SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the Systems Portfolio of

BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE

October 14, 2009
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE

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

AQIP Category One: Helping Students Learn:

- Positive changes are being created since hiring a new president which should increase student learning and administrative effectiveness.

- BSC’s pass rate for first time licensure exams far exceeds the national pass rate.

- BSC students rated their satisfaction with BSC and its student support services higher than the national norm and at the other two-year North Dakota colleges.

- Continuing to work upon creating a formal, campus-wide, and imbedded process for determining meaningful learning objectives, will ensure that the essential and needed skills and knowledge are embedded in every curriculum of the college.

- Increasing the formal and periodic mandatory training of the faculty regarding student learning styles will give faculty a variety of teaching techniques other than lectures in the classrooms. This will also emphasize the importance of this training; how it is implemented; and how it is appreciated across the college.

- A continued formal process to integrate the recognition and usage of the learning styles with the teaching benchmarks in pedagogy should increase overall student achievement and contribute to student retention.

- The College should develop, analyze, and utilize annual performance data regarding the whole institution in addition to the recently developed five-year performance data system. Annual data will allow for quicker responses to issues as well as provide more meaningful trend data and benchmark analysis for each college program.

- Another opportunity is the development of direct measures regarding student learning that will complement the indirect measures being used.
• Further development of a feedback loop regarding the placement tests for on-campus, distance, and online students will document if the placement tests are effective and who the at-risk students are for every delivery venue of the college.

• The continued development of timelines should help and document the re-adjustment and/or the development of new programs for the out-of-state students.

• Increasing tutoring services for online and distance students should increase student success.

• The role and impact of the student learning support systems, such as the library and labs, is not clear.

• It is unclear how much the North Dakota University System (NDUS) helps and/or hinders BSC since BSC has a significant student population located outside (distance learning and online) the State of North Dakota.

**AQIP Category Two: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:**

• BSC has a partnership with 16 institutions of higher education as well as the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education-Internet Course Exchange (WICHE-ICE) that facilitates sharing distance-delivered courses among institutions.

• While BSC notes the value of non-instructional objectives to the institution, results documenting those conclusions have not been provided. Student and visitor participation and feedback for athletic and cultural programming, as well as participation and learning from co-curricular activities, can provide important data and information for analysis and decision making.

**AQIP Category Three: Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs**

• BSC uses multiple avenues to research student and stakeholder needs and to obtain feedback about how well BSC addresses these needs. However, the development of trend lines and benchmarks would provide evidence of continuous improvement in key areas.

• Expanding the measures of stakeholder satisfaction should give increased contextual information, annual trending, and benchmarking for establish improvement targets.
• While BSC employs a variety of strategies for collecting data for these processes, no clear feedback loop exists in the current process, research, or improvement categories.

**AQIP Category Four: Valuing People**

• The goals and philosophy of the new presidential leadership have impacted the culture and decision-making infrastructure of BSC. Employees are empowered to identify processes to be improved and establish commensurate targets.

• BSC employees rated BSC higher in quality and satisfaction compared to the peer NDUS colleges and the national norm for two-year colleges.

• BSC uses a formal new employee orientation process that utilizes several methods.

• Further increasing the quality of the employee feedback can provide improved assessment of the effectiveness of the institutional planning processes; and, if the college is achieving its objectives.

• As BSC continues to address “Valuing People” this will create significantly more objectives for valuing people, leading, and communicating.

• While narrative responses describe processes for hiring new employees, a flow-charting/process mapping of all human resource processes can facilitate decision making and process evaluation. This process should also include the use of cross-functional teams, and how they are involved in applicable processes.

• The goals and philosophy of the new presidential leadership have impacted the culture and decision-making infrastructure of BSC. Employees are empowered to identify processes to be improved and establish commensurate targets.

**AQIP Category Five: Leading and Communicating**

• Change in college leadership through the hiring of a new president has encouraged a culture where employees have opportunities for involvement and leadership roles. This provides an important impetus for innovation and improvement.

• A newly flattened administrative structure enhances careful planning and determining the additional resources and adjunct faculty needs for successful distance learning.
The new organizational structure also allows the cross-divisional Operations Council to work proactively moving day-to-day decision making to the lowest appropriate level.

BSC indicates that its mission and values are aligned with the general purpose of community colleges in the United States and also with the mission and values of the NDUS. A matrix demonstrating this alignment and linkage with strategic planning could enhance this understanding for all stakeholders. Within the context of systems improvement, mapping, documenting leadership, and communicating processes; this could ensure a systematic process for improving the culture.

While the resource planning and campus facilities master planning processes are admirable and cyclical, an opportunity exists to integrate the strategic plan, resource planning, and facilities master plan into one document as part of the College’s long-and-short-term planning process. An integrated planning process model can enhance an institution’s continual improvement journey.

BSC does not have a formalized leadership succession plan that could help the College bridge any gaps in leadership that may occur and ensure that the institution maintains and preserves its mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance.

It is unclear how AQIP Action Projects become part of the longer-term strategic planning process.

**AQIP Category Six: Supporting Institutional Operations**

- BSC would benefit by demonstrating and documenting how improvement is data-driven.
- While much of the data contained in this category indicates usage or enrollment, there is little or no data that illustrates the effectiveness for student service processes.
- Given the emphasis that BSC has put upon academic advising, an assessment of the effectiveness of this emphasis could provide insight into future Action Projects.
- As BSC improves its systematic data collection and analysis process, this will ensure the timeliness, accuracy, validity, and reliability of the captured data for campus-wide decision making and for addressing other critical areas, such as the support needs of the faculty, staff, and administration.

**AQIP Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness**
• BSC is encouraged to review data sources within the state, region, and nationally to enhance their ability to access trends and resources that meet their specific needs in higher education.

• While multiple BSC groups are empowered to collect and analyze information and make decisions, the creation of an institutional, systematic, integrated process with feedback loops can significantly improve the measuring effectiveness capabilities of BSC and minimize the silo approach.

• The formation of a cross-functional workgroup could help BSC improve how it addresses requests for data and reports that will support decision making that uses timely, viable, and reliable data.

• A uniform web-based dashboard for the whole institution could improve efficiency and transparency and enhance data-driven decision making. This tool can provide a historical and projected snapshot of data elements, generate trend-lines, and facilitate analysis for future direction.

• Increasing the effectiveness of the data-driven decision making processes for support systems such as the library, labs, and PeopleSoft program would further support meaningful change.

• A recently developed five-year review process is intended to assess several measures of effectiveness produced by the BCS departments (technical, liberal, transfer, and general education). A parallel annual evaluative snapshot of key factors could identify issues that need to be addressed more quickly in a dynamic educational environment.

AQIP Category Eight: Planning Continuous Improvement

• The hiring of a new President in 2007 has provided the impetus for Bismarck State College to transform how it operates and to change its institutional culture. Primary changes noted in the portfolio include more transparency, more employee involvement in decision making, and enhanced communication of strategies, and action plans.

• The college must allow itself time to evolve this new culture and maintain a reflective evaluation to determine if the cultural change is being integrated and accepted by employees and sustainable for the institution. Initially, surface changes are easy to
implement, but changing institutional culture is a long process and can be a stressful one.

- Continuing on this path of change demonstrates that BSC has embraced the AQIP philosophy of planning continuous process improvement.

- While BSC provides narrative to describe what is done at the institutional level, the development and inclusion of process maps could improve the understanding of processes and enhance efforts for continuous process improvement.

- The use of the data is paramount to the continuous improvement process at BSC. The collected data must be used in decision making or there is no reason to collect the information.

Accreditation issues and Strategic challenges for Bismarck State College are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

**ELEMENTS OF Bismarck State College’s FEEDBACK REPORT**

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

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

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

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

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

**Critical Characteristics:** Your Systems Portfolio’s Organizational Overview provides context for the team’s knowledge of your institution’s identity, mission objectives, strategic goals, and key factors related to improvement. Critical Characteristics are those features most important for understanding the institution’s mission, environment, stakeholders, competitive position, goals, and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in the Report.
Category Feedback: The Report’s feedback on each of AQIP’s nine Categories specifically identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An S or SS identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by O, with OO indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your Systems Portfolio, offer brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team’s findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report.

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

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

Issues Affecting Compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. An important goal for the Systems Appraisal was to review your institution’s compliance with the Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation. The peer quality experts who served on the team were all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission’s Criteria, and the Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the Criteria as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your institution’s systems and processes under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the Index to the Criteria for Accreditation that you provided with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the Criteria and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.
The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Bismarck State College has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five Criteria for Accreditation and each of their Core Components. Although the Systems Appraisal does not in itself constitute a review for continued accreditation, the team’s conclusion upon reviewing your Portfolio against the Criteria will serve as a telling piece of evidence during the Commission’s next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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

- Developing a formal, timely, and integrated internal feedback loop that uses the data being collected and that implements that data into the decision-making processes for the whole college.
- The transition to a new leadership and continued energy for cultural evolution and improvement.
- Continued creation and effective evaluation of the placement tests and learning objectives for all on-campus, distance, and online students.
- It is unclear how AQIP Action Projects become part of the longer-term strategic planning process.
USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

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

An organization needs to examine its Report strategically to identify those areas that will yield greatest benefit if addressed. Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of the Report may be: How do the team’s findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the Systems Portfolio to reflect what we have learned?

