

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

November 9, 2004



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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INTRODUCTION

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 criterion, significant issues for your institution, and an Appraisal Rubric score for each criterion. These are presented in four sections of the Feedback Report: *Critical Characteristics Analysis*, *Criteria Feedback*, *Strategic Issues Analysis* and the *Appraisal Summary*. These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating performance, surfacing critical issues, and assessing institutional performance.

Each member of the Systems Appraisal Team devoted many hours to analyzing your *Systems Portfolio*, first individually and then via a consensus process designed to ensure that all feedback you receive is the agreed-upon conclusion of an entire group of intelligent, trained peers. There are no one-person opinions, no idiosyncratic, subjective opinions. Most of the team's members have had executive responsibilities in colleges and universities, but the team also included at least one person whose experience lies outside of higher education, and who could help the team maintain perspective on the work higher educators still have to do to bring quality principles into all areas of the Academy. All team members are committed to promoting continuous quality improvement in higher education and have received training in quality processes. Many team members have also had experience with Baldrige-type quality award programs. We know that you and your colleagues will find the astuteness of their perceptions, as embodied in this report, useful in your commitment for continuous quality learning.

Good as the team was, however, it is important to remember that they 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, in fact, 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 it was unsure about an area, we urged the team 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.

Critical Characteristics: The Organizational Overview of your *Portfolio* shapes the team's understanding of your institution's distinct character. 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 criterion are identified in the Report.

Criteria Feedback: The Report's feedback on each of AQIP's nine criteria 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 criterion, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report. At the end of the list of strengths and opportunities for each criterion is the team's consensus assessment of the institution's stage of development on that particular criterion. This section consists of a series of statements 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 criterion covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one criterion to another.

Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis: Strategic issues are those most closely related to your institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission and quality improvement goals. The Systems Appraisal Team identified these issues throughout the appraisal process. These issues provide a framework for improving processes and systems and serve as an "executive summary" of key findings and recommendations. Accreditation issues are those that relate directly to your organization's evidence for Commission's five Criteria for Accreditation and their Core Components. The Systems Appraisal Team identified these accreditation issues through analysis of your *Portfolio* and the *Accreditation Evidence Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* you prepared to accompany your *Portfolio*. The Team has identified these issues as either an (a) evidentiary issue, meaning that additional evidence is needed or the evidence is unclear, or as an (b) accreditation issue, meaning that it must to be addressed prior to your *Quality Check up* and your *Reaffirmation Review*.

Appraisal Summary: The compilation of the nine rubrics that capture the team's appraisal of the organization's Portfolio description of each of the nine AQIP criteria. The summary indicates the team's consensus on the developmental maturity of each criterion description.

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, if addressed, will yield greatest benefit. 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*. Rubrics should be used to understand where the opportunities for ongoing systems improvement are greatest, not as scores indicating success or failure. 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, in turn, can be incorporated into an updated *Systems Portfolio*, guaranteeing that future *Systems Appraisals* will reflect the progress an institution has made.

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 Western New Mexico University's identity, 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 to you, when you study *the Feedback Report*,

that the Systems Appraisal Team recognized and knew what makes Western New Mexico University distinctive. Should you find some characteristics that you think are critical and missing from this list, you may want to clarify and highlight these items when you revise your *Systems Portfolio* and other literature explaining your institution to the public.

O1 Distinctive Institutional Features

- O1A WNMU is a 110 year-old public, comprehensive university serving a sparsely populated 18,000 square-mile area in southwestern New Mexico (the only higher ed institution in the area).
- O1B WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- O1
- O1C WNMU's core values include preeminence of teaching and learning, "personal touch" with students, respect for people, integrity, and continuous improvement.
- O1D WNMU defines retention as a key issue in assessing institutional effectiveness.
- O1E WNMU's "first priority is to concentrate its scarce resources on programs that serve the priorities of the people of NM."
- O1F WNMU is given considerable latitude to "chart its own course from the legislatively mandated Commission of Higher Education (CHE). WNMU's governance structure starts with the governor, who appoints WNMU's Board of Regents, to WNMU's president, Executive Council and Cabinet.
- O1G WNMU is the only university in NM to receive New Mexico's highest award for continuous performance improvement.

O2 Scope of Offerings

- O2A WNMU's programs include 16 certificate and associate degrees, 38 baccalaureate majors, and 8 masters-level programs.
- O2B Pre-college literacy, training, and citizenship programs are offered through WNMU's Adult Education Services.
- O2C Over the last decade WNMU has established three off-campus learning centers.

O3 Student Base, Needs, Requirements

- O3A As an open enrollment institution, WNMU serves 5000 primarily non-traditional students (2000 in pre-university programs) with 42% Anglo and 44% Hispanic; 88% are NM residents; females comprise 57% of the SC campus and 78% of the non-SC students. The average age is 27 for undergrads and 40 for grads.
- O3B Teacher education remains at WNMU's core; 54% of Bachelor's and Master's degrees were in education (86% at the Master's level).
- O3C Meeting the needs of financially stressed/at-risk/underserved/culturally diverse students is critical to WNMU's success.
- O3D WNMU's recent substantial growth was primarily at the off-campus learning centers

O4 Collaborations

- O4A WNMU collaborates with school districts; colleges & universities; employers; community organizations; economic development entities; government agencies; alumni; suppliers, etc.
- O4B The scope of collaborations includes governance, support, credentialing, research, public service, education, financial, planning, community enrichment, employment, accountability, etc.

