
Mid-State Technical College Quality Program Summary

Introduction

The quality philosophy at Mid-State Technical College is long-standing and viewed as an integral part of day-to-day operations, rather than a standalone activity or a separate program. Continuous improvement activities occur throughout the organization, at all levels. The College intentionally chose an integrated approach to continuous improvement. By doing so, faculty and staff receptivity was increased; quality is not seen as an “add-on” to an already heavy workload or considered to be a “flavor of the month.” Rather, it is built into the Mid-State Technical College culture and its processes. Because of the integration of continuous improvement into daily activities, individuals at the College may not even be aware of words like AQIP or CQIN (the Continuous Quality Improvement Network). But without a doubt, employees can provide examples of improvement activities in all parts of the College.

This quality program summary outlines the current state of the quality initiatives at Mid-State Technical College, discusses specific efforts triggered by the AQIP process itself, and reviews the active and retired action projects at the College. This document is posted on the College’s continuous improvement web page.

Quality Philosophy

All staff members at the College subscribe to a set of six core values: Student Centeredness, Commitment, Accountability, Respect, Integrity, and Exceptional Service. Prospective staff members are introduced to the College’s core values at the earliest stage of the hiring and search process and core values are a key component of all employee evaluations. Continuous improvement is embedded in the core values; two of the core values summarize the College’s quality philosophy:

Accountability: *We understand and value our individual roles in the college. We take responsibility for processes, decisions, and outcomes within our scope of influence. We work hard to apply our expertise to continuously improve our systems and strengthen organizational performance.*

Exceptional Service: *We create and improve relationships through positive interactions with others. United by a common purpose, to support and improve learning, we collaborate to provide lifelong learning opportunities that enhance the well-being of individuals, businesses, and communities.*

Mission and Vision

The strategic directions for the College are set by the Board of Directors. As part of the on-going improvement process, the Board reviews and updates the College mission and vision. The current mission and vision will be superseded by an updated mission and vision effective July 1, 2008. Both versions are included below.

Mission

Current Mission: Mid-State Technical College serves its communities by providing lifelong learning opportunities which enhance the personal and economic well-being of individuals and businesses.

Updated Mission: Mid-State Technical College transforms lives through the power of teaching and learning.

Vision

Current Vision: Mid-State Technical College is recognized as an educational leader and viewed as an essential technical resource by its communities.

Updated Vision: Mid-State Technical College is the educational provider of first choice for its communities.

Current State of the College Quality Program

The quality program at Mid-State Technical College has four components: Integrated planning, process improvement, peer organizations, and benchmarking and alignment. Each of the program components is discussed below.

Integrated Planning for Continuous Improvement

As an institution, MSTC goes through a focused process for setting the College's direction. Every three years, the College's nine-member Board of Directors promulgates a set of strategic directions, which tie directly to the institution's mission and vision. The strategic directions target internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, students, and partners and potential partners.

The continuous improvement process at the College is integrated throughout the organization. The process is designed to align the strategic directions and College goals with individual performance expectations. MSTC's short- and long-term strategies are laid out in the College's 2006-2008 Strategic Directions, developed by the College's Board of Directors. The strategies focus on economic development; diversity; learner centeredness; educational relationships; and partnerships with business, industry, legislators, and communities. The strategies tie directly to the mission of the College, which is to serve its communities by providing lifelong learning opportunities that enhance the personal and economic well-being of individuals and businesses. The strategies also reflect the vision of the College, which is to be recognized as an educational leader and viewed as an essential technical resource by its communities.

2006-2008 Strategic Directions
Provide leadership and support to stimulate economic development through the provision of highly skilled technicians in emerging and existing industries.
Proactively create a climate which promotes inclusion, enhances diversity, challenges discrimination, and embraces the needs of changing populations.
Build substantive partnerships with legislators and communities to broaden awareness of MSTC's value and benefit to businesses and individuals in central Wisconsin.
Remain learner centered. Continue to assess and improve processes to enhance individual and varied student educational needs.
Foster relationships with educational providers to link resources and needs in a responsive and economical manner.
Partner with diverse groups in business, industry, schools and government to build strong communities and enhance the quality of life in our region.

The Strategic Directions are developed by the College's Board of Directors. Part of the planning process leading to the Directions is a review of the College mission and vision. The planning process also defines the Directions as being tied to and arising out of the College's mission and vision. The Strategic Directions for 2009-2011, which become effective on July 1, 2008, are included below.

2009-2011 Strategic Directions

MSTC meets changing educational needs through quality learning experiences which enhance student success.

MSTC meets the dynamic and diverse employment and training needs of the area.

MSTC embraces instructional effectiveness through the pursuit of excellence and continuous improvement.

MSTC supports and engages diversity through the recruitment, retention, and development of students and employees.