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

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

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OV1</td>
<td>Bismarck State College serves students of all ages who primarily reside in the counties surrounding the College, which is the south central and southwestern region of North Dakota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OV2</td>
<td>Bismarck State College is a public comprehensive community college that also offers a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in Energy Management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OV3</td>
<td>The general education program emphasis for students is to: (1) develop communication skills; (2) acquire the thought processes necessary for problem-solving and understanding complexities; (3) gain an awareness of cultural and ethnic diversity; and, (4) recognize how the past impacts the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1a</td>
<td>Bismarck State College (BSC) awards a variety of certificates, diplomas and degrees, including an Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Energy Management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1b</td>
<td>While Bismarck State College primarily serves students of all ages who reside in the counties surrounding the College; there are programs that serve a statewide and national clientele.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1c</td>
<td>Bismarck State College targets a variety of student populations including: (1) traditionally aged students; (2) individuals who desire more education for a career change or advancement; (3) collaborative students; and, (4) students enrolled in the college’s online programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bismarck State College Foundation and Resource Development division, which is based upon strong relationships with industry and business leaders, pursues grants and external funding for targeted objectives, programs, and research.

The Continuing Education, Training, and Innovation (CETI) division of the College takes the lead regarding working with business and industry by providing workforce and customized training, online courses for employees, and specialty training.

The primary competition for Bismarck State College are: (1) for-profit colleges; (2) online educational providers, (3) other public and private colleges; (3) local trainers; and, (4) in-house industry training.

Time limitations and the job market impacts the educational needs of the non-traditional Bismarck State College students.

The large and varied list of stakeholders served by Bismarck State College creates a significant challenge and a very complex environment for the College to serve all of its audiences and to meet their expectations, especially when these expectations are occasionally in conflict with each other.

Bismarck State College follows the job classification system defined by the North Dakota University System (NDUS).

Bismarck State College has experienced substantial growth regarding its full-time and adjunct faculty positions; but, despite experiencing a relative good economy, the sparse population of the surrounding region significantly limits the potential hiring pool for faculty positions.

A major goal and emphasis by Bismarck State College is to engage, connect, and deliver to its students and stakeholders, which drives the organization and dedicates the college to hiring employees who will maximize each student's educational experience.

The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, in collaboration with its stakeholders, identified the following six cornerstones of the university system. Bismarck State College has also linked and aligned its college mission statement, objectives, and strategies to these cornerstones: (1) economic development; (2) educational excellence; (3) having a flexible and responsive system; (4) having an accessible system; (5) funding and research; and, (6) sustaining the vision.
Bismarck State College is organized into the following four main divisions: (1) academic affairs; (2), college advancement and BSC Foundation; (3) student affairs and operations; and (4) energy technology programs.

As a result of an AQIP Action Project, the student advising center has been designed to improve services to students as well as increase the retention and graduation rates of students.

A Bismarck State College AQIP Action Project objective resulted in the development of an advising center that is designated to better serve students and to increase satisfaction, retention and graduation rates through an improved Academic Advising process."

Despite making progress regarding the collection of its data, Bismarck State College indicated that there is still a need to improve (1) the utilization of data, (2) centralizing data collection and utilization processes, (3) improving data reporting processes; and, (4) involving more human resources with data collection and utilization processes.

Data collection, information gathering, and storage at Bismarck State College occur at the institutional and departmental levels. This provides evidence of accountability to NDUS, which in turn provides Bismarck State College with feedback about its systems.

An inequitable state funding formula for higher education translates into a smaller share of state funding for Bismarck State College.

Bismarck State College is faced with many challenges including: (1) demographics within a sparsely populated state; (2) declining enrollment regarding traditional college-aged students; (3) recruitment of qualified and expert staff; and (4) funding and competition for students.

A newly developed “enrollment management plan” identifies new markets and strategies that must be employed for the continued growth of the college's enrollment or-at least maintain the college's current enrollment. This plan includes focusing upon (1) adult workers; (2) armed services personnel; (3) dual-credit enrolled high school students; and (4) prior learning options.

Bismarck State College seeks to increase a number of collaborative partnerships that will focus upon (1) delivering learning opportunities; (2) streamlining educational
transitions; (3) advancing economic development; (4) ensuring educational quality; and (5) engaging the community.

**CATEGORY FEEDBACK**

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

**AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN**

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

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Bismarck State College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:
Bismarck State College
Systems Appraisal Feedback Report
October 14, 2009

Item Critical Characteristic

OV1 Bismarck State College serves students of all ages who primarily reside in the counties surrounding the college; which is the south central and southwestern region of the State of North Dakota.

O1b While Bismarck State College primarily serves students of all ages who primarily reside in the counties surrounding the College; which is the south central and southwestern region of the State of North Dakota; there are programs that serve a statewide and national clientele.

O1c Bismarck State College targets a variety of student populations, including the (1) traditionally aged student; (2) individuals who desire more education for a career change or advancement; (3) the collaborative students; and, (4) the students enrolled in the college’s online programs.

O2b The Continuing Education, Training, and Innovation (CETI) Division of Bismarck State College takes the lead regarding working with business and industry by providing workforce and customized training, online courses for employees, and specialty training.

O6a As a result of an AQIP Action Project, the student advising center has been designed to improve services to students as well as increase the retention and graduation rates of students.

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

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1P1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>During 2006-2007, the entire faculty came together under the direction of the Academic Assessment Committee and the General Education Committee to revamp the general education philosophy statement and general education objectives which led to the ACT General Education Program emphasizing the following: Awareness, Communication, and Thought.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1P2a S The faculty with input from employers, working professionals, accrediting agencies, and certification entities, has established program-specific learning objectives for the occupational programs.

1P2b O It is unclear what process will be used to continue updating the learning objectives across the whole college curriculum. A well defined, formal, and imbedded process for determining common learning objectives or specific learning objectives will ensure that the essential skills and knowledge will continue to be embedded in every college program and course.

1P3a S The checks and balances mandated by the NDUS system regarding the implementation of new programs prevents duplication and unnecessary competition among institutions in the State of North Dakota.

1P3b O The NDUS system may prevent BSC from addressing stakeholder needs in a timely fashion. There is no indication that implementing new programs is completed in a timely manner. No normal (expected) time period is discussed for implementing new programs or if there can be the quick implementation of new programs. This College, which has a national audience and clientele, would benefit by a streamlined process for implementing new programs in a timely manner.

1P4 S The College utilizes various sources and methods to develop programs and courses to meet the needs of student career goals as well as to meet the needs of business and industry. The process of using feedback from advisory groups, business and industry, as well as monitoring the employment needs, the most needed jobs, etc., is key to the future careers of students.

1P5a O There is no valid feedback or evaluation results showing that the college placement tests are effective. There is no data-based decision making process described by the College for making good placements. There is no feedback process documenting effective placements versus placements that are not effective.
1P5b  O  There is no indication that the online students are being given placement
tests and/or that a valid evaluation process is being used that shows
whether or not online students need remedial work.

1P5c  O  There are no online tutoring services described.

1P5d  S  BSC encourages the use of a self assessment quiz for online courses.
While this assessment is not required, it is complimented with an
orientation program for online courses.

1P6  S  BSC employs multiple methods to communicate information regarding
learning and development objectives to potential students. These
methods include direct contact, print media, web-based resources, career
fairs, and presentations.

1P7  S  An interest survey, combined with advising from BSC personnel, helps
new students to determine their career interests and programs of study.

1P8a  O  Because of its proliferation of online courses, BSC might want to
investigate online tutoring options for students who might need assistance
during non-business hours.

1P8b  O  Placement test results provide an opportunity for academically at-risk
students to be identified and supported on-campus; however, there is no
evidence of such assessment or support for distance and online students.

1P9  OO  It is not documented that the faculty receives adequate training regarding
learning styles; and/or, if this is formal and periodic training presenting a
variety of teaching techniques other than lectures in the classrooms. No
process is described that recognizes the importance of this training, how
it is implemented, and how it is appreciated across the college. A
sustained process to integrate the recognition and usage of the learning
styles in pedagogy may increase overall student achievement and
contribute to student retention.

1P10a  S  By contacting the Student Accessibility Office, a student is ensured
appropriate accommodations and modifications under ADA to not only
access all programs, but to also be successful. Multiple opportunities are
available to, and utilized by seniors through numerous events, class offerings, enrichment, and professional development offerings.

1P10b S Since Bismarck is primarily a commuter college, multiple services and options are available such as extended hours, for offices, computers labs, online, and evening classes.

1P11a O BSC’s performance appraisal system contains the elements that could assist faculty members in improving effective teaching as it relates to helping students learn. The process does not provide, however, clear benchmarks for faculty for defining effective teaching.

1P11b O BSC’s examination process for student-evaluation of its courses might include looking at national evaluation data and/or the development of an in-house process that provides the kind of data that can be used as a benchmark by the BSC faculty.

1P11c O BSC’s performance would be better understood if what the college is doing was described in detail regarding benchmarking.

1P11d OO While BSC has an evaluation process in place, it is not clear if this is the only method by which the College sets forth the expectations of the faculty for effective teaching and learning. The “Annual Assessment Progress Report” is mentioned, but the process is not defined whereby student results are used as part of faculty accountability for student learning. An opportunity may be available to clearly articulate to faculty clear expectations for methodology, instruction, and results expected to improve teaching and learning.

