how community involvement could be leveraged more effectively if mechanisms for follow-up on individual participation were in place.

3P6, O. While NIACC has outlined policies and procedures for students to file complaints (academic or otherwise), it is unclear how other internal stakeholders or external stakeholders can file complaints with the institution. Additionally, NIACC does not mention what is done with the complaints collected or how any actions are communicated to students or stakeholders.

3R1, O. NIACC relies heavily on broad-based assessment tools for measuring student satisfaction and additional localized assessment tools that measure stakeholder satisfaction. Table 3.1 provide results for student engagement with various student services, but no comparisons with national and cohort community colleges are provided as are reported for CCSSE items. Results with comparisons for each administration of the CCSSE, CCFSE, and SENSE, may provide NIACC with information to identify gaps and targets for quality improvement in its processes to meet student and stakeholders' needs. If the survey results are accessible so that systems can be developed that will contribute to the institution's ability to determine student and stakeholder needs at more complex and detailed levels.

3R6, O. The comparisons listed provide NIACC the opportunity to identify strengths and

opportunities for improvement in meeting student and stakeholder needs. Although the data are for one year, it can serve as a baseline to determine if strengths are maintained in subsequent years and opportunities for improvement are addressed. Also, NIACC may benefit by identifying specific targets and benchmarks it wishes to compare among similar and aspirant organizations.

3I2, O. Although the College shows a desire to collect data to identify students' and stakeholders' needs, the College recognizes the need to develop processes and systems. For NIACC to prioritize its needs for improvement it first must know what these needs are; the best way to do this is to assess the programs. Having an institutional researcher on staff, who can access the data gathered and present analysis back to the stakeholders might prove beneficial in selecting the processes and set targets for what needs to be improved the most.

AQIP Category 4: Valuing People: This category explores the North Iowa Area Community College's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for North Iowa Area Community College's success. It examines the North Iowa Area Community College's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **North Iowa Area Community College** for Category 4. *NIACC has a well-developed process for hiring new employees. NIACC has some well-developed processes for ensuring the health and safety of its employees, i.e. the Wellness program and certification as a Blue Zone employer in 2012. NIACC has instituted a Campus Climate Survey to report the results of valuing people. Opportunities exist to refine this measure and use other comparable measures for valuing people, in order to identify future areas for improvement and move further along the continuous improvement continuum.*

4P1, S. NIACC has a clear process for identifying the required credentials and skills required for all open positions. NIACC takes the time to review the job description and qualifications on each open position and communicates the required credentials necessary to be successful in the job.

Additionally, NIACC follows state and NACEP requirements for the hiring of faculty whether full-time or adjunct, or whether the faculty member is teaching concurrent enrollment courses.

4P2, SS. NIACC's process for hiring is consistent across the institution and the College seeks additional information from potential employees including answering current educational trend questions or teaching demonstrations. The process culminates with approval from the appropriate hiring supervisor and next level of supervisor before an offer is made.

4P3, S. NIACC recruits employees via the web, advertising locally, regionally and nationally as well as through appropriate organizations. Employees who are recruited and hired are retained by offering excellent benefits and wages including offering tuition reimbursement for employees who attend accredited institutions and for employees' dependents who earn credits offered through NIACC.

4P4, S. NIACC has a mentoring program for full-time faculty. The capstone of this effort is an anniversary meeting with the Vice President to debrief the experiences of the first year. This meeting provides an opportunity for two-way feedback in an effort to continuously improve new employees' experiences. Human Resources at NIACC has the opportunity to learn from the faculty process to expand the orientation process for non-instructional staff members.

4P5, O. There was no mention of how personnel changes are planned when positions are vacated, other than at an annual retreat with President's Council members. It is important to ensure that employees keep current and accurate procedures for all assigned tasks for a smooth transition from one person to another. When employees leave, it provides an opportunity for leadership to consider realigning office tasks to better serve students, faculty and staff; allowing remaining employees in the immediate area (where a position has been vacated) to have input into this decision-making process is important for both the leader and the employees. Another area to consider when a position is vacated is how technology could be used to improve efficiency or change procedures.

4P6, O. The institution welcomes suggestions for changes in work processes; however, impetus is left to the individual employee. An opportunity for a systematic approach to gathering input and feedback about work flow could focus efforts on the most crucial and strategic changes.

4P10, SS. In 2011 NIACC developed a new instrument for performance evaluation that will be used for non-faculty employees in 2012, following mandatory training for supervisors. In 2012 a new process and evaluation was designed by the faculty, for both full-time and adjunct, for implementation in 2013. Administrators require a 360 evaluation instrument with input from subordinates, peers and community members. In even-numbered years, employees confidentially evaluate their supervisor with the results shared with the supervisor's supervisor.