MSTC is recognized as an effective and essential educational partner.

The strategic directions serve as the foundation for College goals, which are developed annually. Where the strategic directions are necessarily built for the long term, College goals are more immediate. The College goals are more precise, albeit still strategic. The College goals are developed by the executive committee (the president and four vice presidents) based on environmental scanning and feedback from faculty, staff, and stakeholders. The College goals are reviewed by the Board, as a way of ensuring the College goals meet the strategic direction set by the Board.

College goals are first operationalized in each executive committee member's "statement of accountability." Statements of accountability (SOAs) are descriptions of the work performed by particular individuals in the institution. One of the critical components of each individual's SOA is a series of operational (e.g. observable and measurable) goals. Goal attainment and progress are continuously monitored throughout the year. Since each executive committee member's goals are designed to help achieve the College goals, the goals therefore tie to the College mission and vision through the strategic directions.

Executive committee member's goals are further operationalized by ensuring that the goals of direct reports tie to the supervisor's goals. This sequential, nested goal development process ensures that employees are all working in concert to help the College achieve the goals set out by the Board of Directors.

Students and key stakeholders are the focus of each of the College's strategic directions. Since the strategic directions drive College, executive committee, and staff goals, stakeholders and students are central to the focus of the College.

Process Improvement

There are numerous efforts going on that are designed to improve processes. Examples of recent and current activities are addressed in the following paragraphs.

Changes to registration process- Working with faculty, College staff revised the way that students were advised prior to registration day. The effort was spurred by feedback from students and faculty, and the working team that designed the change collaborated on the change to the semester schedule. The desired outcomes included creating a process convenient for and valued by students, creating a meaningful dialog between students and faculty, enhancing student retention and success, promoting the likelihood of a positive online registration experience for students, limiting any significant financial impact on the college, and implementing the process as a pilot with evaluation and assessment following the implementation.

Changes in the support of online teaching and learning- When the College’s academic leadership group decided to expand the movement into online courses and programs, an action project team consisting of faculty and staff was created to examine processes and systems related to online learning. The action team determined that a dedicated staff member was necessary to support faculty members moving courses to an online delivery model. Once hired, this staff member began to work with the team to develop and institute improved online processes. The team used focus groups heavily represented by students and faculty to assess the efficacy of the look and feel of the online environment, and made changes based on stakeholder feedback. The team also reviewed the College’s existing online course approval process, which requires the approval of a four-person Online Review Team (ORT) before a course can be delivered online. The ORT uses a checklist based on the HLC’s Online Best Practices document to ensure the quality of online courses.

Changes to the course scheduling process- This is an on-going effort. Through feedback from students, faculty, and staff it was determined that the College’s scheduling process needed improvement. Schedules have been created one semester at a time, but after collecting feedback it was determined that a yearly schedule would better fit the needs of most stakeholders. The result is a planned pilot of a one-year course schedule; the results of the trial will be used to shape the yearly schedule for the College.

Changes to admissions process- A team of counselors, support staff, and managers examined the admissions process at the College. The paper-based system was determined to be an impediment to students, so the College is in the process of moving to a document imaging model. In addition, a recent CQIN summer institute spurred the examination of admissions processes through the lens of lean thinking. The admissions processes are currently being re-engineered.

Peer Organizations

Mid-State Technical College belongs to several peer organizations that benefit the College’s continuous improvement processes. The two organizations (the Wisconsin Technical College System AQIP Best Practices Group, and the Continuous Quality Improvement Network, or CQIN) and the benefits of membership are described below.

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) is made up of 16 technical colleges. Twelve of the colleges belong to AQIP. The twelve AQIP colleges meet at least two times per year, to share best practices. The colleges maintain much more frequent contact via email and other non-place-bound approaches. Mid-State Technical College has accrued a number of benefits from its relationship with the other eleven peer institutions. The College has used AQIP liaisons as preliminary readers of its systems portfolio, used input from the other colleges to shape processes, and to lay the groundwork for benchmarking and data comparisons.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN) is an organization with 45 members (43 of which are two- or four-year postsecondary institutions) designed

“...to collectively build the capacity to develop and manage quality systems in higher education. By working together in a learning and sharing network, we provide the highest level of information on best practices on quality improvement in higher education. From managing and using data in a balanced scorecard approach, to continuously-improving student success methodologies and assessment, to partnering with others in education and our communities, CQIN is dedicated to ‘raising the bar’ on how we can work smarter, with greater agility, to meet our learners’ needs and expectations.”

Each year, the organization selects learning partners (past partners include Baldrige organizations like Boeing, St. Luke's Hospital, The Ritz-Carlton and other companies like Toyota, Disney, and IDEO). The College sends a team typically made up of faculty and staff to the CQIN summer institute; the team returns with projects designed to improve College processes and services. Mid-State Technical College projects spurred by CQIN summer institutes include the creation of a Learning Support team that led to the renovation and update of library facilities and services, the consolidation of learning support functions into a single functional area, public wireless access for students and visitors at all three campus locations, and the beginning of a redesign of the College's admissions process using lean principles.