O5 Faculty and Staff Base

- O5A WNMU has 325 permanent employees (97 faculty and 31 administrators); 91% of faculty holds an appropriate terminal degree.
- O5B 14% of faculty, as well as 50% of the administration and staff are minority.
- O5C No bargaining unit exists at WNMU.

O6 Facilities, Equipment, and Technologies – Regulatory Environment

- O6A WNMU has four campuses. The SC campus is on 80 acres in a residential area. The three Learning Centers enjoy new facilities.
- O6B In the last 10 years \$31 M was invested in new construction and improvements on the SC campus.
- O6C Significant gains in WNMU's Technology Strategic Plan include Banner administrative software, portal software, network infrastructure, and network services to the three remote Learning Centers.
- O6D WNMU is regulated by state and federal laws (including auditing functions) and adheres to various accrediting standards.

07 Competitive Environment

- O7A NM's other two regional universities (both larger than WNMU) are not regarded as significant competitors due to NM's geographic size.
- O7B WNMU's main competition in Silver City, Deming, and Truth or Consequences comes from New Mexico State University and a community college in Las Cruces. In Gallup the competition comes from a community college and Northern Arizona U.
- O7C In-state tuition agreements with southern Arizona, El Paso, the Navaho Nation, and Colorado impact WNMU's competitive position.
- O7D The proliferation of distance education and other non-traditional educational delivery systems creates new competitors almost daily.
- O7E Record high unemployment and new training opportunities in the region impact enrollment and programmatic initiatives, requiring agility and flexibility on the part of WNMU.

08 Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

- O8A WNMU's SWOT analysis defines several areas of opportunity and vulnerability, especially as they relate to processes, funding, and institutional mission.
- O8B Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

CRITERIA FEEDBACK

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP criteria, selected *Critical Characteristics* are again highlighted, those the Systems Appraisal Team believed were critical keys to reviewing that particular AQIP criterion. The symbols used in these "strengths and opportunities" sections for each criterion 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 CRITERION 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 criterion 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 1, *Helping Students Learn*:

- 01B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- 01C. WNMU's core values include preeminence of teaching and learning, "personal touch" with students, respect for people, integrity, and continuous improvement.
- 01D. WNMU defines retention as a key issue in assessing institutional effectiveness.
- 02A. WNMU's programs include 16 certificate and associate degrees, 38 baccalaureate majors, and 8 masters-level programs.
- 03A. As an open enrollment institution, WNMU serves 5000 primarily non-traditional students (2000 in pre-university programs) with 42% Anglo and 44% Hispanic; 88% are NM residents; females comprise 57% of the SC campus and 78% of the non-SC students. The average age is 27 for undergrads and 40 for grads.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 1, *Helping Students Learn*.

- S 1C1. WNMU's common student learning objectives for all baccalaureate degrees include its four General Education program goals and nine General Education objectives (Figure 1C1.1). This ties the General Education Program to the more specific

learning objectives of the various undergraduate majors. Educational goals, including hire-ability, work ethic, and willingness to participate in community service provide a comprehensive framework from which to evaluate institutional effectiveness.

- O 1C1. Non-degree, continuing education, and recreational course learning objectives are instructor specific and may not be fully defined. They may also inconsistently reflect goals of life-long learning. A framework for understanding the needs of non-degree, continuing education and recreational students might provide better design options for those programs.
- S 1C2. The faculty (Curriculum and Instruction Committee) and the Office of Academic Affairs are responsible for ensuring that student learning goals and program development are guided by—and aligned with—the mission, as well as that assessment processes are in place. Example: Faculty have revised and realigned the COMPASS cut-off test scores based on testing feedback in the freshmen Student Success Seminar.
- S 1C4. The integration of appreciation for cultural diversity throughout the curriculum, including General Education, is evidenced by a number of multi-cultural and co-curricular activities, including special courses, field trips and special activities. These activities support the institution’s mission of building appreciation for diversity, tolerance, and cooperation.
- S 1C4. WNMU addresses individual differences in student learning rates and styles initially by proper placement based on testing and by offering a variety of learning centered processes. Figure 1C4.1 provides evidence of the improvement processes aimed at accommodating a variety of learning skills, as well as the skills necessary for living in a diverse world.
- S 1P2. Utilizing both students and faculty, WNMU has developed a fairly decentralized but agile process for developing and piloting new courses and programs, with approval based on evaluation of market viability, state needs, test markets, potential job placement, facilities and costs, and the integrity of the proposal.
- O 1P4. Although General Education learning objectives constitute the institution’s common student learning objectives and are communicated in a number of ways, they are not well understood by students. WNMU acknowledges that this is “an area where additional communication efforts are warranted.” The relationship of these objectives to those within the undergraduate degree programs makes this a key issue if students are to understand the link between General Education and their own learning objectives.

- S 1P6. WNMU determines and documents effective teaching and learning through a variety of direct and indirect methods. Examples include faculty performance evaluations, exit exams, capstone courses, student portfolios, licensure exams, graduation rates, and alumni feedback.
- O 1P7. It is unclear how delivery decisions balance student and institutional needs or how the course delivery system is effective and efficient. This issue is of particular importance at the institution's current stage of development, when it acknowledges: "additional effort is needed to build alternative course deliveries." It appears that more emphasis on electronic delivery needs could provide increased access for students and help WNMU become more competitive with other educational delivery organizations.
- O 1P10. Although WNMU has a wide-range of co-curricular activities, it acknowledges that the institution's co-curricular goals are less formalized and not yet well-linked to General Education program goals or other co-curricular learning objectives. It is not clear how many WNMU students living in the residence halls actually participate in co-curricular activities. Also, it is unclear how WNMU measures the impact of these programs.
- O 1R1. Although retention is stated as a core measure of institutional effectiveness, WNMU's reporting on retention does not appear to be adequate to address this complicated issue. It is unclear from interpretations of student achievement data how curriculum or instructional methodologies have impacted student achievement or retention.
- OO 1I2. Although some institutional and departmental performance projections (targets) have been articulated (Figure 1I2.1), it is unclear how these will be addressed. Discussions of department strategic plans and goals do not clearly define program goals and objectives (i.e. what students should know or be able to do at the end of their program) or define direct measures of student learning in relation to those goals. Continued institutionalization of a process for setting formal targets and measuring the results of student learning will aid continuous improvement and support of the WNMU Decision Cycle (Figure 5C1.2).