4P13, S. NIACC was Mason City's first workplace certified as a Blue Zone employer in 2012. A number of staff members continue to be involved with the Blue Zone project for Mason City. The Wellness program is very active on campus, and incorporates full-time employees, part-time employees, and students. NIACC conducts a formal Campus Climate survey and informally collects satisfaction levels thorough open conversations with the College President and during all-staff meetings.

4R1, O. The Campus Climate survey results in Table 4-1 displays a downward trend for the four years surveyed on several items which presents an opportunity for the College to explore these areas further with the redesign of the survey, data collection format, analysis and reporting processes.

4R3, O. NIACC described the process of tying annual divisional and program goals to the strategic plan and to identify ways in which they can be measured and evaluated for effectiveness. An opportunity exists to collect and report evidence that indicates the productivity and effectiveness of faculty, staff, and administrators in helping to achieve the plan goals.

4I1, O. The most recent improvements in valuing people made by NIACC are the offering of online harassment training to all staff and expansion of the Wellness program to include part-time staff as well as adjuncts. While few systematic and comprehensive processes are in place at NIACC for *Valuing People*, this is an opportunity for developing new processes with comparable measures to identify future improvements. There is an opportunity for NIACC to identify other areas of improvement within this category. In 4P10, NIACC explained that their evaluation process was recently reviewed and updated for nearly all employees, yet the College does not list it as an improvement made in this category.

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

NIACC does communicate with employee groups throughout the institution and minutes and agendas are shared with all employees from key meetings; however employees believe further improvements in communicating could be made. NIACC has an opportunity to take an in-depth look at their processes in this category, specifically how their vision, mission, and core values are developed and strategically linked to decisions being made. Data collection in this particular category is imperative for NIACC to continue on their Quality Improvement journey.

5P1, S. Input was sought from both external and internal focus groups in the development of the Vision, Mission and Values for NIACC. However the Vision statement should be future oriented (not what NIACC is currently doing). Once created, the information is sent to all employees for additional comment and feedback, with the Board of Governors ultimately approving the mission and values. NIACC has made strides to tie their vision, mission and core values to their strategic planning process.

5P2, S. NIACC has a strong process for ensuring that planning and budgeting at all levels of the institution align with the mission, vision, and core values. The College uses input and feedback from a variety of groups, including the elected Board of Directors and focus group meetings, to develop and implement its strategic plan, especially as it transitions from PEAQ to AQIP. The Board of Trustees monitors the College's progress toward NIACC's goals and holds the President accountable.

5P4, O. NIACC's commitment to community engagement guides its assessment of determining areas for innovation and growth. It includes a commitment to professional growth and academic development, as evidenced by its participation in HLC's Assessment Academy. This

commitment to community engagement is commendable. However it is not clear how College leaders review, assess, and incorporate diverse teaching practices and strategies, current developments in remedial education, and holistic student placement and advising.

5P7, S. NIACC is a nonunion community college, but it has employee groups who represent themselves in the meet and confer process. Annually, a mutual formal agreement is reached, binding for both administration and staff. The administration meets monthly with North Iowa Area Community Educators Association executive team who represents the faculty group. Division Chairs meet weekly with the VP of Academic and Student Affairs to address programs and policies; this information is then shared with employees via regular division meetings. This provides the opportunity to address any concerns or emerging issues. There is an opportunity for communication originating from all directions and levels of the College.

5P10, OO. Recent turnover in College leadership points to an opportunity for careful succession planning by senior leadership especially since NAICC describes its succession planning process as “quite informal.” A clearly defined and structured succession process might benefit the institution since NIACC recognizes it has the opportunity to develop and formalize a succession plan for system-wide leadership.

5R1, OO. NIACC indicates that Key Performance Indicators were developed in June of 2012 for Leading and Communicating, but the portfolio does not list what these KPI’s are, what the results were or how they are analyzed and used. As a result NIACC has the opportunity to describe the data and findings and how it will use these assessment outcomes to identify opportunities for improvement.

5I2, O. NIACC has the opportunity to develop targeted improvements to demonstrate both leadership and communication throughout the College to move beyond the description of the process to a description of how the process lead to data which leads to decision making.

AQIP Category 6: Supporting North Iowa Area Community College Operations: This category addresses the variety of North Iowa Area Community College support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the North Iowa Area Community College's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs,

contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **North Iowa Area Community College** for Category 6.

It is clear that NAICC understands the importance of collecting data from a wide set of instruments to measure the institution's performance in supporting institutional operations. However, the College has an opportunity to transition from this foundation by extending the data collection across multiple years to develop trend data. Coupled with the systematically established meeting schedule, analysis of the measures may help NAICC improve data-informed decision making by focused comparisons to trends and benchmarks.