1P11e O Expectations regarding faculty performance is not defined. An AQIP institution should use data for leading the institution; however, there is no specific description or usage of data regarding what constitutes effective teaching and learning by the faculty.

1P11f S BSC develops and reviews student evaluation data.

1P12 S BSC uses enrollment and faculty teaching load data to plan its course delivery system. Availability of diverse course offerings, times, lengths of
terms, as well as methods of instructional delivery, provides flexibility in meeting the needs of multiple student groups.

1P13a  S  Input from advisory committees and employer surveys provide for the development of up-to-date and effective technical courses.

1P13b  S  Programs are also reviewed in-depth by the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education every five years.

1P13c  O  A recently developed five-year review process is intended to assess several measures of effectiveness produced by the BCS departments (technical, liberal, transfer, and general education). A parallel annual evaluative snapshot of key factors could also assist in identifying issues that need to be addressed more quickly in a dynamic educational environment.

1P14  S  Programs with declining enrollment are put through an extensive review process to determine the cause for the decline. The review includes looking at the curriculum, course and program objectives, tasks and competencies, equipment structure, staffing, and similar programs in the state and across the nation.

1P15  S  Bismarck State College employs various formal and informal methodologies to determine the learning support needs of its students. These include processes such as the College Student Inventory, Student Satisfaction Inventory, Community College Survey of Student Engagement, assessment and placement exams, community input, and feedback during faculty departmental meetings.

1P16a  S  BSC offers its students opportunities for involvement via program-specific clubs, athletics, theater, art, music programs, government and leadership, skill competition, and service learning experiences. Such options provide a diverse menu of activities that are linked with program learning objectives.

1P16b  O  While BSC provides multiple co-curricular activities for students, developing a matrix aligning specific co-curricular goals and
corresponding activities with student learning outcomes, can document the linkage and assist direct measurement of student learning. This includes integrating a feedback loop regarding the degree of effectiveness that student activities match or exceed the expected co-curricular goals and outcomes.

1P17a  S  BSC has a number of indirect measures to ensure that students awarded degrees and certificates have met learning and development expectations. This is especially true regarding areas requiring licensure exams or certification.

1P17b  O  BSC does not appear to have a system of direct measures to ensure that students have met the college’s expectations. Direct measures might give the institution better feedback regarding student learning and attendance.

1P18a  S  BSC has developed formalized assessment plans for technical programs with the corresponding activities and processes, assessment measures, etc. The results of this analysis are reported annually. General education program assessment occurs on a three-year cycle and focuses on one-of-three learning outcome categories. Relevant courses to be assessed are identified in an assessment matrix.

1P18b  O  BSC’s process for collecting data about a variety of levels appears relatively strong. However, this process does not contain a clear feedback loop that ensures that the data leads student learning, program planning, curriculum development, and budgeting decisions.

1P18c  O  While BSC has a detailed assessment process, it does not appear to be linked to a formal decision-making process. This assessment process needs to be taken to the next level where it is used continuously regarding decisions for increasing student learning, teaching effectiveness, etc.

1R1a  S  BSC seems to have a fairly representative mix of direct and indirect measures regarding student learning and development.
1R1b  O  It is not clear if student satisfaction, either through student course evaluations or national surveys, is a component in these measures.

1R2a  O  While an assessment report summarizing and analyzing data is compiled annually and is available on the institution’s website, the portfolio does not provide examples or evidence of the results. The Summary Results for 2007–08 only provides general education course-level assessment data. Therefore, BSC also has an opportunity to develop assessment data for students completing a general education degree program.

1R2b  O  The development of institutional trend-lines and benchmarks are integral to future improvement efforts.

1R3  OO  BSC does not provide annual data to illustrate performance results and what is expected regarding specific program objectives. No data has been given.

1R4a  S  Bismarck State College provides multiple measures of evidence regarding knowledge and skills acquired by graduated students.

1R4b  S  The 2005 Graduate Surveys indicated that BSC students rated their experiences at BSC, as part of the NDUS survey system, above the national average in preparing them for their current job. Mandatory examination results are reported to NDUS for the accountability report.

1R4c  SS  BSC’s pass rate for first time licensure exams far exceeds the national pass rate.

1R5a  S  BSC tracks retention rates as one performance indicator regarding the effectiveness of the learning support services. The graphic results provided by BSC demonstrate an improvement in student retention.

1R5b  O  An AQIP Action Project to improve advising and orientation would further support and improve the learning support services network.

1R5c  O  There is no data regarding how effective the library, labs, or other significant college programs fit into the student support services network.
Bismarck State College
Systems Appraisal Feedback Report
October 14, 2009

1R5d  S  BSC’s advising program and increased retention rates demonstrate that when the college strategically places resources around an issue, the data shows positive results occur regarding the problem.

1R5e  S  Feedback was collected throughout the 2007–2008 academic year as a result of the advising and orientation action project.

1R6a  O  Based upon the CCSSE comparative results, BSC has an identified opportunity to improve three benchmark areas that address the processes for helping students to learn. The use of student focus groups in addition to Employee Conversation Day can provide an in-depth picture for analysis and decision making for improvement.

1R6b  SS  Based upon the student satisfaction results, Bismarck was rated higher in eight of the survey’s scales when compared to the national data.

1R6c  SS  Student engagement data also rates BSC higher than other North Dakota Colleges.

1I1a  S  The revision of BSC’s general education philosophy, objectives, and assessment plan, provided the necessary framework to enhance future student learning outcomes, assessment processes, and the potential for developing trend data and benchmarks for analysis and decision making.

1I1b  O  BSC is improving the assessment and decision-making process that documents student learning. However, a lack of software and not employing more human resources could hinder significant future improvements.

1I2  S  BSU has developed a culture and infrastructure that supports continuous improvement. The flat organizational structure, the strategic planning process, mini-conversations, the Office of Innovation, and the budgeting process, are designed to encourage and support improvement.
AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

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

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O2a</td>
<td>The Bismarck State College Foundation and Resource Development division is based upon strong relationships with industry and business leaders; and it pursues grants and external funding for targeted objectives, programs, and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2b</td>
<td>The Continuing Education, Training, and Innovation (CETI) Division of the College takes the lead regarding working with business and industry by providing workforce and customized training, online courses for employees, and specialty training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O9</td>
<td>Bismarck State College seeks to increase a number of collaborative partnerships that will focus upon (1) delivering learning opportunities; (2) streamlining educational transitions; (3) advancing economic development; (4) ensuring educational quality; and (5) engaging the community.</td>
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Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Bismarck State College’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Key non-instructional processes include athletics, cultural programming, BSC Foundation, BSC Alumni Association, Resource Development and the Continuing Education, as well as the Training and Innovation (CETI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Division. Each of these is empowered to design and operate assigned responsibilities.

2P1b O BCS indicates that processes for non-instructional areas exist. However, the College could benefit from mapping the decision-making process for each unit as it determines the needs of its various stakeholders; and, as it plans corresponding actions, and assesses how well it serves such stakeholders. It is unclear whether cross-functional teams assist in this effort.

2P2a O BSC presents objectives for the BSC foundation and CETI. The development of similar objectives for athletics and cultural programming, key non-instructional areas identified in the Systems Portfolio, could enhance strategic planning, target setting, and assessment of effectiveness.

2P2b O The institutional objectives for non-instructional activities are financially dependent. Objectives that tie the non-instructional activities to the mission of the college would give significant guidance for the non-instructional activities.

2P3 S Various communication methods are used to ensure that the Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and ultimate accomplishments are broadcasted to the wide audience of BSC stakeholders.

2P4 S Program administrators are responsible for assessing and reviewing objectives using feedback from stakeholder groups, evaluative input from employers, and financial indicators.

2P5 S Each non-instructional unit determines faculty and staff needs relative to the non-instructional objectives using internal work processes. Planning, training, budgeting, communication, and community outreach supports decision making.

2P6 O Documenting how economic conditions may result in an adjustment of objectives, a process that recognizes these realities, may assist the college in a deliberate and strategic reaction to economic changes.
2R1a-2R4a  O  BSC struggles to compile and then use data meaningfully in all four of these categories. Determining what data is useful and why it is useful may be a first step in being able to make strategic decisions in this category.

2R1b  S  The College lists multiple measures that are collected and analyzed regularly; which are depicted in table 6.18.

2R2b  S  The BSC Foundation has increased the amount of grants received during the last three years. These grants can assist the college in myriad ways.

2R2c  S  The Alumni Association is dedicated to promoting alumni and student lifelong loyalty to Bismarck State College. Specific results regarding this process are provided for the Alumni Association and the Foundation, which is evidence of a continuous improvement process of collecting data, analyzing trends, setting targets, and meeting objectives.

2R3b  O  Participation in the National Community College Benchmarking Project as well as collaboration with the NDUS in developing comparative data sets for athletic, cultural, and non-instructional objectives, consistent with the mission of NDUS, could provide comparative data and assist with benchmarking and target-setting for future improvement.

2R4b  O  While BSC notes the value of non-instructional objectives to the institution, results documenting those conclusions have not been provided. Student and visitor participation and feedback for athletic and cultural programming, as well as participation and learning from co-curricular activities, can provide important data and information for analysis and decision making.