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *maturing*, characterized by:

Growing, emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place. Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most

areas. Recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance exist in several areas. Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly. Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is a record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, as the result of specific initiatives.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 2, *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives*:

- 01E. WNMU's "first priority is to concentrate its scarce resources on programs that serve the priorities of the people of NM."
- 02B. Pre-college literacy, training, and citizenship programs are offered through WNMU's Adult Education Services.
- 04A. WNMU collaborates with school districts; colleges & universities; employers; community organizations; economic development entities; government agencies; alumni; suppliers, etc.
- 07E. Record high unemployment and new training opportunities in the region impact enrollment and programmatic initiatives, requiring agility and flexibility on the part of WNMU.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 2, *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives*:

- O 2C1. Although scarce financial resources are identified as a challenge, there appears to be no evidence of goals for addressing this challenge.

- O 2C2. Figure 2C1.1 indicates how each of the other distinctive objectives relates to the mission or vision. However, there is no clear indication of how the University ensures alignment between the distinctive objectives, mission, and vision and, in particular, the values.
- S 2C3. Figure 2C3.1 provides examples of how seven of the other distinctive objectives have been linked to the WNMU's core goal of helping students learn.
- O 2P1-2P2. With an extensive number of internal and external stakeholders, it is unclear who is responsible for approval and implementation of the planning process in WNMU's decentralized planning model. Although faculty, staff, and students have opportunities to contribute ideas through participation in open forums, campus committees, and surveys, they do not appear to be actively engaged in the planning process. This may contribute to the problems of morale referred to elsewhere in the portfolio.
- O 2P3. WNMU's approach to determining faculty and staff needs does not appear to be systematic. A systematic approach that identifies, incorporates, and integrates the needs could ensure that stakeholder needs are incorporated into the WNMU decision-making cycle.
- S 2P5. As summarized in Figure 2P5.1, WNMU regularly collects and analyzes multiple measures of accomplishing its other distinctive objectives. WNMU not only lists items that could be measured easily, but has identified ways to further improve its processes.
- O 2R1. Although several results areas (including expansion of grant and foundation funding, GED and ESL programs, and the Noel Levitz satisfaction survey) demonstrate improvement, areas such as scholarship and quality practices were not identified or do not easily link to objectives.
- O 2R2. Although WNMU has made efforts to collect and analyze comparative data from other NM public colleges and the CHE Survey of Peer Institutions, there is little comparative information presented in the portfolio. It is also not apparent whether or not WNMU has made any comparisons with organizations outside of higher education.
- O 2R3. The results offered do not tie directly to the claim that other distinctive objectives strengthen the institution by positively impacting enrollment and retention, as well as providing encouraging interaction between students, employees, and the community.

- O 211-212. It is unclear what specific improvement priorities WNMU is targeting and addressing and the extent to which targets are measured against goals and priorities set in the annual strategic planning process.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 3, *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*:

- 01B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- 03A. As an open enrollment institution, WNMU serves 5,000 primarily non-traditional students (2,000 in pre-university programs) with 42% Hispanic; 88% are NM residents; females

comprise 57% of the SC campus and 78% of the non-SC students. The average age is 27 for undergrads and 40 for grads.

03C. Meeting the needs of financially stressed/at-risk/underserved/culturally diverse students is critical to WNMU's success.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 3, *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*:

- S 3C1. WNMU defines and acknowledges important demographic information that describes its students.
- O 3C1. WNMU tracks students by segment, but the differing needs between these groups are unclear.
- O 3C2. WNMU affirms key stakeholder expectations, but does not differentiate between short-term and which are long-term. It is also unclear how these expectations were developed, as well as their relationship to the strategic plan.
- O 3C2. It is unclear whether or not WNMU has identified the requirements and expectations of students with special needs, at risk students, or transfer students, although these constituencies are named among the University's student market segments.
- O 3P1. Although WNMU reports multiple formal and informal processes to identify changing needs and satisfaction levels of students and other stakeholders, it recognizes its lack of effective integration of information from many sources to build a broader but unified perspective, such as for specific student populations.
- SS 3P2. WNMU describes multiple means of building and maintaining student and parent relationships, which begin before college and continue beyond graduation.
- O 3P2. Although there is much emphasis on student needs, retention, graduation, and satisfaction, there is little information on expectations for learning outcomes or faculty expectations for student learning.
- S 3P3. WNMU collects information and maintains relationships with external stakeholders through a variety of formal organizations, special programs and meetings. It takes pride in responding to input from these stakeholders.
- O 3P4. WNMU's analysis of needs by stakeholder group seems ad hoc and lacking a systematic process for gathering needs or integrating information.