6P2, S. Administrative support service needs of faculty, staff, and administrators are identified and discussed at meetings of the President's Council with different areas of the College, semi-annual individual employee group meetings, Cracker Barrel meetings four times a year, open meetings for staff and faculty with the President, meetings with the Division Chairs, the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs weekly meetings, and College Chair meetings. During these meetings the administrative support service needs are discussed, allowing senior staff members to make decisions regarding College direction. The College Senate, which meets monthly, serves as the focal point for communication between the four employee groups, standing committees, and at-large representation.

6P3, S. NIACC is strengthening its key support processes to ensure physical safety. A systematic review of the campus was conducted to identify areas to improve and a tabletop discussion occurred to improve processes used in emergencies. Exterior doors have been outfitted with sensors that allow a full lock-down from one computer command station and a consultant assisted with updating the College's emergency plan. A Continuity of Operations Plan is also being developed. These initiatives are communicated through the meetings listed in Table 6.1. NAICC implemented a system to deliver text and email notifications for weather or security-related events.

6R1, S. NIACC uses several measures for student, administrative, and institutional support services that include Key Performance Indicators, IPEDS, CCSSE, SENSE, student satisfaction surveys, employment rates, graduate employer surveys, Campus Climate Survey, and the

Community College Benchmark Study. The College has the opportunity to establish a systematic process for when these measures are administered and results collected.

6R5, O. NIACC realizes that while it collects data to compare itself to other institutions, it has an opportunity to compare trend data within its own institution. For many of the measures, NAICC does not report results for multiple years, which makes it difficult to determine trends. A few results are reported for some of the measures, but only for one year. Reviewing Baldrige Award winners' applications may provide examples of reporting results that might indicate to the College if its processes are improving.

6I1, O. NIACC has an opportunity to improve reporting measures related to Supporting Institutional Operations so that targets and benchmarks are readily identified. The recent development of a Strategic Plan, a Student Success and Completion Plan, and a Facilities Master Plan provide a basis to use measures to determine if these plans result in quality improvement. Although NAICC should be commended for recent safety and security improvements, measuring key performance indicators regularly may help the College ensure new protocols are implemented successfully.

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

The College has developed some processes and recognizes its need to make advancements in information systems and technology. During the past several years, the College has increased its ability to provide data to decision makers. Employees have experienced improved access to individuals who can run complex reports; consequently, this has improved the ability to provide better and timelier services to

students. The College has identified the need for a full-time Institutional Researcher and made this a priority. However, the College has focused its efforts on databases and data mining. The institution may benefit from defining its data needs to ensure that these data support key performance indicators; NIACC appears to be data rich, but information poor.

7P1, O. NIACC has a centralized data management system. Data are secured with access controlled by user type; records are available from 1985. While the College collects and stores data, it is unclear how these data are analyzed and used in decision making. The addition of a reporting system and an institutional researcher may provide seamless integration with other sources, dashboard capabilities, and real-time reporting.

7P3, O. Data needs for departments and units are met through a decentralized process at NIACC that relies on requests to “power users.” While this approach makes data accessible, a decentralized approach to data mining may result in duplicative queries and reduced efficiency. The College recognizes hiring personnel dedicated to reporting may provide an opportunity to improve data-reporting processes.

7P5, O. Although the College identifies a number of data sources and comparison points to meet reporting needs, it remains unclear how NIACC determines priorities or identifies sources for comparative data and information. Developing clear approaches for identifying and prioritizing sources may result in better data sources that could provide data to improve processes. It is also not clear how the College ensures that it meets FERPA requirements.

7P7, O. While NIACC’s Technology Services department conducts a monthly vulnerability scan as well as a penetration test on the College’s services and network infrastructure it is not clear how these scans are used to improve its information systems. Results for monthly server application uptime for 2012- 2013 are above 99% except for July and September of 2012, which suggests reliable servers. Table 7.2 indicates Call Center Statistics, but it is not clear the time period that the data were collected or comparisons with other time periods. It is also unclear what process the College uses to create and secure on- and off-site backups. Table 7.1 may serve as a model for how to report trends for the College to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

7R1, O. NIACC has strong systems in place to track its help desk requests and follows up with satisfaction surveys. Preliminary work is being done to determine institutional readiness for

online learning. The reliance on informal feedback mechanisms and manual checks produces lengthy turnaround times, which may provide opportunities for improvement.

7R2, O. It is unclear how NIACC's selection of reported evidence demonstrates that the institution is meeting the College's mission and goals. NIACC may benefit from aligning the selected evidence to the stated mission and goals as it communicates its effectiveness to its constituencies. The assignment of a position with the responsibility for AQIP, strategic, and operational plan development may help the institution measure the effectiveness of its processes.