2I1  S  BSC initiated programs to improve educational services to its stakeholders. These include the partnership with Dickinson State University and the Learning Unlimited program. The National Power Plant Operations Technology and Educational Center, as well as the partnership with the city to provide health, wellness, and athletic opportunities, also demonstrate improvement efforts.
Because there are no clear targets or objectives for improvement, it is difficult to determine how BSC’s culture contributes to improved performance in this area.

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

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

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

**Item** Critical Characteristic

OV1 Bismarck State College serves students of all ages who primarily reside in the counties surrounding the college; which is the south central and southwestern region of the State of North Dakota.

O1a Bismarck State College awards a variety of certificates and diplomas, including an Associate Degree in Applied Science, Associate Degree of Arts, Associate Degree of Science, and a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in Energy Management.

O1c Bismarck State College targets a variety of student populations, including the (1) traditionally aged student; (2) individuals who desire more education for a career change or advancement; (3) the collaborative students; and, (4) the students enrolled in the college’s online programs.

O4c A major goal and emphasis by Bismarck State College is to engage, connect, and deliver to its students and stakeholders; which drives the organization and which
dedicates the college to hiring employees who will maximize each student's educational experience.

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>BSC uses a variety of instruments to collect and analyze the changing needs of students. Alumni are surveyed to determine if their education and training is meeting the requirements of their employment. Advisory committees assist in identifying job openings, placement rates to ensure there are job opportunities for the programs that are offered, and to make recommendations for new courses and programs to meet emerging needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>While survey data assesses whether services are meeting the needs of students in specific functional areas, the college does not articulate how a course of action is selected to address student needs. An inclusive process with students, faculty, and staff can provide valuable ideas for improving targeted processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2a</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Providing excellent customer service is a priority of the College. BSC strives to engage, connect, and deliver to stakeholders. However, there is no specific feedback system regarding the effectiveness of these services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Bismarck State College strives to engage, connect and deliver to their stakeholders. Many activities and the faculty are centered upon for attracting and admitting new students. Many student organizations are involved with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P2c</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>BSC maintains relationships with its students using multiple strategies (e.g., general education assessment, marketing, trained counselors and advisors, sponsoring student organizations, faculty accessibility, and other means as appropriate).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bismarck State College utilizes a variety of methods to collect data regarding the changing needs of key stakeholder groups ranging from meetings with key civic groups or industries to survey data, meetings, and advisory committees. A process is in place with the departments, the Operations Council, or a cross-functional team, to review and analyze data for opportunities for improvement. Action projects are developed and submitted to the Wild Endeavors (WE) Implementation committee of the Office of Innovation for approval.

Relationships with key stakeholders are established and maintained through a comprehensive listing of activities, initiatives, and agreements.

Bismarck determines if there are new student and stakeholder groups to be targeted through the strategic planning process at local, regional, and national levels. A newly flattened administrative structure enhances careful planning that has determined additional resources and adjunct faculty needs for successful distance learning. Referrals, as well as information from a variety of sources such as BSC personnel, Foundation Board members, and high schools are used. A structure and process is in place through the Operations Council to ensure survey data and scanning is analyzed.

BSC has established informal and formal channels for student complaint and grievance procedures and processes; as well as, a formal employee complaint process.

The College states that there is no formal procedure to collect, analyze, and respond to complaints from stakeholders other than students and employees.

It is not clear if the College collects aggregate data about the types of complaints filed by students and employees. An opportunity exists to develop a process to analyze complaint data from all stakeholders to further improve processes.

BSC employs meetings, surveys, and evaluations to collect satisfaction feedback from students and key stakeholder groups. Nationally normed
surveys include the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE).

3R2a  S  CCSSE results note areas above and below mean scores. Scores above the national mean indicate student satisfaction in writing, speaking, and educational experiences as well as computer lab and transfer assistance.

3R2b  O  CCSSE results reflect that student engagement in community-based projects, career planning, diversity, and social-networking opportunities, co-curricular participation, and job placement present opportunities for improvement for BSC. While multiple measures were listed to indicate stakeholder satisfaction, only one has been reported. The College could analyze these results for additional contextual information, year-to-year trending, and benchmarking in order to establish improvement targets.

3R3  O  While enrollment and graduation data are important as results for building relationships; the college has listed many more surveys (CCSSE, Noel-Levitz, and other instruments) in their process questions, as well as informal methods. An opportunity exists for the institution to establish a formalized system to review all data sources, establish trends, acknowledge, and model those areas where there is high satisfaction, and improve those that have little or no satisfaction.

3R4  S  Employer satisfaction survey data, workforce training evaluations, and internally developed department surveys solicit stakeholder feedback. Results from employer satisfaction surveys are compared to the NDUS mean to suggest areas of improvement within the state system.

3R5  S  BSC has engaged in a number of activities that have resulted in positive outcomes from building relationships with key stakeholders. BSC notes growth in private financial support and grant awards. BSC’s National Energy Center of Excellence is a direct result of $18.3 million raised through partnerships with industry, the community, and state and federal government agencies. An additional outcome of this project is the development of a two-year program in Instrumentation and Control.
Technology in 2008. BSC received a scholarship grant for $597K from the NSF to attract students into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields (STEM). Partnerships with the Bismarck Public Schools provide programs bringing over 500 students on the campus daily. Dual enrollments have increased from 222 in 2006-2007 to 293 in 2008-2009. A new Aquatics and Wellness Center on the BSC Campus is the product of a partnership with the Bismarck Parks and Recreation Department.

3R6 S Analysis of SSI data indicates that BSC students rate expectations and satisfaction levels higher than national standards and satisfaction levels. Alumni satisfaction data also reflects satisfaction with quality of instruction offered by BSC.

3I1a S Adding human resources to utilize PeopleSoft and manage it within the NDSU should assist the college in accessing and utilizing data for this category more efficiently. BSC acknowledges facing a challenge when trying to extract individual campus information from the NDUS system information.

3I1b S The recent creation of the Operations Council (OC) to “flatten the operations” of the organization and to empower employees to communicate across the organization providing employees with a voice in decisions and the ability to contribute to the organization in a meaningful way.

3I2 S The new infrastructure with the Operations Council, and the cross-functional structure of committees will facilitate communication and action as well as, identifying targets for improvement. This process exemplifies the quality improvement journey.

AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE

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

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tr>
<td>O3a</td>
<td>The primary competition for Bismarck State College are the (1) for-profit colleges; (2) online educational providers, (3) other public and private colleges; (3) local trainers; and, (4) the in-house industry training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O4b</td>
<td>Bismarck State College has experienced substantial growth regarding its full-time and adjunct faculty positions; but, despite experiencing a relative good economy, the sparse population of the surrounding region significantly limits the potential hiring pool for faculty positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O4c</td>
<td>A major goal and emphasis by Bismarck State College is to engage, connect, and deliver to its students and stakeholders; which drives the organization and which dedicates the College to hiring employees who will maximize each student's educational experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O7a</td>
<td>Despite making progress regarding the collection of its data, Bismarck State College indicated that there is still a need to improve (1) the utilization of their data, (2) centralizing their data collection and utilization process, (3) improving their data reporting process; and (4) involving more human resources with data collection and utilization processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O8a</td>
<td>An inequitable state funding formula for higher education translates into a smaller share of state funding for Bismarck State College.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Bismarck State College’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 4, Valuing People.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The identification of specific credentials, skills and values required for new hires is a collaborative process with the Human Resources (HR) office working closely with all stakeholders in the departments and divisions in the development of the job description. The HR office also follows the North Dakota University System policies and procedures, as well as any research necessary from recent publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P1b</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>BSC does not articulate whether processes to identify and update credentials, skills, and values for current employees exist. Such processes could ensure relevancy of job descriptions for all human resources and adapt for emerging skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A fairly rigorous two-step process is used to ensure that new employees possess the credentials, skills and values. This is accomplished by HR screening for minimum qualifications prior to submitting to the departments or divisions for the second screening. An interview committee is established to select the top candidates, and, after reference checks, selects the best candidate for a six month probationary period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P3</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Recruitment occurs both internally and externally through advertisements in local, state, regional and national newspapers and publications as well as online recruiting. Retention of valued employees occurs through an excellent benefit package, as well as recognition and financial awards through the Faculty and Staff Awards for Excellence that annually recognizes exemplary employees. The Bismarck State College Foundation also provides other benefits such as tuition scholarship to spouses, partners, and or children of employees and the opportunity to enroll in BSC or other NDUS college classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4P4a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>New faculty are invited to several orientation activities: 1) a formal orientation with human resources, 2) informal lunch with the President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and executive council, 3) assignment of a mentor, and 4) attendance at a series of Faculty Development Workshops during the first year.

4P4b O BSC does not articulate whether orientation processes include part-time in addition to full-time employees. Part-time faculty and staff can supplement an institution’s human resources and enhance the ability of the institution to enhance and expand its capabilities. If BSC employs part-time staff, an orientation program can promote loyalty as well as stakeholder satisfaction.

4P5 O A process for internal management and leadership training could assist the college in planning for changes in personnel to allow BSC to “promote from within.”

4P6 S The Operations Council (OC) has responsibility for day-to-day decision making within the College’s flattened organizational structure. Continuous quality improvement facilitators and cross-functional teams are used during project planning and implementation. This movement is designed for more voice and empowerment. Employees are surveyed for their opinions on issues, focus groups are held and all committees provide employees a venue for voice and action. Use of surveys and other processes assist BSC in gauging the satisfaction of employees with their workplace.