- S 3P5. WNMU uses feedback from multiple sources to identify new student and stakeholder groups. The leadership determines if these groups should be addressed through educational offerings and services.
- O 3P6. WNMU lacks a means to communicate feedback from informal mechanisms, such as complaint cards, letters and phone calls. A mechanism to communicate improvements in policy/procedure/facilities or to provide feedback from complaints would provide an additional avenue for communication and relationship building.
- S 3P6. WNMU handles formal complaints such as grade appeals, admissions decisions, academic suspension, and sexual harassment in a consistent manner with review of the resolution by the President or the appropriate Vice President to ensure fairness and effectiveness.
- O 3P7. Employees as a stakeholder group are not included in this section, making it difficult to ascertain what measures of employee satisfaction the institution analyzes.
- S 3R1-3R5. Student evaluations of faculty and courses indicate a high level of student satisfaction with faculty performance in most areas.
- O 3R1-3R5. Based on the Noel-Levitz survey, when compared to national levels, there is room for improvement in some areas of student satisfaction, such as recruitment/financial aid, campus climate, and campus life.
- O 3R2/3R5. WNMU reports measures such as retention, enrollment growth, and class size, but does not clearly show the connection between understanding stakeholders' needs, constituents' views of performance, and these results.
- O 3R2/3R5. WNMU graduating senior satisfaction levels appear to be good relative to two peer state institutions. However, they are below those of the lead NM institution. This suggests a possible need to determine underlying causes for unfavorable responses related to student support areas, curriculum, and instruction.
- O 3R3/3R5. There is no indication that satisfaction is formally determined and measured with groups other than students and alumni.
- O 3R3. It is not apparent how WNMU has examined the underlying reasons for its decline in retention over the last three years, as well as for the fluctuation in rates from year to year.
- O 3R3/3R5. Little data is presented to compare WNMU's stakeholder needs and satisfaction with those of other institutions for benchmarking purposes.

- O 311/2. Stated targets for improvement do not directly address issues related to understanding students and other stakeholders' needs. Also, it is unclear how such issues are prioritized and how resources are allocated.
- O 311. Procedures for collecting some appropriate data were presented, but little in the way of process improvement was offered in the portfolio.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 4: *VALUING PEOPLE*

Valuing People explores your institution's commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators since the efforts of all 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 4, *Valuing People*:

- 01B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.

- 01C. WNMU's core values include preeminence of teaching and learning, "personal touch" with students, respect for people, integrity, and continuous improvement.
- 05A. WNMU has 325 permanent employees (97 faculty and 31 administrators); 91% of faculty holds an appropriate terminal degree.
- 05B. 14% of faculty, as well as 50% of the administration and staff are minority.
- 08B. Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 4, *Valuing People*:

- O 4C1. It is unclear how WNMU organizes the work environment, work activities, and job classifications to strengthen its focus on student learning and development.
- O 4C1-4C2. The portfolio utilizes statistics that describe WNMU employees, but does not clearly analyze employee diversity or satisfaction. For example: WNMU states the number of part-time employees, but does not address the organization's strategy in using them or how they represent diversity within the institution.
- OO 4C1. WNMU acknowledges "a specific human resources plan does not exist." Not having a university-wide HR plan could adversely affect the efficiency of the overall HR structure.
- O 4C2. Although WNMU cites expansion of off-campus learning centers and distance learning options, it does not indicate what key institutional and geographic factors determine how it addresses its work environment and job classification. Analysis of these factors can aid in the development of an effective human resource plan.
- O 4C2/4P4. WNMU uses about 400 work study student employees in virtually every unit of the institution, outnumbering all other employees. Student worker training is reported as sporadic. Analysis of the impact of this situation on institutional objectives would help WNMU's decision-making processes related to student workers.
- O 4C4. Although a number of orientation and training activities are offered to employees, there appears to be little follow-up to training initiatives. The process does not seem aligned with any strategic objective, and there is little information about the numbers participating or any analysis of the effectiveness of training.

- OO 4P1. It is unclear how University values and other mission-driven characteristics are included in the hiring process. A systematic approach to including these criteria can strengthen the enculturation process for new employees.
- O 4P2. Although WNMU states that it makes strong efforts to recruit staff internally to support career development and affirmative action goals, it is not apparent what these efforts are, beyond some professional development.
- S 4P3. Ensuring ethical practices for all employees is accomplished through a systematic approach. This includes readily available policies and processes in on-line and paper documents, as well as a zero tolerance policy when dealing with ethical/legal indiscretions and mandatory training for managers at all levels on legal/ethical issues.
- O 4P3. In the portfolio, WNMU does not address the correlation between training and behavior. It is unclear how high performance, innovation, and empowerment are considered and addressed.
- S 4P5. Multiple means of determining training needs, combined with a focus on strategic alignment and skill/knowledge development, provide a solid basis for training program development. WNMU provides good examples of linking unmet student needs (re: advising) to in-depth advisor and assessment training to respond to accreditation mandates.
- O 4P4-4P5. Although WNMU offers a wide range of training programs for faculty, there is no clear indication of supported faculty development in one's discipline, nor in the implementation of classroom effectiveness. Also, it is difficult to determine the level and nature of training and professional development activities of other employees.
- O 4P6. Based on results of the employee survey, continuous improvement relative to the usefulness of the evaluation of personnel self-improvement appears to be an issue. In the last employee survey one third of the faculty did not agree that performance reviews helped them understand strengths and needed improvements. The positive rating by less than one half the staff on the "timely and regular" question(s) indicates the evaluation process is not being effectively carried out. The new alternative portfolio approach initiated by faculty may improve faculty perceptions of the performance review process.
- O 4P7. Although there are some examples that show how the institution values people and supports learning and development with holiday periods, awards for teaching, and a tuition waiver program, it appears the WNMU compensation system is tied only indirectly to performance.