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

NIACC has made a number of important steps in the development of their strategic plan. The process is inclusive and aligns with continuous improvement principles and AQIP categories. NIACC has the opportunity to improve its reporting and analysis of key performance indicators to determine the effectiveness of the newly developed planning continuous improvement processes.

8P1, S. NIACC has strong planning structures in place including a five-year strategic planning cycle and a three-year budget projection cycle. The strategic plan is organized by the nine AQIP categories. Additional institutional planning is aligned with the strategic plan.

8P2, S. Short and long-term strategies and action plans are developed at the department level and aligned with the strategic plan. Selection of strategies is dependent upon weighting the urgency of implementation against the benefit and the available capital, time, and human resources.

8P6, S. Action plans are linked directly to one or more areas of the NIACC strategic plan. A three-year budget projection cycle is used in this process to determine levels of current resources and future needs. Each year, operational budgets are developed and revised based on the status of the action plans.

8P7, S. NIACC uses a three-year budget projection process as one way to mitigate risk. Coupled with constant environmental scanning and the use of outside consultants, NIACC works to identify risks while meeting its goals.

8R1, O. NIACC has developed key performance indicators (KPIs) for its strategic agenda. While the KPIs are in place, the institution has limited experience with the measures and analysis of its results. While the hiring of an institutional researcher may help the institution improve, using dashboards may help communicate performance for the fifteen KPIs to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

8R2, OO. NIACC recognizes the opportunity to improve analysis of performance results at the department level. It is unclear how the KPIs are shared at the department level and how the departments contribute to the attainment of the benchmarks.

8R4, OO. NIACC does not provide comparison results with other higher education institutions and other organizations outside higher education. These comparisons may help NIACC identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in this category.

8I1, S. NIACC has made several improvements in this area over the last five years, including the development of a strategic planning process aligned with AQIP categories. Additionally, department goals and budgetary resources are aligned with the strategic plan.

AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships: This category examines your North Iowa Area Community College's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the North Iowa Area Community College's accomplishing its mission. It examines your North Iowa Area Community College'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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **North Iowa Area Community College** for Category 9.

NIACC has established some processes and measures for building collaborative relationships. The College is proactive in establishing these relationships and takes a leadership role in its service area in doing so. Survey and meeting summary data to develop collaborative relationships are not evident. The

analysis of trends and comparisons may help the College identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and serve as a good approach for the other AQIP category sections.

9P1, SS. NIACC establishes connections with a number of educational institutions that send students to them starting with elementary schools and continuing through the high schools. NIACC's Entrepreneur for a Day program is targeted to fifth-grade students and 6,944 fifth graders have participated since the inception of the program. Eighth-grade and high school students are also served through programs that encourage campus visits and educational planning. Meeting between NIACC and school district administrators occur throughout the year. Partnerships with workforce development organizations are accomplished through an integrated model. NIACC has specialized accredited programs in school partnerships, automotive technology, and nursing. Staff members belong to state professional associations to develop relationships. A new position, Executive Assistant to the President for Corporate and Community Programs, was created in 2012 to promote workforce and economic development in the College's service area. NIACC is a member of the region's rapid response team that meets with businesses that are downsizing or closing.

9P2, S. NIACC demonstrates its commitment to local employers who employ its graduates by coordinating the annual NIACC Job and Internship Fair on campus, by providing an on-line job posting board, and by utilizing a Career Mail system where students and recent graduates are made aware of job openings in their field.

9P3, S. Relationships with educational institutions and employers are developed through advisory committees, internships, participation in the Iowa Accelerated Career Education (ACE) Program, and transfer and articulation agreements. NIACC coordinates quarterly meetings with state agencies that provide services to students and the community. Agency representatives such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor are also included in College staff meetings

9P6, O. Through meeting with and listening to its partners, NIACC indicates that it is meeting their needs. NIACC could benefit from implementing employer surveys or other assessments to collect some data that would support the measures. It is unclear if the qualitative data gathered in those conversations or meetings are collected and analyzed.

9P7, O. Although NIACC provides a litany of outlets for communication, the College does not describe how relationships are built or how integration and communication is ensured across these relationships. A formalized description of processes for building relationships internally might provide ways to strengthen internal relationships.

9R2, OO. Trends in these measures are analyzed and indicate slight declines in credit and concurrent enrollment since 2011. NIACC's five-year placement rate ranges from 95-98% with training-related placement rates ranging from 83-90%. Analysis of the trends provides information as to the strengths and opportunities for improvement in NIACC processes. Placement rate comparisons with other colleges and agencies may help NIACC determine if its rates are "best in class" as it seems to suggest. This approach to reporting and analysis of results may be useful for other AQIP category results sections.