Benchmarking and Alignment

The College uses benchmarks to compare performance with institutions within the state as well as at a national level. There are three primary venues for benchmarking in Wisconsin: Through the WTCS data system, through the College's membership in the WILM consortium (named for the three consortium technical colleges: Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, Lakeshore Technical College, and Mid-State Technical College), and through the state-wide Quality Review Process (QRP). At the national level, the College benchmarks using IPEDS data and interacts with members of CQIN.

Statewide Benchmarking and Alignment

The WTCS has an extensive data collection and reporting system. The types of reports and benchmarking data available can be viewed at <http://systemattic.wtcsystem.org/reports/>. Within the various reports, data for each technical college district in the state are provided. Because of standardization in the data collection and reporting process, it is possible to compare the College's performance to other organizations within the WTCS. In addition to the reports listed on the state site, additional custom reports can be requested. For instance, Mid-State Technical College has been analyzing movement by district residents from our district to programs at other technical college districts. The data are used to make programmatic decisions and as a direct means of assessing district residents' needs.

Mid-State Technical College is part of a consortium with two other technical colleges. The consortium members share a single PeopleSoft installation and the associated data center. The sharing of data base management costs among similar institutions is a best practice. Since the colleges share a data center and PeopleSoft installation, comparisons between and among the three institutions in the consortium are readily accessible. The reporting system, based on Cognos, allows high-level comparisons of key performance indicators. Trend data regarding enrollments, graduation rates, and other data are available to assist in the assessment of program health. The consortium members work together on more than just data; the college presidents encourage academic collaboration, data sharing, resources sharing, and staff collaboration as well.

The College also has a current action project to build academic effectiveness indicators that can be meaningfully compared among the three colleges. Consortium members chose the indicators based on input from faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. The consortium members have met and discussed a draft list of academic effectiveness indicator measures and the project is actively moving forward.

The state-wide QRP (Quality Review Process) system was developed in response to a directive from the WTCS office for the colleges to create a standard set of tools and measures to evaluate program performance. The result was a web-based tool designed for quality improvement and evaluation activities. The state-wide system is designed to support the continuous improvement cycle, and thus supports strategic program planning. Each program in the state is required to be evaluated every five years at a minimum, and evaluation is performed within the context of program performance at every

institution in the system. The benchmarking allows direct college-to-college comparisons. The QRP documentation states:

“The QRP enabled the WTC System Office and individual colleges to make a shift from collecting and reviewing data, to using data to guide performance improvement. Essential to this new process is a critical analysis of data to determine the cause of performance gaps as well as [to] identify and evaluate strategies to improve performance.”

The QRP system provides a system for quantitative and qualitative analysis, and aids continuous improvement through data-informed decision making. The system also assists with the allocation of College resources.

Nationwide Benchmarking and Alignment

The College is working to align the data structures and definitions for its academic effectiveness indicator project with the data elements in IPEDS. This will allow the College (and the WILM consortium) to make direct comparisons between the data it generates and IPEDS. This will be useful in benchmarking College processes. Information from IPEDS is monitored regularly. In addition, the WILM colleges have standardized collection sources and processes to allow for comparison using the IPEDS COOL and Cognos tools.

Annually MSTC reviews its retention and graduation rates. This year the College will be removing transfer students from enrollment data to improve the quality of the retention rate. Upon completion of IPEDS reporting each year, the Director of Enrollment Management reviews the retention and graduation rates for any changes. If there is a significant variance it is investigated and shared with Executive Committee and Deans. Based on the data that are shared, strategies are determined to improve processes within the college.

The member colleges of CQIN share resources. When CQIN members need specific information, a listserv is used to solicit data. The CQIN web site (<http://www.cqin.net>) has a resources page, and also describes upcoming events with learning partners. In 2001, CQIN performed a study of key performance indicators at member institutions; the study provided background that shaped some of the indicators developed for use in the College’s academic effectiveness indicator project.

The College’s president serves on the board of the Council of North Central Two-Year Colleges, the second largest organization of two-year colleges in the United States.

Efforts Supporting the AQIP Process

The AQIP process at the College has numerous supporting events and processes at the College. The following paragraphs address the College’s response to the strategic issues identified during the appraisal of the Systems Portfolio, the status of the update process for the systems portfolio, and the results of the second Strategy Forum.

The systems appraisal of the College’s Systems Portfolio identified six strategic issues, summarized below. Following each strategic issue are examples of College activities, either completed or in-process, related to the strategic issue.