- S 4P10. WNMU values people by tracking their opinions and needs via the employee survey, responsive handling of the few grievances/complaints received, and evaluation of employee morale indicators such as employee retention and absenteeism.
- O 4R1. Feedback from the employee survey has allowed WNMU to revise some of their evaluation and orientation systems, as well as recommend a new ombudsperson. However, because these changes are so new and are in progress, it is unclear how results will be gathered and analyzed for continuous improvement.
- OO 4R1. Results from the 2002 WNMU Employee Survey (Figure 4R1.1) indicate improvement in most areas from the previous year. The institution's response to these results can have a significant impact on employee perceptions regarding how the University values people and their input. As the survey is further developed, benchmarking might help WNMU gain a better understanding of issues and performance.
- OO 4R4. WNMU acknowledges that it needs to pay additional attention to gathering appropriate and useful comparative workforce data related to valuing people. Establishing meaningful external benchmarks could help improve the results discussed in 4R1.
- OO 4I2. With regards to results for valuing people, there is no evidence of systems in place for setting and addressing targets or for communicating results and improvement priorities to appropriate stakeholders. The lack of these systems makes it difficult for the institution to implement data-driven improvements and effective responses to concerns in the area of valuing people.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 5, *Leading and Communicating*:

- 1B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- 1C. WNMU's core values include preeminence of teaching and learning, "personal touch" with students, respect for people, integrity, and continuous improvement.
- 1F. WNMU is given considerable latitude to "chart its own course from the legislatively mandated Commission of Higher Education (CHE). WNMU's governance structure starts with the governor, who appoints WNMU's Board of Regents, to WNMU's president, Executive Council and Cabinet.
- 8A. WNMU's SWOT analysis defines several areas of opportunity and vulnerability, especially as they relate to processes, funding, and institutional mission.
- 8B. Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 5, *Leading and Communicating*:

- S 5C1. WNMU's leadership system is built around a continuous improvement Decision Cycle (Figure 5C1.2), providing opportunities for discussion and input from all levels of stakeholders. The communication systems are formal and informal

- depending on the leadership style and situation. This appears to provide a strong, yet agile system for leadership.
- O 5C1. Within WNMU's Decision Cycle (Figure 5C1.2), it is difficult to determine the relationship of the Executive Council and Cabinet Membership with other leadership bodies, (cross-functional task forces, standing committees and department chairs).
 - S 5C2/5C3. Results from the Strategic Planning Forum Conversation (Figure 5C3.1) reflect faculty and staff expectations and values concerning ethics, social responsibility, and community service. These expectations are in line with the WNMU's vision and core values, as well as with state and institutional policies regarding ethical and legal issues.
 - O 5P2. Although WNMU has multiple learning opportunities (Figure 5P2.1), it is unclear how the leadership guides WNMU in seeking future opportunities and in building and sustaining a learning environment.
 - S 5P4. Figures 5P4.1 and 7C2.1 provide good reference points to other uses of data in the portfolio, as well as excellent illustrations of data used in decision making.
 - O 5P5. WNMU recognizes that communicating information to all campus constituencies remains an issue, especially regarding the upward flow of interactive communication. WNMU is addressing the issue by making it an AQIP Action Project.
 - O 5P8. WNMU lacks a formal leadership succession process at the executive level and a systematic process for ensuring that the mission, vision, and core values are passed on during leadership succession at the academic department level. The development of such processes would foster greater stability and continuity within the leadership structure and would help ensure that leaders understand and are prepared to address major issues within the context of the institutional culture.
 - OO 5R1. Although external agencies have noted some positive results, internal employee survey results (Figure 5R1.1) indicate that only about 20% of the employees surveyed agree that WNMU's top management provides a clear sense of direction, is truthful in their communications, and will respond to opportunities for improvement identified in the survey.
 - OO 5R2. WNMU appears to lack sufficient leadership data and related comparative data from other higher education institutions to draw meaningful conclusions as to their relative strengths or weaknesses. Without such data the University may lack

external perspectives for gauging the effectiveness of its results for leading and communicating processes and systems.

- O 511. Although WNMU communicates its current results and improvement priorities to the campus community, it appears that stakeholders outside the institution are not informed of developments and improvement priorities regarding measuring effectiveness. Because funding is a major concern, it may be beneficial to keep stakeholders informed who have the potential to invest in these efforts.
- O 511-512. WNMU presents a number of ways that departments are striving to improve their leadership and communication systems. However, it is unclear how development, growth, and maintenance of institutional leadership will be measured and evaluated. It is also not apparent how the institution plans to move from basic communication to interactive dialog.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 6, *Supporting Institutional Operations*:

O1B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.

O6A. WNMU has four campuses. The SC campus is on 80 acres in a residential area. The three Learning Centers enjoy new facilities.

O6B. In the last 10 years \$31 M was invested in new construction and improvements on the SC campus.

O8B. Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 6, *Supporting Institutional Operations*:

- S 6C1. In Figure 6C1.1 WNMU identifies 20 key student and administrative support service processes. This detailed overview provides a context for analysis of WNMU's key support service processes.
- O 6C2. Figures 6C1.1 and 6C2.1 display support services that help students learn and assist in the accomplishment of other distinctive objectives. However, is unclear how these support services reinforce processes and systems described in Criterion 1 and 2.
- S 6P1. Informal assessment of student needs is reinforced by reviewing feedback from various surveys, assessment results, and usage statistics.
- S 6P2. Identifying the support service needs of stakeholders and employees occurs through multiple measures that are used in budget deliberations involving several groups.
- S 6P3. Individual units are empowered to provide reliable, responsive services that tie to the institutional mission. Innovation often happens because staff members think out of the box and want to make things happen regardless of limited resources.
- O 6P4. It is unclear how key student and administrative support areas use information and results to improve services.