9R3, O. Comparisons between NIACC and Iowa institutions show room for growth. The College may benefit from national comparisons with other rural community colleges. Enrollment comparisons place NIACC in the bottom third of Iowa community colleges. Placement data are mentioned, but not detailed.

9I1, OO. NIACC reports that it collects enrollment and demographic data as measures of processes and performance for building collaborative relationships. It is unclear how these measures assess the efficacy of building collaborative relationships; NIACC may find that developing purpose-specific measures may provide the opportunity to improve and strengthen both internal and external collaborative relationships.

9I2, O. The College has the opportunity to utilize AQIP to identify actions to improve processes and involve all employees in these discussions. The College's AQIP Quality Council also has the opportunity to provide leadership in strengthening quality improvement.

ACCREDITATION ISSUES NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the North Iowa Area Community College either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the core components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and core components in the future. Identification of any such

deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the North Iowa Area Community College the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

The Systems Portfolio Appraisal Team identified the following accreditation core components that are incomplete.

- Core Component 1C needs additional evidence concerning how NIACC addresses its role in a multicultural society and provides instruction concerning diversity.
- Core Component 3A needs additional evidence concerning learning goals for non-technical programs that are offered in various locations and modes of delivery.
- Core Component 4C needs additional evidence concerning student retention, persistence, and completion at the institutional and program level.

The Systems Portfolio Appraisal Team recommends that NIACC submit a monitoring report to the Higher Learning Commission that provides evidence for each of these core components within eighteen months of receipt of this appraisal.

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

	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.			X		
Adequate but could be improved.	X	X		X	
Unclear or incomplete.					

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 3.B.

NIACC does have general education program objectives identified and is based on eight learning objectives. The eight learning objectives were identified by faculty and approved by the Board of Governors. These objectives are identified for associate degree programs.

The learning objectives are reviewed on a rotating basis each year. Additionally, NIACC's full-time faculty members in all disciplines measure two objectives each year.

It is not clear how NIACC meets the requirements for 3.B 3-4.

NIACC communicates its degree and course requirements to students and external agencies.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 4.B.

NIACC offered professional development activities related to assessment to get faculty involved. Those activities included book discussions and an assessment consultant was brought in to offer workshops on assessment.

Faculty members are assessing achievement of student learning within the classroom and results are kept in file in the VP for Academic and Student Affairs' office. The College is also in the process of gathering baseline data to begin the process of moving to the next level of assessment.

Assessment of co-curricular programs does not have a formal process. However, clubs are assessed through Student Senate and the CCSSE survey.

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

Evidence is unclear or incomplete for Core Component 1.C.

No evidence is provided that NIACC understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society and NIACC's role in a multicultural society. The means by which NAICC provides instruction related to the diversity of society is incomplete or unclear.

NIACC's attention to human diversity is focused on programs it offers to senior citizens as well as employing an ADA compliance officer and an ADA Coordinator to assist students with disabilities. The College has maintained a General Education global awareness competency.

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

Evidence is unclear or incomplete for Core Component 3.A.

With respect to the degrees NIACC is offering, (AA, AS, AAS, Certificates and Diplomas), the degrees are appropriate to higher education and a community college. However, only a few specific programs (or majors) are listed in 1P4, 1P12 or any of the Results for the Category; based on this lack of evidence, it cannot be determined if the programs are appropriate to higher education.

Evidence exists for program and curriculum review for occupational programs. Program Competency Profiles are created for Career Technical programs, which are then used to identify specific learning objectives for each of these programs.

No evidence is provided by NIACC of learning goals specific to non-technical programs. No evidence is provided regarding the quality and consistent learning goals across all modes of delivery and all locations. Processes to ensure the consistency of delivery are not addressed.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 4.A.

The program review process is a very thorough five-year process and in the sixth year, an update is required by the Academic Affairs Council stating how concerns were addressed (in the five-year plan).

The institution utilizes external sources as a means of meeting accepted standards in several areas. NIACC is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership for its dual enrollment programs that requires complete alignment with programs and courses offered on campus.

NIACC holds specialized accreditation for the programs in Physical Therapy, Radiologic Technology and Nursing.

There is no evidence that the institution evaluates transfer credits prior to transcribing. The registrar transcribes traditional credits (it is not indicated who evaluates the transfer credits) and CAEL evaluates prior learning for credit. It is not clear if NIACC has policies that ensure the quality of transfer credit.

It is not clear how NIACC addresses 4.A.6, success of graduates.

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

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 2.B.