4P7 S Training and development on college policies that emphasize ethical practices and expectations of employees is provided. Performance appraisals assess ethical behavior. Faculty training on academic ethics is also presented annually.

4P8a S Employee training needs are identified through multiple avenues such as performance appraisals, surveys, new College initiatives, technology changes, strategic planning, and budgeting. These venues provide opportunities applicable to individual as well as organizational needs.

4P8b O Even though the College seeks training needs, the portfolio does not describe the systematic decision-making process used to ensure that such training aligns with instructional and non-instructional programs and
services. For instance, emphasis on innovation resulted in innovation training being made available for employees, but was this identified as a need? It is suggested that the College collect data for identified staff and faculty needs.

4P9a  S  Training and development needs are provided for the entire faculty through in-service days as well as numerous opportunities through HR staff, Staff Senate or individual departments. On an individual basis, memberships to professional organizations are paid by the College, publication subscriptions are provided and faculty and staff are able to participate in conferences, seminars and workshops both in and out of state. Most critical is the expectation in the evaluation that all employees are expected to keep up-to-date and knowledgeable in their fields.

4P9b  O  While there seem to many opportunities at BSC for faculty and staff to avail themselves of training and development, the college does not seem to have a strategic and integrative process that promotes and encourages training and development that make these areas part of a larger personnel plan and strategic for the college.

4P9c  O  The College might consider developing a process that allows conference and workshop attendees opportunities to share relevant knowledge and information with peers. This reinforces training and can engage others in professional development activities.

4P10  S  BSC uses a comprehensive three-part annual evaluation process for benefitted employees framed by a self-evaluation that identifies major accomplishments, sets new goals, and suggests professional improvement targets. Full-time faculty evaluations involve an evaluator (peer, department chair or dean), students, and a self-evaluation. Evaluation instruments are reviewed every three years or as needed. Clients report a 99% satisfaction rating for workforce training activities.

4P11a  S  BSC offers a number of recognition activities including achievement awards, service awards, as well as You Make a Difference awards to deserving employees.
The Portfolio does not articulate how these awards align with the College’s objectives or whether a process for faculty promotions is in place. Also, BSC does not describe its compensation and benefits system, a key process within this category. Such processes impact employee retention and continuous institutional improvement.

Key issues related to motivation of employees occur informally from day-to-day conversations and department meetings to more formal methods such as the Campus Quality Survey to assess level of employee satisfaction, and the HERI faculty survey to inform satisfaction, workload and attitude.

It is unclear what process is in place to deal with the data generated in 4P12.

Multiple systems are in place to provide for and evaluate employee satisfaction, health, safety and well-being. Employee satisfaction is measured through the Campus Quality Survey, Health and well-being is demonstrated by numerous programs that are available, while BSC and NDUS have taken multiple measures to ensure the safety and security for students, visitors and employees.

BSC participates in The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey to collect satisfaction feedback on nine areas relevant to faculty. BSC also collects employee satisfaction data from the Campus Quality Survey. Specific areas are noted in 4R4.

Performance results on the Campus Quality Survey rose from 78% to 88% from 2006 to 2008 in the area of satisfied, while the neutral and not satisfied results decreased. The results of the HERI survey indicated that 79% of BSC faculty would still want to teach at BSC if they were to begin their teaching career again. From 2007-2009, 35 family scholarships were provided to family members of employees and 71 BSC employees took a class through the Business Partners.

The Campus Quality Survey points at two areas where BSC has an opportunity to improve. Employees perceive that outstanding job
performance is not rewarded adequately. Also the processes for selecting, orienting, training, empowering, and recognizing employees are not as carefully planned as they could be.

4R3  OO Enrollment growth and growth in numbers of employees may or may not be tied to productivity and efficiency of an organization. Information provided in this category does not match indicate how productivity and efficiency relate institution’s goals and objectives.

4R4  S Employees rate BSC higher compared to NDUS colleges and the national norm for two-year colleges in all eight key quality categories.

4I1  S BSC has a recently developed Recruitment and Retention Management plan to recruit and retain good employees. This plan includes increasing salaries, managing workloads and increasing employee recognition. A new project the Big “I” WE project is a starting point of transforming the entire campus to be in alignment with other strategies taking place to embed innovation as part of the culture.

4I2  S A new President and new strategies are in place from the flat campus concept, to the Operations Council to Office of Innovation. Specific targets have been set for Valuing People through the Recruitment and Retention Plan, Spinning spaces-smiling Faces project and increasing satisfaction in the area of employee training and recognition.

AQIP Category 5: Leading And Communicating

Leading And Communicating addresses how your institution’s leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction setting, future opportunity seeking, decision making, use of data, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.
Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Bismarck State College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:

**Item Critical Characteristic**

**O3c** The large and varied list of stakeholders served by Bismarck State College creates a significant challenge and a very complex environment for the College to serve all of its audiences and to meet their expectations; especially, when these expectations are occasionally in conflict with one another.

**O5a** The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, in collaboration with its stakeholders, identified the following six cornerstones of the university system. Bismarck State College has also linked and aligned its college mission statement, objectives, and strategies to these cornerstones: (1) economic development; (2) educational excellence; (3) having a flexible and responsive system; (4) having an accessible system; (5) funding and research; and (6) sustaining the vision.

**O5b** Bismarck State College is organized into the following four main divisions: (1) academic affairs; (2) college advancement and BSC Foundation; (3) student affairs and operations; and (4) energy technology programs.

**O9** Bismarck State College seeks to increase a number of collaborative partnerships that will focus upon (1) delivering learning opportunities; (2) streamlining educational transitions; (3) advancing economic development; (4) ensuring educational quality; and (5) engaging the community.

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

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| 5P1a | S   | Bismarck State College’s mission and values must operate within the boundaries of the mission and values set by the NDSU; and as such, the campus leaders define the mission and vision for the college. While BSC has substantial freedom to determine its own course within the NDUS,
BSC must work, as part of the system, for what is best for post-secondary education in North Dakota.

5P1b S College leadership defines its unique mission and values as part of the strategic planning process and it seeks annual input and approval from employees.

5P1c O It appears that BSC’s mission and values are defined in a top-down manner. While acknowledging that BSC must align its mission and values with the larger NDSU system, incorporating other stakeholders, such as students, alumni, staff, and faculty; with determining the mission and values, may create larger buy-in from a larger number of BSC’s constituency.

5P2a S The strategic planning process provides direction for the leaders to become aligned with the core mission of the college. BSC also aligns its strategies and initiatives with the nine AQIP categories and college-defined objectives. Planning activities are linked to NDUS. Institutional directions are determined through a multi-step process that requires broad campus involvement.

5P2b S While the Executive Council (college leadership) has responsibility for strategic planning, the cross-divisional Operations Council supervises related activities.

5P3a S BSC solicits input from multiple student and stakeholder groups through surveys, technical advisory committees, the Faculty Senate, and the student body governing board. These initiatives provide insight that aid in establishing the future direction of the institution.

5P3b O BSC seems to set its institutional directions before identifying stakeholder needs. Identifying stakeholder needs before setting institutional direction may help the college to more strategically align institutional direction with stakeholder needs.

5P4a S BSC fosters collaborative partnerships, monitors internal and external environments, and uses qualitative and quantitative data to identify
student and stakeholder needs. All campus leaders and employees seek future opportunities to enhance student learning. BSC has had a number of recent successes with recognizing future trends.

5P4b S BSC identified the need for improved student advising, the opportunity to recruit military students, and the need to recruit and retain quality employees through these processes.

5P5a S Bismarck State College utilizes a combination of a traditional organizational structure to facilitate budgetary and personnel issues. The institution developed an innovative operational structure to move the day-to-day decision making to employees in a flattened organization. The Operational Council serves as a central cross-functional team and oversees the day-to-day operations. This makes the organization more efficient and less “silo” oriented.

5P5b O It is unclear how the blending of a traditional organizational structure and an innovative operational structure works in practice. BSC might consider developing institutional performance metrics to support decision making in relation to the use of cross-functional teams. The portfolio does not articulate whether a systematic process is in place to form teams and to establish team charters that guide the governance role of such groups.

5P6a S Figure 5.2 summarizes qualitative and quantitative data and information used by the respective organizational units as a basis for decision making. Such measures can also form the basis for evaluating institutional effectiveness.

5P6b O The College has noted that, while leaders use a number of sources of information for decision making, there is room for improvement and the plan for the web-based dashboard will certainly assist in this area. The move towards a uniform dashboard for the institution could improve efficiency and transparency and enhance data-driven decision making. This tool can also provide a historical as well as projected snapshot of data elements, generate trend-lines, and facilitate analysis for future direction.
Bismarck State College uses the Operations Council, several blogs, email, other electronic messages, and print media for communication channels.

BSC continues to seek improvements in communication across campus. Noting that the volume of information can occasionally impact its effectiveness, BSC might consider implementing additional management tools or developing a web-based library of electronic links or folders to store specific types of communications and reports.

College leadership included employee input and feedback during the development of BSC’s mission, vision, and goals; as well as, for the strategic and operational planning. Figure 5.4 presents multiple opportunities for employee, student, and stakeholder interaction. Leaders communicate the shared mission, vision, and values through a variety of ways to all stakeholders.