- O 6P5. Although Figure 6P5.1 lists multiple key performance measures for student and administrative support service processes, some of these key areas are omitted in Figure 6C1.1. This lack of data may negatively affect comprehensive analysis and continuous improvement in major processes.
- O 6R1-6R2. Figure 6R1.3 lists positive results related to changes made in support service areas. However, these results appear to be based on faculty and staff perceptions accumulated at conversation meetings rather than through more quantitative methods.
- S 6R3. WNMU is making significant strides in collecting some comparative data through surveys and accreditation information. Lumina Projects and receipt of the Zia Award for 2003 are notable.
- O 6R3. The presentation of actual comparative data in this section is limited and there is little discussion of the meaning of the results.
- O 6R1-6R2. WNMU appears to lack a process that establishes targeted goals and a method that captures comparative data for determining improvements at the support services departmental and unit levels.
- O 6I2. WNMU acknowledges that “there is room for significant improvement in setting and using targets to support improvement.” The development of a system for setting targets based on performance measures for support service processes (such as those listed in Figure 6P5.1) would strengthen the institution’s ability to systematically and effectively improve these processes.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University’s performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

The institution is at a developing stage for this criterion. Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 7, *Measuring Effectiveness*:

- O1B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- O1D. WNMU defines retention as a key issue in assessing institutional effectiveness.
- O1G. WNMU is the only university in NM to receive New Mexico's highest award for continuous performance improvement.
- O6C. Significant gains in WNMU's Technology Strategic Plan include Banner administrative software, portal software, network infrastructure, and network services to the three remote Learning Centers.
- O8B. Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 7, *Measuring Effectiveness*:

- S 7C1. WNMU's description of an integrated data collection, storage and distribution system using Banner software provides evidence of commitment to quality in the area of measuring effectiveness.
- SS 7C2. WNMU has mapped measures of effectiveness to Baldrige criteria, strategic goals, and desired outcomes, which will support the alignment and integration of these criteria.

- O 7C2. Many of the measures of effectiveness appear to be categories of measurement – not actual measures.
- OO 7P4. Although the Cabinet serves as a central coordination point for many activities related to data analysis, WNMU has no single office responsible for data analysis or sharing data. Plans are to establish such an office in the fall of 2004 if funding is available.
- O 7P4. Although WNMU has collected data for measures of effectiveness, it is unclear how the results are used to measure effectiveness and to inform decision making.
- S 7P5. Annual assessment reports for all academic programs include the relationship of program goals to institutional goals, assessment methods utilized, data collected and analyzed, and the manner in which the results were used.
- S 7P6. WNMU ensures hardware and software reliability, data integrity, and security through a back-up system, a network firewall and virus protection system, and by building data systems which strictly uphold FERPA guidelines.
- S 7P7. Strong, new leadership in the IT department has resulted in new, reliable measurement and reporting on the quality of IT availability and service.
- O 7P7/7R1/7R2/7I1/7I2. While WNMU focuses on IT capabilities in its description of measuring effectiveness, a more complete overview would indicate how specific processes for collecting, analyzing, and using information drive institutional performance improvement.
- S 7R1. WNMU's success in dealing with accreditation teams and the CHE audit is evidence of proactive processes, assessments, and quality of data.
- O 7R2. Comparative results are only in a preliminary stage. In the interim, historical trends or patterns might reveal valuable information for future improvements.
- O 7I2. Although a significant amount of IT information is provided, actual measures aren't specified and it is unclear how actual measurements are used.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *developing*, characterized by:

Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information (rather than systematic data) is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set

performance targets in a few areas. There is anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 8, *Planning Continuous Improvement*:

- O1B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- O1G. WNMU is the only university in NM to receive New Mexico's highest award for continuous performance improvement.
- O8A. WNMU's SWOT analysis defines several areas of opportunity and vulnerability, especially as they relate to processes, funding, and institutional mission.
- O8B. Key opportunities/vulnerabilities involve accountability, enrollment, technology, funding, facilities, community/economic development, employee compensation, \$22 M infrastructure backlog, diversity, and personalized student services.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 8, *Planning Continuous Improvement*:

- S 8C1. WNMU has articulated its vision for the next 5-10 years from a big picture overview to specific details at both the institutional and departmental levels. The well-aligned vision, mission and strategic goals seem to be comprehensive, measurable, and achievable, yet ambitious enough to lead the University to stretch itself to accomplish its goals and form a framework for continuous improvement.