- 1. While MSTC describes processes in response to the questions in the nine categories, there is no discussion of a process or processes connecting them to a continuous improvement system. This may make it difficult to accomplish improvement initiatives.*

Since receiving the systems appraisal focus, the College has worked on establishing a more systematic approach to data utilization. For instance budgets are set in the first quarter; prior to beginning the

budgeting process, the academic effectiveness indicators are evaluated in divisions and at Deans Council. The results of the data review are used to identify programs needing additional resources, or improvement. Other examples of a more data-informed approach are outlined in the responses to the strategic issues in the following sections.

- 2. MSTC lists a wide variety of data sources, but little trend line data are reported in the portfolio and there is no evidence the data is being used as part of a comprehensive continuous improvement process. There appears to be a lack of alignment among data collection, analysis, and improvement processes within the college. Alignment of these measurement issues is necessary if data-based decision making is to become institutionalized throughout the organization. Full implementation of these processes and the accumulation of trend line data are critical to the college's ability to analyze effectiveness.*

Examples of the College's current usage of trend line data are listed below. Much of the College's trend line data comes from the state office; the data from the state office allows the College to compare its performance across time and against other technical colleges in the system. The majority of the processes listed below were in place prior to the submission of the systems portfolio for review. However, Systems Portfolio writers did not adequately document existing processes, data, or information.

- Instructional supervisors (deans and associate deans) utilize QRP data to analyze, for instance, retention between the second and third semesters. The deans and associate deans share the QRP data with faculty and other stakeholders. The majority of these data elements serve as benchmarks to allow the College to compare the performance of its programs to the same programs in other WTCS colleges.
 - Student performance in capstone courses routinely leads to course curriculum modifications.
 - Some courses use standardized testing (TABE) to measure student success.
 - FTE data and section sizes are reviewed to assess delivery methodologies, or for adding or reducing course offerings.
 - Instructional supervisors in the Business Division observed a trend of declining student success in the beginning programming class in the programmer/analyst program. Based on this, the program team changed the programming language used in the course from a procedural language to an object-based language.
 - Declining enrollments in the programmer/analyst program led to a change in where and how the program was offered. A similar change was made in the network specialist program, based on feedback from students and other stakeholders.
 - The nursing program has a Systematic Evaluation Plan, and routinely uses data from the evaluation plan to make decisions and changes in the program.
 - Budget transfers are made based on monthly trend line analyses at the account level within the College's operating unit budgets. Budget managers are alerted to potential shortfalls or surpluses based on trend line monitoring.
 - Student performance on national and state certification and licensure exams drives course design and redesign.
- 3. Processes do not appear to be in place to monitor and improve the level of diversity in staffing for the college and to provide a variety of methods to support diverse student learning styles.*

Without attention to these important issues it would be difficult to adhere to the Higher Learning Commission's requirements focused on diversity.

The following bullet points outline how the College works to monitor and improve the level of diversity in staffing. Also addressed are approaches used to address differences in student learning styles.

- Using WTCS Staff Accounting and Client Reporting statistics, the College monitors diversity in faculty, staff, and student populations annually.
- The College is required by the WTCS state office to develop and maintain an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action five-year compliance plan, and report on employee and student statistics and initiatives yearly.
- College recruitment efforts to improve staff diversity included targeted recruitment to minority community-based organizations, local agencies, and tribal nations; advertising in publications that target minority applicants including *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, and *The Hmong Times*; and posting vacancies on web sites that emphasize affirmative action/equal opportunity affiliations, such as HigherEdJobs.com, AcademicCareers.com, InsideHigherEd.com, and CCollegeJobs.com.
- The College is a featured visit site for Rotary International when international exchanges occur with the local Rotary clubs. The local Rotary clubs host foreign business leaders and professionals, and bring the visitors to the College.
- College human resources staff collaborate with employment staff from other technical colleges periodically to co-sponsor recruitment booths at diversity job fairs in an effort to target diverse applicants for open positions.
- A key result area in annual performance appraisals for managerial staff members is his or her commitment to diversity and equal opportunity in employment, participation, and expression.
- Human Resources staff provided supervisory training on employee recruitment and selection and distributed a Resource Guide for the Recruitment & Selection of Staff. A section addressed "hiring for excellence and diversity". The Guide provided additional information to assist supervisors in selecting qualified, diverse applicants and to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination in the College's employment process. Furthermore, a Human Resources representative interacts with each selection committee throughout the employment process to ensure fair and impartial evaluation of candidates.
- The extensive use of the Internet for recruitment advertising, by its very nature, provides the opportunity for dissemination of the College's position announcements to broad audiences in diverse geographic locations.
- College faculty and academic supervisors must take a course in Educational Diversity as a WTCS certification requirement. Among other principles, the course emphasizes the value of diversity in educational environments. This is especially relevant as supervisors participate on selection committees responsible for recommending new persons to be hired.
- A Human Resources member represents the College on the WTCS Recruitment Committee and Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officers Committee. The goals and activities of both committees relate to diversity in employment and contribute to the sharing of information and resources for the recruitment of minorities, females in under-represented job categories, and persons with disabilities.