While the portfolio uses a table to illustrate the various methods of communicating a shared mission and values, BSC could continue to evaluate and upgrade its methods of communication. It is unclear whether a systematic process for improvement in “Leading and Communicating” is in place.

BSC encourages the development of new and established leaders through a number of formal and informal activities and strategies. This approach to training could assist the college in retaining qualified leaders and promoting from within the institution when opportunities arise.

The State Board of Higher Education has defined processes for hiring the President of North Dakota Colleges that are part of the NDUS. This process includes opportunities for significant representation of the campus in the process.

While the process for selecting the President, middle management, and department chairs is described, Bismarck State College does not appear to have a leadership succession plan. Such a plan could help the College bridge any gaps in leadership that may occur and ensure that the
institution maintains and preserves its mission, vision, values, and commitment to high performance.

5R1a  S  Bismarck State College utilizes various methods including nationally developed surveys and AQIP mini-conversation days to evaluate “Leading and Communicating.” These methods provide information about employee perception of leadership, effectiveness, and communication issues.

5R1b  O  Since BSC provides formal and informal options for employee leadership development, the College could collect feedback data regarding the effectiveness of these training methods. Analysis of this data would supplement survey responses.

5R2a  S  The Operations Council conducted surveys on campus issues related to recruitment and retention, cross functional duties, and communication. Results and corresponding planned improvements presented in the portfolio indicate that BSC is researching and implementing strategies to improve internal communications.

5R2b  O  Group involvement in activities such as think tank discussions can generate ideas and support for continuous institutional improvement.

5R2c  O  While the results from the Recruitment and Retention Survey are provided and Noel-Levitz and HERI surveys are discussed in 5R1, BSC does not report any results corresponding to “Leading and Communicating.” Such results would provide additional evidence relevant to the effectiveness of “Leading and Communicating” efforts.

5R3a  S  Results from the Campus Quality Survey reflect that BSC rates better than its NDUS colleagues and national two-year colleges in the “Leadership and Communication” area. The largest performance gap was regarding the question There are effective lines of communication between departments with a 1.447 disparity between how things should be and how they are. The national results for this question are 1.835 for two-year colleges.
Quality improvement or focus group teams could research ongoing issues as BSC pursues continued improvement in this category.

BSC realizes that it needs to improve its communication strategies. The BSC leadership focused on three initiatives to implement in this category: (1) ‘flatten’ the operational structure of campus decision making; (2) implement a BSC Blog; and (3) establish an Office of Innovation.

Since these improvements are relatively recent initiatives, the college has an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of each activity to ensure that processes employed in each initiative provide the desired improvement results. Such an analysis would also demonstrate that BSC has integrated a systematic, infrastructure that promotes quality improvements into its culture.

The realization of the Strategic Plan as a living document and the continual review of the plan illustrates how BSC’s culture recognizes that continual improvement only occurs by continual reflection. The selection of two campus-wide projects---flattened organization structure and employee recruitment and retention---illustrate that BSC supports a culture of “Leading and Communicating.”

BSC has a culture and leadership promoting: 1) focus on student learning, 2) innovation in the classroom, and 3) continuous quality improvement across campus.

AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

Supporting Institutional Operations addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines your institution’s processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.
Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Bismarck State College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:

**Item** | **Critical Characteristic**
--- | ---
O6b | A Bismarck State College AQIP Action Project objective resulted in the development of an advising center that is to: “Better serve students and to increase satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates through an improved Academic Advising process.”

O7b | Data collection, information gathering, and storage at Bismarck State College occurs at the institutional and departmental levels; which provides evidence of accountability to NDUS; which in turn provides Bismarck State College with feedback about its systems.

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

**Item** | **S/O** | **Comment**
--- | --- | ---
6P1a | O | The College does not describe a systematic and formal process of data collection; nor, the frequency of data collection; nor, the process for decision making and feedback. A systematic process can ensure that needs are prioritized and addressed during a dynamic era for education and allow for the evaluation of prior decisions.

6P1b | S | Identifying the needs of students, stakeholders, support staff, and administrators are accomplished by a variety of formal and informal methods.

6P2 | O | BSC does not have a deliberate or systematic process for data collection and analysis that identifies the administrative support service needs of its faculty, staff, and administrators. Before preparing a budget request regarding this, there should be a formal process that documents and illustrates the urgency of each need and an established evaluation process documenting the effectiveness of the decision making. At the current time, BSC does not present any clear description regarding what drives improvement.
6P3 O Review of the evaluation of the on-site visit of the North Dakota Division of Homeland Security evaluation data from its visit on-campus, can provide the initiatives and framework for improving the safety and security of the BSC stakeholders. There is no indication that BSC has utilized the data from the Homeland Security visit nor what components are utilized for this system to be effective.

6P4a S BSC identified the following areas as being in some stage of improvement: Orientation, registration, marketing plan, enrollment management plan, employee recruitment and retention, and response to data requests.

6P4b O The formation of a cross-functional workgroup could help BSC improve how it addresses requests for data and reports that will support decision making and that use timely, viable, and reliable data.

6P5 S Procedure and process manuals describe the information resources and the standardized ways for operating the college support services. Print and electronic media offer a diverse range of campus information to internal stakeholders. The portfolio stresses that a campus culture of innovation enhances an environment that supports employee involvement in decision making and related problem-solving. Established procedures allow employees to complete routine tasks and activities with greater ease, promoting a culture of innovation with respect to new conditions and situations.

6R1a S Multiple measures regarding the student, administration, and organization, support service processes that are collected and analyzed regularly as depicted in Figure 6.1

6R1b O While the College indicates that the measures listed in Figure 6.1 are given “regularly,” it appears there is no specific time to report these results. A timeline for these measures would enhance Figure 6.1.

6R2a O Even though the performance gap scores on the SSI are relatively low, performance results in several key support areas reflect a decline in satisfaction ratings during the two-year period. Academic advising, a
current AQIP Action Project, reflects that BSC recognizes and plans to address a vital student concern. Continued feedback can validate the success of strategies BSC employs to address this issue.

6R2b O While overall Bismarck’s results on the Student Satisfaction Survey indicate performance gaps between what students want, and what students believe, there are opportunities for improvement in these areas. The College has begun the process of analyzing the data and developing systems to improve the processes and perceptions, but further specific, systematic action plans would assist the College, particularly given the new flattened structure. BSC may want to more closely monitor results by administering the survey annually, and specifically communicating to students exactly what is available.

6R3a S SSI results in figure 6.17 reflect that students perceive that the College has improved the student center, campus facilities, and grounds maintenance. Even though some areas have higher gap scores between years 2006–2008, all scores presented are under 1.00 indicating generally strong student satisfaction.

6R3b S BSC presents Campus Quality Survey general results for administrative support service processes. The college has developed work teams focusing upon the areas with lower satisfaction scores such as marketing, communications, recruitment, and retention to assess relevant processes.

6R3c S BSC financial and compliance audits are conducted regularly and indicate that the college is fiscally sound and meeting regulatory requirements.

6R4 S Anecdotal input, surveys, usage data, and other performance indicators provide a basis for decision making. Strategic planning, department meetings, cross-disciplinary teams, and committees address results and provide strategies for improvement.

6P5a S Procedure manual and business process manuals are used to ensure consistency of services.
Results from the SSI and CCSSE demonstrate that, in general, BCS students rate student support services higher than their peers at NDUS two-year and other United States community colleges. The College is to be commended for its efforts in this arena. Its challenge is to continue improvement in providing excellent services.

Bismarck State College is actively improving processes for support services. By the recent AQIP Action projects, by reviewing data from surveys, and other sources, the college is planning for improvement.

Continuous quality improvement seems inherent in BSC’s current culture. The reorganization of its operational structure as well as employee involvement in AQIP and campus conversations promotes engagement in “Supporting Organizational Operations” and the improvement of concomitant processes.

**AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS**

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O5b</td>
<td>Bismarck State College is organized into the following four main divisions: (1) academic affairs; (2), college advancement and BSC Foundation; (3) student affairs and operations; and (4) energy technology programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O7a  Despite making progress regarding the collection of its data, Bismarck State College indicated that there is still a need to improve (1) the utilization of their data, (2) centralizing their data collection and utilization process, (3) improving their data reporting process; and, (4) involving more human resources with their data collection and utilization process.

O7b  Data collection, information gathering, and storage at Bismarck State College occurs at the institutional and departmental levels, which provides evidence of accountability to NDUS; which in turn provides Bismarck State College with feedback about its systems.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7P1a</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>BSC employs both centralized and decentralized data collection, storage, and dissemination. The portfolio indicates that data often remain at its “source.” The creation of an electronic storage system with folders for all data and reporting documents could allow for better transparency and appropriate sharing with internal and external stakeholders. Continued improvement regarding analysis, sharing, and explaining of the collected data would increase the meaningfulness and validity of data sharing with stakeholders. Data about student learning is shared with the Assessment Committee, but it is not clear how the process of sharing allows the data to be acted upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P1b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>BSC collects and manages data that directly relates to its mission, goals, and strategic plan. Using data that speaks to those three facets of the college could enable BSC to make strategic decisions based upon that data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7P2a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>BSC determines if objectives were met or accomplished by using data and other information to complete an annual review of campus objectives. Data is found through campus reporting, state, federal, and stakeholder resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The creation and implementation of an institutional scorecard with appropriate performance indicators and metrics could assist the college’s efforts to create and manage a systematic process. Institutional scorecards can also provide status updates and benchmarks regarding its effectiveness measures to enhance decision making.