- O 8P1. Although Figure 8P1.1 offers an overview of the strategic planning process, it is difficult to follow and unclear as to how it relates to timeframes in 8P1.2. Also, Figure 8P1.1 does not illustrate how these processes are linked to the Executive Committee, Cabinet, cross-functional committees, standing committees and other groups involved in the planning process.
- O 8P2. Although WNMU has a process for selecting short and long term strategies, and the VPs prepare an operational plan for their units to support achievement of the institutional vision, there are no measures of effectiveness provided.
- O 8P3. Action plans derived from the operational plans are developed within the responsible units or through campus hearings. Figure 8P3.1 lists plans and identifies responsibility for implementation. However, several plans associated with strategic challenges are not fully articulated, such as enrollment and retention, augmentation of state funding, and compensation equity.
- O 8P4. When deploying University-wide initiatives, WNMU employs standing and ad-hoc cross-functional teams as a means of aligning planning processes, organizing new initiatives, and gathering feedback. However, it is not clear if all institutional levels are included in the standing and ad-hoc cross-functional teams. It is also not apparent how alignment/integration among teams is ensured.
- S 8P5. WNMU utilizes several key factors in identifying measures of effectiveness, including ease of collection, ability to address progress, availability of data, stakeholder balance, data reliability and integrity, accreditation and program review requirements, and topical research. The process for selecting MOEs across the board is excellent as evidenced by the array of such measures outlined in Figure 7C2.1.
- O 8P5. It is not apparent how the senior leadership ensures balance among the various resource needs at WNMU.
- O 8P8. WNMU relies on indirect measures, such as satisfaction surveys, usage statistics, and retention. This makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of WNMU's planning processes. More direct measures would strengthen planning efforts.
- O 8R1. Examples of results measured do not systematically tie back to planning continuous improvement, although they do demonstrate some longitudinal data tracking. For example, there appears to be no results presented for goals 1, 3, 6, and 7 of Figure 8C2.1. A more thorough process of linking a priority for improvement to the action taken and the result as measured would improve planning efforts.

- O 8R2. Projections included in 112.1 are meaningful targets and help visualize where WNMU is heading in practical terms. However, the projections are not strategic or tied to action plans and do not have timeframes associated with them. The University does not identify timeframes for projections in the 1-3 year range.
- O 8R3. Although WNMU cites the availability of some comparative data at the state and national levels, it does not specify how its projections for its strategies and action plans compare with those of other institutions. Such information would strengthen WNMU's continuous improvement planning processes, as well as its results analysis.
- S 8R4. WNMU cites receipt of the QNM Zia Award, as well as its Continuous Improvement Scorecard process, and results (Figure 8R4.1) as evidence that its system for planning continuous improvement is effective. Both are based on Baldrige processes, thus connecting the evidence to nationally recognized standards for continuous improvement.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *maturing*, characterized by:

Growing, emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place. Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas. Recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance exist in several areas. Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly. Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is a record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, as the result of specific initiatives.

AQIP CRITERION 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 Western New Mexico University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Criterion 9, *Building Collaborative Relationships*:

- 01B. WNMU's mission stresses responsibility for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual population, as well as affordability, accessibility, preeminence of teaching, and professional growth of employees.
- 01E. WNMU's "first priority is to concentrate its scarce resources on programs that serve the priorities of the people of NM."
- 04A. WNMU collaborates with school districts; colleges & universities; employers; community organizations; economic development entities; government agencies; alumni; suppliers, etc.
- 04B. The scope of collaborations includes governance, support, credentialing, research, public service, education, financial, planning, community enrichment, employment, accountability, etc.
- 07C. In-state tuition agreements with southern Arizona, El Paso, the Navaho Nation, and Colorado impact WNMU's competitive position.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Western New Mexico University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Criterion 9, *Building Collaborative Relationships*:

- SS 9C1. In Figure 9C1.1 WNMU identifies 23 key collaborative relationships, including the status and nature of each relationship, as well as its impact on the University's mission. This information provides the context for analysis of WNMU's key collaborative relationships.
- O 9C1. Although WNMU has many successful collaborative relationships, it is difficult to assess the status of the relationships.
- S 9C2. The Workforce Coalition partnership demonstrates how collaboration can reinforce mission and impacts planning. Faculty and staff articulated their understanding of the importance of collaborations during the strategic planning forum.
- S 9P1. Figure 9P1.1 describes the relationship building activities with parents, feeder schools, community, state agencies, employers, and alumni. At all priority levels collaboration and partnerships strengthen relationships and help build new ones, forming the basis for effective and efficient use of resources.

- S 9P2. WNMU faculty and staff serve on advisory boards as an effective way of maintaining collaborative relationships.
- O 9P4. The response to MOEs collected and analyzed does not seem to provide adequate data or reference to meaningful measures. This could be strengthened by creating and analyzing direct measures of building collaborative relationships.
- SS 9R1. Retention data from WNMU's Student Success Seminar provides convincing evidence that the course experience improved student retention rates. Therefore, WNMU made it a mandatory course, and retention rates continue to improve. This is an example of data-driven results from an internal collaboration effort.
- O 9R1. It is not always apparent how the results of collaboration have strengthened relationships. An analysis of the data collected and its effect on collaborative relationships may help WNMU more effectively determine actions that can strengthen collaborative relationships.
- O 9R2. Although WNMU refers to some comparative results throughout the portfolio; it does not draw conclusions regarding how its results in building collaborative relationships compare with those of other institutions. This makes it difficult to assess the relative success of WNMU's results in relation to other institutions.
- O 9I1. Although WNMU has been able to develop some qualitative results to appraise success in building collaborative relationships; it is unclear what quantitative measures are being developed to support the qualitative data.
- O 9I1-9I2. There appears to be no systematic method for improving processes associated with building collaborative relationships. It is also not apparent how results are communicated to external stakeholder groups.

Overall, the Systems Appraisal Team saw Western New Mexico University's performance on this criterion as *maturing*, characterized by:

Growing, emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place. Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas. Recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance exist in several areas. Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly. Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas. There is a record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, as the result of specific initiatives.

