

**Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of  
St. Cloud Technical and Community College

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for

**The Higher Learning Commission**  
A commission of the North Central Association

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## Elements Of St. Cloud Technical and Community College's Feedback Report

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

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

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

**Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary:** In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback; and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that each AQIP

Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

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

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

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

**Quality of Report & Its Use:** As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the institution by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state, as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative

that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

## **Reflective Introduction and Executive Summary For St. Cloud Technical and Community College**

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

*St. Cloud has a 66-year history of providing quality, accessible and affordable higher education. As of May 7, 2013, it serves 2230 full-time students and 2521 part-time students. Nearly 70% of SCTCC students come from a six county service area. It is an open enrollment institution admitting students based on evidence of high school graduation or GED completion. In 2010 its mission was revised to reflect its status as a "comprehensive community college." The College asserts that it is committed to placing students first, and that it is guided by its mission to prepare students for life-long learning by providing career, technical and transferable education. A strategic vision is enunciated through its "Pillars of Success." These pillars are Student Success, Community Building, Skilled Workforce, Sustainability, and Employee Engagement*

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

- **Category 1: Helping Student's Learn** – In this category overview, SCTCC stated that student success and developing a skilled workforce are priorities. During the past four years the College developed an improved, student-focused advising model and is in the process of developing and implementing an enhanced academic assessment process. Both of these efforts are supported by AQIP Action Projects. Improvements are noted in both advising and assessment. The transfer programs are less mature than the occupational programs in terms of course and program assessment. The College identified five competencies that are designed to measure the Associate degree level of learning. The College has an opportunity to have a systematic and measurable process in place for a comprehensive assessment of student learning for general education.

Program outcomes are determined by faculty and administration in consultation with advisory committees. Programs are reviewed on a 3-5 year cycle. The majority of career and technical programs employ the use of Technical Skills Assessments as a measure of student learning. SCTCC participates in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Benchmark results for 2009 – 2013 are presented. Pass rates for licensure and board examinations exceed national averages.

- **Category Two: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives** -- SCTCC's main focus in Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives has been in community building and developing a skilled workforce for the region, which is the College's primary objective for meeting the needs of external stakeholders. The College is working to enhance its relationships with external stakeholders. For example, the College is a founding partner and an active participant in the Greater St. Cloud Economic Development Corp. and it is engaged in a project to establish a brand that accurately represents its expanded mission. The change in institutional mission has necessitated development of a Brand Implementation Plan to help communicate SCTCC's new role.
- **Category Three: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders Needs** – SCTCC uses a nationally benchmarked survey, CCSSE, as a data source with regard to student engagement and success. The College Career Center helps align program offerings with the educational and training needs of students entering college from the workforce. Centralized academic advising and the early alert system, Starfish, enhance student communication with advisors and faculty. An integrated process for moving students from application to enrollment is aligned and nearly integrated. The student on-boarding process is nearly integrated and the college has recently implemented new student business process improvements to help students enroll and to persist. In order to address concerns about student retention, the College has recently developed a centralized academic advising system and an electronic early alert system to improve contact and communication among students, advisors, and instructors.
- **Category Four: Valuing People** – SCTCC sets professional improvement targets at both the College and individual employee levels and the 2012 Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) Professional Development Survey results rank the College above average in the categories of institutional attention to staff development, supervisory support for staff development, and performance management efforts. The College is beginning to

use the PACE survey to gauge employee perceptions. Preliminary data indicate that communicating information is an opportunity for improvement. The institution has implemented the PACE Employee Engagement /Workplace Climate Survey to help identify personnel issues and to provide information on the structure. The College promotes “appreciative inquiry” to enhance shared governance and strategic planning.