NIACC communicates to current and prospective students, community, high school partners and employers the required preparation and developmental objectives for specific programs, courses, degrees, and credentials as explained in Table 1.2. The face-to-face events listed in Table 1.2 provide interaction with Enrollment Specialists, Student Development Counselors, and representatives from all faculty divisions. NIACC communicates program requirements in a variety of ways, i.e. face-to-face, printed, and technology-based methods through the website and in the College Catalog (also in electronic format).

Faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships are available on the website and in the catalog.

It is not clear if transfer students to NIACC are considered prospective students.

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

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 3.D.

NIACC provides support for student learning through the Student Learning Center which provides one-on-one tutoring in transfer and developmental education courses. Additionally, the College uses Supplemental Instruction in several core courses such as Anatomy & Physiology I & II, Introductory Biology, Body Structure and Function and Developmental Psychology.

NIACC provides support for effective teaching through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which provides training to instructors interested in the use of Learning Communities in their

classes. NIACC has a proposed plan to update the science and math areas of the College to ensure the availability of necessary resources.

The College has the TRIO Student Support Services program for first-generation, low income, and/or students with disabilities. NIACC provides personal counseling to the students through the Student Development Office and has a counselor specifically assigned to work with students with disabilities to assist not only with accommodations in classes but also to assist with transitioning to other colleges and the workforce.

It is not clear how NIACC supports other infrastructure resources like research and information resources.

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

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 2.D.

NIACC believes the true meaning of academic freedom is founded on a hospitable reception to an infinite variety of skills and viewpoints, which allows the institution to rely upon open competition among them as the assured safeguard of truth.

NIACC faculty members are required by the College to meet course competency expectations in their instructional duties, but are afforded academic freedom on how course competencies are delivered and assessed in the act of student learning.

NIACC exposes faculty members to new methods and modalities in teaching and learning through the College's commitment to professional development. Faculty members have the freedom to incorporate proven innovative methods into their classrooms.

1P11. HLC Core Component 2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 2.E.

NIACC has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees all research requests. This procedure is intended to ensure that College faculty, students, and staff are engaged in research that is methodologically sound and does not violate Board policy or human subjects' rights.

Current and returning students are made aware of copyright, academic honesty, and integrity policies and enforcements through the Student Handbook, via the portal and through a College and Library orientation.

NIACC enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity through a College policy defining faculty and student responsibilities, as highlighted in the Grade Appeal Process in the Student Handbook, through publication in course syllabi, and by secured student logins and passwords to access personal academic information and online course access.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 3.E.

An enriched educational environment is provided through student clubs (33) and student organizations (6) which offer co-curricular activities. Eleven of the clubs are associated with state and/or national organizations and provide additional opportunities for learning and work-related trips, competitions, and networking with the field. The co-curricular activities provide a mixture of cultural, occupational, social, volunteer/civic, and student leadership as displayed in Table 1.3. NIACC mentions the co-curricular clubs and student organizations it offers to students.

It is unclear how these clubs or organizations make for a more enriched educational environment and support attainment of educational outcomes.

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

Evidence is unclear and incomplete for Core Component 4.C.

No evidence is provided that NIACC has defined its goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, but attainable and appropriate to its missions, student populations and educational offerings. NIACC writes, “We believe the research will guide the decision-making process regarding improved student retention, persistence and completion rates”, but it does not state what research will be done, by whom and when. An overview of the goal-setting process, an articulation of goals, and a description of the methodology used might prove helpful.

There is also no evidence that NIACC collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs. NIACC lists a number of surveys it conducts in this section, but none of the surveys listed are relevant to the evidence required for this Core Component.

Through recent institutional research, NIACC has developed 20 “Immediate Actions” that are *currently being considered* to improve student retention, persistence and completion. However, no evidence is provided to support that these data *have been used* to make improvements.

There is no evidence that NIACC has developed processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs that reflect good practice. NIACC seems to do well in conducting several surveys, but none of these surveys gather evidence on why students leave, and what make those who persist, persist. NIACC does not present any evidence on tenth day vs. end-of-term headcount to know who is or is not persisting in which programs.

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

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 1.D.

NIACC provides significant outreach services to the communities it serves to identify and keep current on the changing needs of key stakeholder groups in its commitment to the public good. NIACC currently has many outreach services:

- Beginning stages of Career and Academic Academies in communities to the west of NIACC
- Establishment of a STEM Academy in communities to the east of NIACC
- Development of a Diesel Program in response to community need
- Expansion of the Life-long Learning Program in its provision of educational opportunities to senior community members
- Construction of new student housing
- Current planning of a new Bio-Science and Health Building.

As a result, NIACC has a strong relationship with its communities and stakeholders and has established new career academies and degree options.