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES FOR: Western New Mexico University

Strategic issues are those most closely related to Western New Mexico University's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. The Systems Appraisal Team identified these issues through analysis of your *Organizational Overview* and the feedback it provided for each criterion. This list of strategic issues is included to assist you and your colleagues on prioritizing the important issues facing Western New Mexico University. Among these you may discover your vital immediate priorities, the opportunities and challenges that can lead to a quantum leap in the performance of your institution. Accreditation issues are those that relate directly to your organization's evidence for Commission's five Criteria for Accreditation and their Core Components. The Systems Appraisal Team identified these accreditation issues through analysis of your *Portfolio* and the *Accreditation Evidence Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* you prepared to accompany your *Portfolio*. The Team has identified these issues as either an (a) evidentiary accreditation issue, meaning that additional evidence is needed or the evidence is unclear, or as an (b) accreditation issue, meaning that it must be addressed prior to your *Quality Check up* and your *Reaffirmation Review*.

AQIP expects an institution to have three or four vital Action Projects at a time in order to encourage administrators, faculty, and staff to prioritize their efforts and resources. The Systems Appraisal Team has listed more than three or four issues, trusting that Western New Mexico University will discuss and prioritize those it concludes are most critical. If the team has identified accreditation issues, you must respond to those either by providing an addition to your portfolio (for evidentiary accreditation issues) or by including in your Action Projects one that addresses an accreditation issue that must be addressed prior to your *Quality Checkup* and *Reaffirmation Review*. This *Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis* is intended to intensify your continuing quality efforts as well as to provide you feedback on your continued fulfillment of the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation.

Strategic Issues

- ◆ WNMU is committed to continuous quality improvement. This effort could be maximized by clearly delineating how each quality mechanism/process (AQIP, Baldrige, MOEs, SWOT assessment bodies, IT data collection, strategic planning processes, external demands from CUP, etc.) relates to the others within WNMU's organizational and planning structures. Within these processes, a important component for identifying specific targets for improvement would be the collection of national and state-wide benchmark and comparative information (including data from outside traditional higher education).

- ◆ WNMU recognizes the value of strong relationships, collaborative efforts, and partnerships with employers, business, industry, and other community-based organizations. Productive relationships appear to exist with state agencies and entities within the community. The development of meaningful measures of satisfaction, such as results from community based forums and surveys, can help strengthen relationships by identifying the needs of these external stakeholders.
- ◆ WNMU recognizes that it must continue developing alternative course delivery methods and learning support systems to meet the needs of distance learning students and face to face students alike. Key issues in this process include competition from other providers of higher education programs; the ability to reach out to its communities through electronic media; construction and acquisition of remote sites; and a comprehensive human resources plan to address future growth and contingent future scenarios.
- ◆ Key issues related to faculty and staff morale include the lack of a direct link between performance or merit and compensation, dissatisfaction with evaluation processes, and the lack of trust in leadership. As part of its effort to enhance communication with employees, WNMU seeks to improve its faculty/staff evaluation and orientation systems with such additions as an employee mentoring system. WNMU can use these as initial steps in a more comprehensive effort to improve communication, compensation, professional development, equal opportunity for employees, understanding of personnel policies, work conditions, and morale in the work place environment.
- ◆ As an “open admissions” institution, WNMU consistently experiences low student retention rates, indicating a need for additional analysis and a higher level of proactive intervention. For example, as part of the WNMU retention and advising programs, a student tracking system to monitor the success of different target populations would provide valuable data as a basis for intervention strategies.
- ◆ Most assessment data presented in the Systems Portfolio are external “objective” measures, such as standardized tests and satisfaction surveys. It is unclear how assessment results are used in planning processes to improve student learning. For example, it is not apparent how progress with common student learning objectives is assessed and how the curriculum is being revised based on that assessment. By addressing such assessment issues, WNMU can make better informed decisions on how to improve student learning.
- ◆ WNMU's commitment to diversity is clearly integrated into its mission and vision. It is an important component within many core functions, such as understanding the demographics of the population it serves, helping students learn, and providing service to the community.

Further data-driven analysis of the diverse needs of each population could enhance the institution's ability to more specifically address the peculiar requirements of targeted groups of current and potential students.

APPRAISAL SUMMARY FOR: WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

The Systems Appraisal conducted by the Academic Quality Improvement Program of The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools provides a comprehensive examination of the Western New Mexico University conducted by a trained team composed primarily of higher education peer reviewers. In order to provide fresh and objective insights and perspectives the team also included reviewers from outside higher education. Following is the Appraisal Team's summary evaluation of Western New Mexico University's current performance in each of the nine AQIP Criteria areas.

AQIP CRITERION 1: *Helping Students Learn* identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Criterion 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.

The institution's effectiveness for this criterion is at a maturing stage. Growing emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place. Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas. Recent (within last two years) trends exist of improving levels of performance in several areas. Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly. Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas. Record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, as the result of specific initiatives.

AQIP CRITERION 2: *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.

The institution is at a developing stage for this criterion. Reliable processes that work consistently to achieve their goals are being developed and implemented. Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used in units other than where they originated. Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in a few areas. Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) improving levels of performance in a few areas. Anecdotal information is on hand about processes and performance of other organizations. Feedback is occasionally used to set performance targets in a few areas. Anecdotal evidence of improvements, occurring at irregular intervals.

AQIP CRITERION 3: *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.

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AQIP CRITERION 4: *Valuing People* explores your institution's commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators since the efforts of all 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.

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AQIP CRITERION 5: *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.

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AQIP CRITERION 6: *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.

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AQIP CRITERION 7: *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.

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AQIP CRITERION 8: *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.

The institution's effectiveness for this criterion is at a maturing stage. Growing emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place. Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution.

Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas. Recent (within last two years) trends exist of improving levels of performance in several areas. Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly. Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas. Record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, as the result of specific initiatives.

AQIP CRITERION 9: *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.

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