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- All technical College faculty are required to complete seven certification courses. Several of the courses address teaching for diverse learning styles. One course in particular, Teaching Methods, has a significant focus on learning style and helps instructors develop pedagogical approaches to meeting the needs of students with differing styles.
 - During one of the recent College Initiative Days, faculty members received training on Universal Design of Instruction (UDI). According to the College's Disability Services group, UDI "...is the design of instructional materials and activities that allow learning goals to be achieved by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organize, engage, and remember. While allowing students with disabilities to engage in a course with few special accommodations, the flexibility of courses using these principles also helps other students learn the course material in ways most appropriate to their unique learning styles and preferences."
 - Teaching/learning activities in Urban Forestry classes are designed to address the variety of learning styles in each class. For example, the Chainsaw Safety class allows students to accumulate points doing written work as well as physical performance.
 - The Marketing program uses a fund raiser called "Hoops for Hunger" to give students hands-on experience in marketing promotion. The entire course uses alternate assessment strategies to evaluate student performance.
 - Many programs use supervised field or clinical experiences as capstone courses.
 - Students in the information technology programs operate a Computer Clinic on the Stevens Point campus, as a hands-on demonstration of skills.
 - The College has a relationship with Max-Eyth College in Hessen, Germany. There is an annual exchange where students travel to Germany along with an instructor. The colleges have a program-to-program educational exchange.
 - Several programs use the True Colors program to help students identify individual differences in learning style and approach to problem-solving, in support of the College's core abilities related to teamwork.
 - The Business Decision Making course uses a simulation rather than other types of assessments to accommodate multiple learning styles.
 - The College uses alternative delivery methodologies like online learning and independent study to accommodate multiple learning styles.
 - Faculty members are trained to deliver teaching and learning using accelerated learning approaches.
4. *A strong student focus is not readily apparent throughout the MSTC portfolio. A student focus is integral to maintaining a successful AQIP learning environment and a continuous quality improvement culture. Directly involving students, identifying their needs, and incorporating this information into institutional planning and decision making seems an important next step if MSTC is committed to continuous improvement.*

The first of the College's six core values, which guide College faculty and staff, is student centeredness. The College defines the core value thusly:

Student Centeredness: We value and respect all students as unique individuals. We assist students in realizing their educational goals and work hard to create a dynamic learning environment. Providing students with a positive educational experience is of vital interest to each of us.

The following bullet points provide examples for the core value in action:

- Urban Forestry uses feedback from Student Feedback forms to make changes in course design; an example was an adjustment in the amount of lecture versus lab time.
 - Farm Operations met with 5-year grads about how well the program prepared them for the workplace. The program curriculum was changed based on their recommendations.
 - Many advisory committees and other groups (like the nursing student council) have either student or graduate committee members.
 - End of course surveys of instruction are used in conversations between instructional supervisors and faculty members to identify improvement ideas.
 - The College uses the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory to identify areas of high importance to students. Areas that are important to students are examined to identify where satisfaction is low. This allows the College to focus its efforts to improve student satisfaction. The inventory has been administered since 2002. Initially, the inventory was administered every three years, but is now administered every two years because of the importance of understanding student satisfaction. Trend line data are closely monitored; information from the survey is used to modify systems and processes.
 - Employer panels assist students in understanding new program/jobs.
 - The Service & Health division uses program Orientation Handbooks and program orientations to communicate expectations and gather feedback from students.
 - The College uses graduate follow-up surveys to assess curriculum-to-work-world fit.
 - Academic Affairs and Student Affairs share information and work on processes together; the integrated approach to problem solving is centered on meeting student needs.
 - Ad hoc surveys are used with students early in semester to better understand student issues and concerns. Recently, such an approach resulted in early semester orientation for logging on to the Educator course management system.
5. *MSTC has not demonstrated an overarching commitment to maintaining a stakeholder focus and including all stakeholders in planning and decision making for the college. Throughout the portfolio, a top-down approach to management issues, communication, and planning appears to be prevalent in the organization. Listening to stakeholders, collaborating on decision making, and moving to more participatory, cross-representational processes are key components of a successful continuous improvement environment.*

The following points outline some of the ways College faculty and staff use stakeholder input to shape decisions.

- Programs use Program Advisory committees to comment on and provide direction for program curricula. Community needs are also taken into account when evaluating the efficacy of program curricula.