NIACC administration, faculty, and staff listen closely to its constituents to identify significant emerging trends. NIACC uses focus groups, surveys, forums, advisory committees, and other tools to gauge the winds of change in regards to stakeholder needs and serving the public good.

The requests for services and programs generally exceed the institutional resources available. In addressing this situation, NIACC will prioritize needs through a needs assessment, strategic plan development, along with other key indicators that directs planning and resource allocation.

Stakeholder requests that align with strategic initiatives are given approval by NIACC's Board of Directors.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 3.C.

Enrollment numbers are monitored to ensure that enough sections of courses are offered and if additional sections of courses need to be offered, that the appropriate adjunct faculty members are hired.

NIACC has an effective and well-defined process for the hiring of quality faculty and staff. This includes a review of the job description and qualifications prior to the advertisement, teaching demonstrations, review of transcripts, and the addition of comment sheets to determine how faculty and administrators feel about current issues and trends in higher education.

NIACC requires the librarian and counselors to complete Quality Plans and coaches must have the appropriate training and certifications.

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

Evidence is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 2.A.

NIACC's core values include Integrity as a value for all College employees. An Employee Standards of Ethics policy is reviewed in new employee orientation. Board members receive Board of Directors Standards of Ethics training at new member orientation.

NIACC ensures policies and procedures are followed and program compliance is met via financial audits. The Foundation is audited annually.

NIACC conducts harassment prevention training and NIACC conducts employee criminal background checks during the hiring process.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 2.E.

NIACC provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students through its Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees all research requests. Through IRB procedures students are provided with research project guidelines for the ethical use of information resources that outline potential risks to participants and subjects. IRB procedures at NIACC require students conducting research to be provided with information and evidence of research misconduct that enforces NIACC's policy on academic honesty and integrity.

As part of new student orientation, students are informed about the ethical use of information technology resources and proper use of library services. Students are provided with policies for academic honesty and integrity in their classes.

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

The evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 1.A.

Through a series of community and internal focus group meetings, the AQIP Quality Council (AQC) led an information gathering effort to validate the existing mission statement and to define for the first time a formal vision statement and defined core values. Once the draft of the vision statement and core values was developed, it was forwarded to all employees for review and comment. Then, all were ultimately approved by the College Senate and the Board of Directors.

The Vision developed through the above process is: North Iowa Area Community College is our region's first choice for postsecondary education, recognized for its commitment to quality teaching and learning and dedication to seamless educational opportunities, exemplary programs and services, responsive and collaborative partnerships with business. The Core Values of Academic Excellence, Integrity, and Community Vision were formulated during the information gathering effort.

Core Component 1.A2 is not addressed for students and support services as being consistent with the mission.

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

The evidence provided is strong, clear, and well-presented for Core Component 5.C.

The strategic direction is set by the Board of Directors and approved on a five-year cycle. The Board monitors the College's progress towards these goals, holding the President accountable. Operationally, President's Council members construct strategies aligned with keeping NIACC First in Education, Leadership, and Partnership, the pillars of the strategic plan. This includes the process for academic planning and assessment initiatives. NIACC builds the strategies to connect the planning process and budget priorities to the strategic plan, and the goals that are set by each of the areas must align with one of the pillars in the strategic plan. An annual review of plan progress is conducted to reestablish priorities.

New initiatives are vetted through the working committees of the College Senate and Academic Affairs to ensure that through the governance process, staff remained involved to ensure initiatives aligned with the strategic plan. The process circles back with the annual report on key performance indicators to the Board of Directors.

The information gathering process for the development of the new strategic plan included a SWOT analysis. Internal and external constituents were asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The results were incorporated into the development of the strategic plan.

The College has implemented a three-year budget scenario for financial and new initiatives. This model incorporates anticipated revenue from state support, expenditures and enrollment.

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

The evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 2.C.

NIACC is governed by nine Board members representing each of the College's nine service areas. Board members are elected by the residents of their respective district typically along with local school board elections. The Board adheres to the responsibilities as delineated by the Code of Iowa and sends annual reports to the Iowa Department of Education. Board members are the final decision makers on all financial matters. The Board approves the preliminary and working budgets and conducts a monthly independent review of the bills. All new academic programs and institutional policies (strategic plan, academic plans, and diversity plan) require Board approval.

As elected officials, it is each trustee's responsibility to listen to the needs and concerns of the district residents, business and industry partners, K-12 collaborators, local governments and community-based organizations. The Board uses the strategic plan and priorities as a guide for the decisions it makes. The NIACC Board uses information of internal and external stakeholders always with an eye to the College's strategic direction and priorities.

The Board has adopted a Code of Ethics policy which includes a legal and moral commitment, conflict of interest, and as directed by the Code of Iowa 68B2A will not use their elected position for personal gain.