The necessary data for reports is obtained from the NDUS data storage systems along with information from various accrediting bodies and professional organizations. The college website is widely used to distribute information.

While the decentralized process addresses individual department and unit needs, this model may allow for inefficiency and duplication of efforts. BSC might consider the creation of a cross-functional team to assess data collection, analysis, and communication of key data points and processes. A systematic effort can identify gaps and provide feedback for data collection, analysis, and decision making to improve institutional efficiency.

It is unclear whether data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes are systematic. While multiple groups are empowered to collect and analyze pertinent information and make decisions, the creation of an institutional, systematic, integrated process with feedback loops can improve the “Measuring Effectiveness” capabilities of BSC and minimize the silo approach. The efficiency of the data collection and analysis process is not documented.

The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, with the assistance of the institutional researcher, analyzes and summarizes the majority of institutional data. This information is shared with all appropriate areas. Comparisons of national averages are discussed and shared with all employees in the areas that are affected.

Benchmarking addresses a number of areas on a continuous basis with two-year colleges within the NDUS and on nationally normed tests.
required for certification and licensure. These results are compared to nationally normed data.

7P5b O Participation in the National Community College Benchmarking Project as well as the Kansas Study can provide additional comparative data analysis and assist with the creation of institutional benchmarks. The validity and usefulness of the data for college improvement is not clear. It is not documented regarding how or if BSC selects and uses data from outside the higher education community.

7P6 S BSC aligns the department and the unit analysis of data and information through its budgeting process. The Campus Alignment Report summarizing progress results, documents institutional effectiveness measures, and related efforts to the NDUS.

7P7a S The Information Technology (IT) department at BSC has responsibility for compliance with data security and IT system installation, maintenance, and upgrades as well as policies and procedures. Data transmitted to PeopleSoft hosted at the NDUS computer center is encrypted and the data is stored behind a firewall. Computer access is controlled with passwords. The Network Access Controller ensures that computers accessing the network are protected against computer viruses.

7P7b O The portfolio does not address how BSC ensures the timeliness, accuracy, and reliability of the data that is captured and used.

7R1a S In general, student and employee information and knowledge management performance data measures are determined by PeopleSoft database used statewide. The IT department oversees the operation of campus software and hardware performance, and STAGEnet information is monitored by the state’s IT department. This approach provides both internal and external oversight.

7R1b O While BSC has a number of processes in place concerning the security of the data and the use of the data, there does not appear to be any measures of the performance and effectiveness of the systems for information and knowledge management. Also, the effectiveness of the
PeopleSoft program is not clear. Examples of what data is gathered and analyzed would be helpful.

7R2a S Satisfaction feedback and gap scores analyzed from the Campus Quality Survey indicate that employees feel that information and technology needs at BSC are generally being met. Employees recognize the use of comparative data and quality improvement efforts. In six of the eight categories from the Campus Quality Survey concerning “Measurement and Analysis,” BSC had gap scores less than 1. Only two items (This institution has “user-friendly” computer systems to assist employees and students.” and “This institution analyzes all relevant data before making decisions.”) have a performance gap over 1.000.

7R2b O BSC has identified areas of improvement for college information and technology systems. Areas with gap scores greater than 1.00 suggest that BSC could review and assess current computer systems to determine challenges for users or provide additional computer systems training. Concerns regarding data analysis for decision making also merit further study, as data-driven decision making is the genesis of continuous improvement.

7R3a S As the need for data and reporting requirements increase, BSC has responded by increasing staff positions to access the data from the university data management system. The data provided indicates that BSC scored well in those processes for “Measuring Effectiveness” tracked on the Campus Quality Survey and better than peers within the NDUS system. Trend line information tracking changes in scores over time could also document improvement efforts.

7R3b O While BSC has a gap score below 1 in comparison with other North Dakota public institutions, there is no data concerning national comparisons with either community colleges or higher education institutions in general. The Kansas Survey or the National Community College Benchmarking project could provide useful information for the decision makers at BSC.
BSC states that it is adding new benchmarks to measure success. The inclusion of sample benchmarks in the portfolio could provide further evidence that the college has integrated continuous improvement targets in its data-driven decision making.

Bismarck State College realizes that the amount of information being requested from higher education institutions is increasing. The College is trying to respond appropriately by centralizing data collection and the dispersing of the information. This centralization should give BSC the structure and processes to support data analysis and dispersion.

BSC recognizes the need to develop more effective means of collecting data and analyzing it to enhance campus functions and accountability. Goals to improve processes to minimize duplication of surveys, centralize data collection and storage, and develop transparent strategies to share information and decision making can enhance its self-understanding. Continuing to address and improve data collecting and analysis will provide the foundation for campus-wide improvements.

BSC recognizes that it is just beginning to establish systematic processes for measuring effectiveness. Centralizing data collection and storage, creating a dashboard system, and expanding the use of TracDat are all examples of BSC’s efforts to improve performance in “Measuring Effectiveness.”

BSC also identifies the need to benchmark data that will assist the College in comparing itself with peers within the state and throughout the nation. BSC may find participation in the National Community College Benchmark Project will provide additional benchmarking information.

**AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement**

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Critical Characteristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O8a</td>
<td>An inequitable state funding formula for higher education translates into a smaller share of state funding for Bismarck State College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O8b</td>
<td>Bismarck State College is faced with many challenges including: (1) the demographics within a sparsely populated state; declining enrollment regarding traditional college-aged students; (3) recruitment of qualified and expert staff; and (4) funding and competition for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O8c</td>
<td>A newly developed “enrollment management plan” identifies new markets and strategies that must be employed for the continued growth of the college’s enrollment; or, in order to at least maintain the college’s current enrollment. This plan includes focusing upon: (1) adult workers; (2) armed services personnel (3) dual credit enrolled high school students; and (4) prior learning options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>S/O</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8P1a</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Bismarck State College’s key planning process is the strategic planning process which, in 2007, began with a two-day retreat of administrators and managers. They developed a new vision, mission, and innovation statements, core trends, campus values, and overarching goals. The draft was then submitted to the campus-at-large. The strategic planning process is reviewed annually and updated to ensure progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8P1b</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>BSC links annual planning to goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan through resource planning, while campus facility’s master</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
planning is completed in conjunction with the biennial legislative cycle. Planning processes appear to be predicated upon data, stakeholder input, and progress toward stated objectives.

8P1c O While the resource planning and campus facilities master planning processes are pragmatic and cyclical, an opportunity exists to integrate the Strategic Plan, resource planning, and facilities master plan into one document as part of the College’s long-and-short-term planning processes. An integrated planning process model can enhance an institution’s continual improvement journey.

8P2a S Alignment with the NDUS drives the development of long-and-short-term objectives. While College leadership identifies campus objectives that align with one of the major goals of the college, internal stakeholders play a role in selecting final objectives through online voting. Employees are also involved in the process to submit strategies that will help meet campus objectives.

8P2b S The Office of Innovation sponsored the Wild Endeavors project as an avenue for submitting innovative ideas for campus improvement. Examples of projects approved through this process include: Crime-Solvers, Learning Unlimited, and Quality Matters.

8P3a-8P4a O It is unclear how action plans become part of the longer-term strategic planning process and whether there is a strategic coordination of these short term plans. This linkage could demonstrate an integrated planning process.

8P3b S Each short term strategy is assigned a "champion" who, with a cross-functional team, develops the action plan to implement each strategy. This system provides the opportunity for multiple levels of development across campus departments.

8P4b S BSC employs a top-down model in which the administration and mid-management develop the strategic plan “draft.” It is then communicated throughout the entire campus, and feedback is sought through an all-
campus meeting. This allows participation and buy-in by different stakeholders.

8P5a  S  BSC initiatives link to the AQIP categories and NDUS planning and reporting initiatives. Both of these entities require identification of objectives, measures, action plans, timelines, and outcomes. Reporting results enables BSC to monitor progress regarding projects and priorities.

8P5b  O  There is no clear indication of the NDSU measures or internal measures for progress regarding organizational strategies or action plans. Setting and communicating these measures may give the college better insight into its performance in “Planning Continuous Improvement.”

8P6  S  Bismarck State College ensures that goals and objectives are strongly linked to the current resources through a formalized, continuous improvement process that includes budget requests, staffing, equipment, and departmental needs. Each request for resources must be linked to NDSU Cornerstones and to AQIP categories as well as outcomes. This well-defined process provides the opportunity to judge initiatives and base decisions upon relevant information.

8P7  O  BSC recognizes that it does have a formal process for assessing risk. Informally, management team members monitor and evaluate conditions in their departments. For example, the following have been identified as potential risk factors for the college: 1) sustaining enrollment given a declining high school population, 2) uncertainty of funding sources, and 3) safety and security of employees and students in an educational setting. Developing a process to actively assess and limit risk to the college, or developing a financial feasibility study process for new initiatives, can provide a platform for making informed decisions at the organizational level instead of reacting to occurring risks at the departmental level.