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- The College uses program and facilities focus groups to drive improvement. An example was the stakeholder focus groups that led to the current facilities improvements in the libraries, and the design of the protective and emergency services facilities expansion planned in FY2009.
 - All prospective new programs use the DACUM process or other forms of environmental scanning to collect data in support of new program creation.
 - The College leadership supports participation and membership in community organizations and programs like United Way, Rotary International, district hospital boards, district library boards, Opportunity Development Center, Literacy Council, Workforce Development Board, and the Community Progress Initiative.
 - College staff members are an integral part of Rapid Response Teams, which are designed to assess the needs of workers displaced by plant or business closures.
 - College staff members maintain close relationships with high schools in the district. For instance, instructional television classes for dual credit are driven by the needs of the high schools receiving the ITV feeds.

The College holds a Counselor and Community Partners Workshop annually, which attracts high school counselors and educates the attendees about the College's programs and services.

The College has a High School Relations Coordinator. This position oversees all contacts with in-district high schools; one of the College Enrollment Advisors is tasked with overseeing contacts with out-of-district high schools.

The College also partnered with local high schools (Wisconsin Rapids public and private, Nekoosa Public Schools, Port Edwards Public Schools, and the Community Christian Academy) to create a charter high school called the Central Cities Health Institute, open to 11th and 12th graders. The charter high school was designed to increase exposure to and exploration of health careers.

- The College encourages involvement in institutional and program-specific accreditation teams. Three individuals at the college are AQIP systems appraisers; one of the systems appraisers is also a consultant evaluator for the PEAQ program.
- The College supports participation in professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Participation extends from board members to operational staff members. For instance, the president of the college serves on the board of the Council of North Central Two-Year Colleges, the second largest organization of two-year colleges in the United States.
- The health programs collaborate extensively with clinical sites for students, and shape curriculum and training to meet the needs of the clinical sites.
- The College conducts an annual employer survey in Nursing, asking how MSTC nursing graduates compare to other nursing grads hired by the employer.
- Early Childhood students provide training in area day care centers as part of collaborative partnerships.
- Since the College's Urban Forestry program articulates students into a four-year program at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, the program undergoes continuous review and update with the UWSP.

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- MSTC designed short-term courses for basic metal fabrication training, based on an expressed need from Marshfield area manufacturing employers. The curriculum was designed with input from local industry representatives.
 - A local employer asked for custom Six Sigma training focusing on their needs. MSTC designed a training program with them.
 - The sensitivity of local stakeholders to fiscal responsibility has driven the College to focus on being efficient and effective in all endeavors, in order to keep our tax levy mill rate stable.
 - The College built a wellness program for employees.
 - In partnership with Lakeland College, the College developed more than 10 interwoven programs, which are designed to allow students to earn an associate degree through the College and a bachelor's degree through Lakeland. The College also created a shared Associate of Arts with UW-WC, and has extensive articulation agreements with high schools and colleges.
6. *Overall, the MSTC portfolio document appears to focus on a more traditional (PEAQ) approach to accreditation requirements rather than an AQIP approach. Failure to shift college processes to a stakeholder based system will impede college efforts to realize the full benefits of a quality improvement culture.*

The various activities outlined in response to the strategic issues above indicate that the College has a continuous improvement focus appropriate to an AQIP institution. Additional examples not listed in the previous sections include the Monday activity period, and team meetings. The College limits the scheduling of classes on Mondays from 1:00 until 2:00; the second Monday of the month is set aside for division and department staff meetings, and the fourth Monday is set aside for campus-wide staff meetings and events. The activity periods provide a time for faculty and staff to communicate and collaborate on strengthening programs and processes. First Mondays are reserved for student club meetings, and third Mondays are for Student Senate meetings and events.

Update Process

The systems appraisal was analyzed by a team within the College Advancement department. The team divided the feedback into two categories: Items that represented miscommunications on the part of the Systems Portfolio writers, and items that actually represented strengths or opportunities.

Miscommunications were items where the Systems Portfolio writers did not adequately document existing processes, data, or information. For the items thus identified, the body of the College's Portfolio was updated to clarify the process, data, or information. The focus throughout the update process was complete documentation, without regard to the length of the Portfolio. The College viewed the Portfolio as a repository for documentary evidence; the Portfolio will be edited for length prior to submission in June 2010.

Opportunities identified in the systems appraisal process were summarized into two high-level themes. The high-level themes included:

1. A lack of an explicitly designed continuous improvement process cycle.
2. A lack of a formalized process for using data to inform decision making.

The high-level themes drove the selection of focus categories for the College's second Strategy Forum in January 2007, and influenced the selection of current action projects. The Systems Portfolio update will be posted to the College's continuous improvement page no later than a month before the scheduled checkup visit.

Strategy Forum

The high-level themes drove the plan of action for the Strategy Forum, which the College attended January 23-26, 2007. The team composition included faculty, staff, and a board member, and was based on the two categories on which the College chose to focus, *Helping Students Learn* (category 1), and *Measuring Effectiveness* (category 7). The focus categories were chosen based on feedback in the College's systems appraisal feedback report.