It is not clear how the Board delegates day-to-day management as called for in Core Component 2.C.4.

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

The evidence is strong, clear and well-presented for Core Component 1.B.

The mission, vision and values are posted in the College catalog, student handbook, employee handbook, and website as well in other electronic and print materials. Three pillars (education, leadership and partnership) were chosen as the foundation of the strategic plan, then various strategies were developed under each pillar. The mission statement does list all three pillars (comprehensive education, progressive partnerships, and responsive leadership). The mission statement does mention, "the people of North Iowa" as the intended recipients of the higher education programs and services it provides.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 5.B.

NIACC's Senate and Academic Affairs include designated seats for students who have full voting rights.

NIACC uses committees for decision making. Table 5.1 shows the number of committees established for administrative and governance, curriculum and instruction, information technology, student affairs, and steering committees. Each of the four employee groups selects its own internal leader allowing for further leadership development opportunities within the College.

NIACC's Board of Directors is the final decision maker on all financial matters.

Changes in the leadership point to the need for improved succession planning. NIACC acknowledges the need for improved communication strategies.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 5.D.

It is not clear how the institution is learning from its processes to improve. Closing the Plan-Do-Check-Act quality improvement cycle may help NIACC's efforts.

NIACC uses data from external sources for planning and improvement. The data are shared with the President's Council and other institutional councils and committees. The College compiles an annual KPI report that is shared with the President's Council and the College Senate. An Educational Effectiveness Committee is responsible for general education and College-wide core competencies assessment and program reviews that are used to improve performance.

A three-year scenario planning is used for financial review with the plan shared with the four employee groups at President's Council, Cracker Barrel, and College Senate meetings.

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

Evidence is adequate but could be improved for Core Component 5.A.

NIACC notes in 5.A.1. that it employs the necessary human resources or consultant services to support and advance current educational programs and to advance the strategic plan, yet throughout the portfolio NIACC indicates its strong need for an institutional researcher. NIACC is planning to utilize a Title III grant to fill this position, but if it is key to the future of AQIP and the operation of the College, necessary financial resources should be allocated for the position. NIACC demonstrates it has the human resources sufficient to support its operations by employing full-time faculty to provide 76% of the entire College instruction. The constant mention of the Ellucian Colleague system suggests that the College does have sufficient technology resources to support its operation. Although the College asserts that it has adequate resources, evidence is not provided to support that the institution has the fiscal or physical resources necessary to sustain its operation.

The College operates on a three-year budget prediction cycle and the information is widely shared throughout the College and discussed in meetings. Priorities are determined at the President's Council and at the Board level. NIACC has worked to tie the budgeting process to their strategic plan. The Board approves all monthly expenditures. No evidence, such as a financial document, is provided that

demonstrates NIACC's resource allocations are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas.

NIACC has provided evidence that it employs quality faculty and staff and has outlined its process. Both adjunct and full-time faculty are required to meet Iowa Code requirements for instructors to have earned at least a Master's degree and a minimum of 12 semester credits of graduate level coursework in the field of instruction (arts and sciences division) or a Bachelor's' degree or 6,000 hours of recent relevant experiences in the occupational areas (career and technical area). The institution also indicates that 67% of its faculty hold a master's degree and faculty have a long history with NIACC which indicates it is a good place to work. Additionally, NIACC provides professional development opportunities by providing tuition reimbursement and continuing education.

QUALITY OF SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO FOR NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

The Appraisal Team offers the following comments about the quality of North Iowa Area Community College's Systems Portfolio.

- For a first Systems Portfolio, NIACC provided insightful overall and category contextual statements.
- NIACC provided useful narratives to the processes it deploys for each category. As it develops its processes, NIACC should consider the use of flow charts and planning schedules in describing the "how" of its processes.
- NIACC provided helpful cross-references in its category items to document evidence of accreditation criteria. The documentation does need to address each sub-category of the criterion.
- NIACC has the opportunity to improve its reporting of results through presentation of trends and comparisons to benchmarks. Key Performance Indicators were mentioned, but were seldom

reported throughout the Systems Portfolio. The reporting of results may also help NIACC identify improvement targets to complete the Plan-Do-Check-Act quality improvement cycle. A review of Baldrige Award recipients' applications may help NIACC identify best practices in reporting results.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

AQIP reminds North Iowa Area Community Colleges that the Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for North Iowa Area Community College's improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with North Iowa Area Community College, AQIP expects North Iowa Area Community College to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

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

AQIP's goal is to help North Iowa Area Community College to clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support North Iowa Area Community College as it addresses these priorities in ways that will make a difference in North Iowa Area Community College's performance.