8P8a  S  As recognized in Categories 4 and 5, BSC is committed to cultivating future college leaders and enhancing the skills of all employees. The college addressed applicable training needs in innovation and continuous quality improvement techniques, while professional development avenues
also provide opportunities for knowledge and skill enhancement within specific disciplines.

8P8b O As Bismarck State College continues to expand its human resources, it can ensure the integration of new hires into its culture by systematically offering educational opportunities and programs in CQI and innovation. This ensures and reinforces employee understanding of quality improvement tools and resources and plays a key role in continually improving all aspects of BSC.

8R1a S Bismarck State College does possess some qualitative data for measuring effectiveness of planning processes and systems. BSC is utilizing one tool with four categories, the Campus Quality Survey, to evaluate its planning process.

8R1b O Bismarck State College recognizes that a formal plan to measure the effectiveness of the planning process is not fully developed. An opportunity exists to formalize the process to gather data about effectiveness as well as perception data. Such performance measures can complement informal methods currently employed. Due to the dynamic environment in education legislative priorities in an uncertain economy, formal metrics can ensure an objective assessment of each institutional process.

8R2a S Bismarck State College provides evidence of performance results for accomplishing organizational strategies described for each of the objectives of the strategic plan. Objectives include performance targets for the next 1-3 years.

8R2b O BSC has the opportunity to develop quantitative data or more formal metrics for certain facets of its strategic plan to give a more robust picture of the college’s performance. For example, in Objective 3 (increasing retention of employees), measures of benchmarks and data indicating BSC’s performance could illustrate the college’s improvement or opportunity to improve.
8R3a  S  Bismarck has set projections and improvement targets for performance based upon the 2007-2009 Strategic Plan. The college is realistic in its planning and recognizes the constraints of time and resources in achieving earlier objectives. Objectives not completed will be reviewed and likely incorporated in the 2009-2011 strategic plan.

8R3  O  BSC’s projections are extremely quantitative. Exploring national benchmarks or developing internal benchmarks and targets may assist the college with developing meaningful data for this category.

8R4  S  Campus Quality Survey data provides evidence that “Planning Continuous Improvement” processes at BSC rate very favorably when compared to other institutions of higher education. Staff at BSC rate the current strategic planning and quality improvement processes better than their peers at respective NDUS two-year colleges.

8R5a  S  Bismarck State College generated excitement and interest about continuous quality improvement on campus, after refocusing its efforts on CQI. Employee perception of “Planning Continuous Improvement” efforts improved as evidenced in figure 8.3.

8R5b  O  As BSC continues its new strategic and operational planning model, employee feedback can provide continued assessment of the effectiveness of these institutional planning processes and activities and enable the institution to gauge whether it is achieving its stated objectives.

8I1  S  BSC shifted its strategic planning model to a quicker, more effective process focused upon implementation of specific strategies to achieve goals and objectives. The college enacted a large number of processes that ultimately flow into its strategic planning process. This alignment of these processes can assist the college in planning for its long-term future and for improvement in this category.

8I2  S  New leadership at BSC is sending a consistent message that encourages innovation, transparency, and cross-divisional team collaboration. Changing the culture, as evidenced by leadership initiatives, to one of
continuous improvement based upon the data and the results, is truly a quality improvement initiative. Persistent focus over a sustained period of time will provide an indication of commitment to this vision.

AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

**Item** | **Critical Characteristic**
--- | ---
O7a | Despite making progress regarding the collection of its data, Bismarck State College indicated that there is still a need to improve (1) the utilization of data, (2) centralizing data collection and utilization processes, (3) improving data reporting processes; and, (4) involving more human resources with data collection and utilization processes.

O9 | Bismarck State College seeks to increase a number of collaborative partnerships that will focus upon (1) delivering learning opportunities; (2) streamlining educational transitions; (3) advancing economic development; (4) ensuring educational quality; and (5) engaging the community.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Bismarck State College’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

**Item** | **S/O** | **Comment**
--- | --- | ---
9P1a | S | BSC has a variety of relationships with organizations such as area high schools, a correction facility, and military services that provide students
for the college. BSC is also a cooperating member of the Missouri River
Education Cooperative enabling BSC to gain insight into the concerns of
member schools and what services and opportunities they offer for
students entering college.

9P1b  S  BSC offers dual credit and early entry for high school juniors and seniors
who may benefit getting a head start on college. Additionally, through
interactive video sites (the Great Western Network), BSC offers 20-25
classes each year to high schools via the GWN. These relationships allow
BSC to fulfill its mission as a community college and that it can continue
to grow.

9P1c  O  While BSC aligns the creation and prioritization of relationships with
institutional objectives, the development of criteria and a scoring matrix
could provide a systematic model for partnership selection, prioritization,
and evaluation to facilitate decision making.

9P2a  S  The College builds relationships with educational receiving institutions as
well as employers through its NDUS activities; as well as, via the
statewide discipline groups. Articulation agreements and collaborative
meetings facilitate relationships with educational partners. Advisory
committees and business and industry groups establish linkages with
potential employers. Also, transfer students are benefiting from a
common-course numbering and the general education transfer
agreements.

9P2b  O  While BSC aligns the creation and prioritization of relationships with
institutional objectives, the development of criteria and a scoring matrix
could provide a systematic model for partnership selection, prioritization,
and evaluation to facilitate decision making.

9P3a  S  BSC was an early adopter of online education and partners with eCollege
to deliver a full range of support and services to online students.

9P3b  S  BSC indicates that traditional student support services including food
service, custodial support, bookstore, etc. are provided by the college.
The online educational provider, eCollege, provides requisite professional services and help desk assistance.

9P4a  S  The Foundation and Office of Resource Development were instrumental in working with businesses to provide equipment and materials for the new mechanical maintenance program when it was developed.

9P4b  S  Department or unit managers are empowered to seek and facilitate relationships with organizations that can provide funding, equipment, and direct support to institutional initiatives. The college also abides by North Dakota law in bidding, leasing, and other contractual arrangements.

9P5a  SS  BSC, in partnership with 16 institutions in higher education, developed a consortium (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education-Internet Course Exchange (WICHE-ICE) to facilitate sharing distance-delivered courses among institutions.

9P5b  S  BSC identifies the various external agencies it maintains relationships with in order to provide quality programs that meet industry standards. See Figure 9.1.

9P5c  S  The College formulates and prioritizes relationships that align with its mission and strategic plan. Examples include governing bodies, institutional and program accreditation agencies, as well as educational consortia partners, in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education-Internet Course Exchange (WICHE-ICE).

9P5d  S  BSC appears to play an integral role with various organizations in the region as well as the city of Bismarck, N D. The college is involved with community and civic organizations such as the United Way Campaign and Building Together, which provide integral support and linkages with its service area.

9P6a  S  Informal processes such as personal contact, employer surveys, and a review of partnership agreements are techniques that BSC employs to ensure the value and relevancy of its partnerships.
9P6b  O  The College might consider the development of a partnership satisfaction survey or similar tool to obtain feedback concerning the effectiveness of its relationships with various partners. This could ensure the feedback loop and suggest areas for improvement within the CQI philosophy.

9P7  S  There seems to be an effort to cultivate relationships among departments and units through cross-functional teams at BSC. Governance groups and department meetings provide an avenue for building internal relationships. Informal and formal processes, training, projects, and communication channels complement these efforts.

9R1  S  BSC identifies qualitative and quantitative measures to assess its relationship building productivity. Survey feedback, enrollment, grant funding, and number of partnership agreements are some metrics that the institution collects and analyzes.

9R2a  S  BSC does have a variety of results that show success in building collaborative relationships. Highlights of BSC collaborative endeavors include the following: 18 affiliation agreements, 16 collaborative agreements, 31 clinical agreements, and 14 transfer/articulation agreements; 755 high school students enrolled in dual credit courses, and 153 students enrolled in early entry courses; approximately $360,000 in donations was received for equipment supplies, and welding stations for the mechanical maintenance program; an increase from 425 to 500 students on campus each day in the CTE programs.

9R2b  S  The College provides data and information relevant to most of the measures identified in 9R1. Examples of educational partnerships are noted in figure 9.2.

9R3a  O  While BSC presently does not have comparative information, the NDUS could benefit from defining data elements relevant to organizational partnerships and educational collaboration in order to provide a foundation for systems improvement and decision making.

9R3b  O  BSC might investigate “best practices” for community colleges in this category through HLC AQIP institutions either through their Action
Projects or direct contact. This knowledge may provide the college with indicators of strengths and weaknesses and ideas for new ways to measure effectiveness in this category.

9I1a  S  In a state with a small population, BSC has long recognized the need to partner with others to meet its goals and to be successful.

9I1b  S  BSC has identified an opportunity to partner with military students in the region as a potential improvement area. This market niche can enhance the educational experience for non-military students as well as provide new learning opportunities in related discipline areas.

9I2a  O  While the College has cultivated new relationships, the 9P and 9R categories have not sufficiently demonstrated that this category has become part of the strategic or budgetary planning process.

9I2b  S  As noted in other responses, the current organizational structure and culture of innovation empower employees to improve and expand educational, business, and industry partnerships. With the flattening of the organizational structure, employees are well poised to scan and recognize opportunities for partnerships. Target areas presently include dual enrollments, expanded program accreditation, military educational partnerships, and additional business/industry initiatives.