At the strategy forum, the team spent a great deal of time developing a Category Improvement Campaign tied to Category 7. The team identified the current state of the College's measurement efforts, and the desired future state. The team identified four large-scale efforts that would move the College to the desired future state:

1. Identify and establish academic effectiveness indicators for programs
2. Create dashboard indicators for each academic effectiveness indicator
3. Provide training and professional development on using the indicators for faculty, staff, and board members
4. Integrate the measures into the College's strategic planning process

The College has a current action project designed to meet the first three goals identified by the team. The action project team met initially in January 2007 and has a structured timeline running through January 2009.

At the strategy forum, the team had a primary focus on Category 7, which the group considered foundational to a continuous improvement culture. The College has a current action project centered on Category 1, aimed at standardizing a College-wide (as opposed to a program-level) admissions and orientation program.

The College brought in an outside AQIP facilitator to lead a team in the development of a Category Improvement Campaign for Category 1. This activity occurred in September 2007, right after the beginning of the school year. The team of faculty and staff members identified five large-scale efforts that would move the College to the desired future state:

1. Continue to expand learning activity options for faculty and staff to improve teaching and learning
2. Develop a clear academic roadmap for students in the advising and orientation process
3. Create customized programs in multiple delivery formats to meet individual learning needs for a wide variety of stakeholders
4. Develop connections between staff and students to improve student persistence and retention
5. Develop approaches to improve student foundation skills to support successful attainment of educational goals

Current Action Projects

The College has three current action projects. The projects are concentrated on developing measures of academic program effectiveness, designing a standardized admissions and orientation process, and supporting online instruction. Each of the action projects are summarized briefly below.

Academic Program Effectiveness

Benchmarking performance is a central AQIP process. As a member of the three-college WILM consortium, MSTC is ideally situated to develop academic effectiveness indicators for programs that can be benchmarked against two other institutions of similar size and with similar service demographics.

Academic effectiveness indicators would provide a concrete tool for gauging program health, which is tied directly to organizational health. The indicators would also provide a direct means to determine whether specific programs are meeting workforce needs. Information from the indicators could be used to drive decisions about program expansion or modification. The indicators would be used primarily by the decision makers closest to the decision point.

Admissions and Orientation

The College currently has a mixed set of admissions and orientation processes that vary across locations. Such variation can result in confusion for students and staff. A standardized process across College locations would improve the student experience, communicate consistent expectations, and help enhance recruitment and retention. The goal of the action project is to build a standard College admission and orientation process at all three campuses.

Online Support

Students are looking for flexible delivery options as a means to increase accessibility to educational learning opportunities. The College is ideally situated to establish processes and procedures for supporting online courses and programs, since MSTC is in the process of ramping up the number of online courses from what has historically a relatively small number of online courses.

The College has five adjoining technical college districts with firm commitments to online delivery, so MSTC must expand its online teaching and learning to remain competitive.

With the current and future planned growth in online instruction the College wants to ensure that instructors have adequate support for working in an online teaching and learning environment. The goal of the action project is to create a standardized system to support online courses and programs.

The work of the team resulted in the hiring of a dedicated Online Support Specialist, tasked with supporting faculty in moving teaching and learning online. The faculty and staff team also engaged in an active review of the College's online learning management system through focus groups and surveys, the results of which drove changes in processes and systems. The College is evaluating a change in the learning management system based on faculty input. The team continues to revise systems based on faculty and stakeholder feedback.

Retired Action Projects

The College retired three action projects after feedback from the systems appraisal process was received. The three retired projects are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Internal Communication

The purpose of this action project was to improve internal communication. The modeled communicating about communication resulted in both higher visibility of good communication, and improved communication across the College. The communication from the team sent a message to all employees that the College valued open communication and wanted to support it in any way possible.

The College administration demonstrated the importance of communication by negotiating an additional divisional planning day into the new faculty contract, as well as four "college initiative" days. These days are utilized to support College goals and initiatives or other work that has the intent of

positively impacting student learning. The divisional planning and college initiative days have fostered better communication by providing dedicated time focused on the sharing of best practices and working together toward College goals.

External Collaborations

The purpose of the external collaboration project was to document existing collaborations between the College and external stakeholders, and codify what made an effective collaborative partnership. The action team designed software tools to compile a listing of the partnerships that the College maintained with external organizations. More than three hundred collaborations were identified.

In October 2006, the team presented a session entitled “Documenting and Data: Technical College Partnerships” at the Wisconsin Technical College System’s Fall Conference. The conference, called “Learning and Improving: The Human Side of Data,” brought together faculty and staff from across the technical college system to share best practices. The session provided information on the processes used to document and categorize the various collaborative relationships that supported the College’s mission. This initial exploration and documentation was an essential first step in the development of a systematic understanding of the strategic importance of collaboration in a two-year, public technical college.

Advising

The purpose of this project was to improve the advising process for newly enrolled program students. The goal was to design and implement an efficient and effective advising system for students who had enrolled in an MSTC program, but had not taken their first course. The project struggled to maintain progress, largely because of leadership changes early on (both deans leading the team retired at the same time; the new deans assumed leadership).

There were several positive outcomes from the project. One of the recommendations of the team was the development of orientation guides for incoming students. The idea for orientation guides was based on the successful use of such guides in some programs at the College. The recommendation suggested that the guides follow a set of guiding principles for content, but tailored to specific programs. The purpose of the guides was to provide, in a single location, a wide range of information needed by new students to succeed in a degree program. The team developed a list of required content that included background on program instructors; fees; MSTC’s core abilities and general education outcomes; program and occupation requirements; expectations for students including academic integrity, ADA, the College’s mission, vision, and values; a list of supportive web sites, and program-specific policies. To date, 22 of MSTC’s 45 programs have program orientation handbooks and orientation programs designed to clarify program expectations for students.

Another positive outcome was an offshoot of the project. The Director of Student Support, responsible for the counseling process at the College, worked with advisors and counselors from the College to update the advising material in the College’s new faculty mentoring handbook. The handbook was updated in August 2006. New faculty who started in August had the updated mentoring material. Although this project was not part of the action project per se, it was a direct result of the project.

Continuing Work

The College has numerous on-going continuous improvement efforts. While there are too many to fit within this quality program summary, some select projects, both completed and in-process, are discussed below.

Cafeteria upgrade- This project grew out of a CQIN summer institute. Students, faculty, and staff were surveyed by a team of students led by faculty to identify needs and wants in regard to the food service at the College's Wisconsin Rapids campus. The outcome of the process was an updated space, a completely new (and healthier) menu, and wireless computer access for users.

Quality Review Program (QRP) implementation- The QRP system is a state-wide effort to quantify academic program performance in the context of direct comparisons of identical programs throughout the state. The program went through a trial rollout across the state, and the lessons learned were used to shape the final program. Now, the QRP system is beginning to be used to assess program performance at the College.

Employee Development Center (EDC)- The EDC provides training to faculty and staff. The EDC uses feedback from faculty and staff at the College to determine topics for training sessions. The sessions led by EDC staff members are designed to provide just-in-time training; feedback from session participants is used to drive improvements in the training provided in the center.

Moving courses and programs online- Through environmental scanning, it was determined that there was strong demand for increased online course offerings. The College started an action project team with strong faculty representation tasked with building processes and systems to support the effort. One of the recommendations of the action project team was to hire a staff member dedicated to supporting faculty moving teaching and learning online, and to oversee online processes at the College.

Adjunct certification support systems-Through discussion with deans, associate deans, and adjunct instructors it was determined that the cost of required WTCS certification courses to maintain teaching certification was a barrier to the retention of qualified adjunct instructors. A team evaluated the issue and the result was a change in College policy to provide adjunct instructors with a stipend for completing recertification courses. In addition, the group noted that there was a gap in available courses for adjunct instructors needing a 10-hour training session for recertification. A team member identified an existing course from the League for Innovation and secured approval from the state certification office to use the League course to meet the needs of the adjunct instructors.

Technology plan- The College has developed a formal technology planning process, centered on meeting the needs of all groups of stakeholders. The process is designed to collect needs and wants from employee groups throughout the College, which are then vetted and consolidated into a single technology plan that drives funding requests. A high priority in the process is to improve teaching and learning. The technology plan drives deployment schedules and strategies; for instance, the choice of classrooms built-out as smart classrooms (with a full suite of technology tools to support teaching and learning) is based on classroom utilization.

Facilities improvement- When stakeholder input leads to the development of new programs or expansions of existing programs, the facilities plan is focused by such input. Stakeholder needs led to the expansion of the College's Marshfield campus, which is in a community with a world-class healthcare provider. The College built three new programs unique to the state technical college system, and the new programs required additional teaching and learning spaces. The facilities plan was driven by the programmatic needs of the campus. The planned facilities work for the protective and emergency services programs, scheduled for FY2009, was driven by the same processes as the facilities upgrades to the Marshfield campus.

MyMSTC Portal- The College built a team to quantify student need for electronic self-service resources for scheduling, registration, and access to data. The result of the effort led to the creation of the MyMSTC portal, where students, faculty, and staff have access to a wide range of individually pertinent information. The portal team surveyed students on features they wanted to see in the portal, and did

user testing for the web site with students. The Director of Student support serves on the portal leadership team, and is able to share upcoming changes and ideas with the Student Senate.