- **Category Five: Leading and Communicating** – SCTCC aligns its process for leading and communicating with its strategic pillars and MnSCU policies. Comparative data from national instruments, PACE and CCSSE, are used to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. The hiring of a communications manager allowed for the expansion, integration, and systematic use of existing communication vehicles. The College’s administration and faculty participate in a shared governance model. The results of a PACE survey indicate that the College has a relatively high level of productivity and a healthy campus climate. Faculty, however, ranked the institutional structure below those with other classifications.
- **Category Six: Supporting Institutional Operations** -- The College has in place processes and measurements that are transactional in nature and have well-aligned, stable daily operational processes. These units are consciously managed and regularly evaluated for improvement. Processes for serving students from application to graduation are perceived to be transparent and effective. Although SCTCC indicates that its processes for Supporting Institutional Operations are aligned or systematic, descriptions indicate who is involved in the process, but not how the processes work. SCTCC does collect and analyze comparative data including state and national data. The College says it is focused on sustainability in Supporting Institutional Operations, but what is meant by sustainability is not fully developed or articulated. The College provides extensive information related to Student Services and student satisfaction.
- **Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness** --The College’s system for handling and analyzing data is improving and is currently the focus of an AQIP Action Project. The College has supported a number of new processes to improve its operational functions. An appreciative inquiry process focuses on accomplishments and engages the entire college community in an inclusive and participative manner to build on its successes. Based on the results of comparisons with other institutions in Minnesota, SCTCC has established a strategic goal to increase retention by 2% and reduce its instructional cost per FYE. The measures deployed by SCTCC are aligned with the MnSCU system and the institution’s

strategic plan. The MnSCU uses a dashboard to measure effectiveness for 22 key performance indicators of each college and university in the system that SCTCC analyzes. Performance levels are at or above peer institutions on most of the key performance indicators. However, it is not clear how audits and surveys are conducted systematically or how results are used to make changes.

- **Category Eight: Planning and Continuous Improvement** -- The College's planning processes support the overall vision and strategies of the Minnesota State Colleges and University System. "Charting the Future for a Prosperous Minnesota" provides the strategic framework for increasing access, affordability, excellence, and service by the state's colleges and universities. Planning processes are managed by the College's Executive Leadership team. SCTCC utilizes an integrated planning process beginning with the College's Annual Work Plan. The Annual Work Plan is monitored for continuous improvement to determine which initiatives have worked and where opportunities for improvement exist.
- **Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships** - The College has established a number of partnerships with the community such as the Connections Program with St. Cloud State University, the St. Cloud Metro Transit, and the Great River Perkins Consortium (GRPC) –a collaboration involving the College and 25 secondary school districts. On-campus resources, such as the new Veteran's Center, are also described. The College has a number of collaborative relationships with community agencies and organizations. By fostering these relationships and promoting campus-based services, the College is able to provide students with assistance that allows them to make the most of their academic experiences.

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

### **Strategic Challenges For St. Cloud Technical and Community College**

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the Systems Appraisal Team attempted to identify the broader issues that would seem to present the greatest challenges and opportunities for the institution in the coming years. These areas are ones that the institution should address as it seeks to become the institution it wants to be. From these the institution may discover its immediate priorities, as well as strategies for long-term performance improvement. These items may also serve as the basis for future activities and projects that satisfy other AQIP



requirements. The team also considered whether any of these challenges put the institution at risk of not meeting the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. That portion of the team's work is presented later in this report.

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

- While SCTCC benefits from consistency brought about by oversight from the MnSCU system, it is strategically important that the College establish its own unique identity tied to its expanded mission as a comprehensive community college and focusing on the needs of its stakeholders.
- While SCTCC has clearly identified learning outcomes for its career and technical programs, the role and expectations of its general education program need to be developed. The process responses provided a narrative for the components of the process, but could have been strengthened with flow charts that indicate when decisions occur during a calendar, fiscal, or academic year. For instance, the budgeting and strategic planning processes are unclear as to the time in the academic year when decisions are made. The responses to the process questions need to reflect the "how" of a process, not the "who" or "what." A review of Baldrige Award Winner Applications at [http://patapsco.nist.gov/Award\\_Recipients/index.cfm](http://patapsco.nist.gov/Award_Recipients/index.cfm) may provide models for presenting the processes deployed at SCTCC. In addition, the College needs to provide results of its assessment of student learning and indicate the ways in which these results lead to improvement in curriculum and instruction.
- SCTCC will benefit from working to develop an integrated process for calculating results from data and systematically using these results to drive its planning and decisions making procedures. Trend and comparison data were presented in the results although the comparisons relied heavily from the MnSCU system reports. Comparisons to other colleges and organizations may help the College identify best practices and targets for improvement.
- The responses to improvement questions tended to be more anecdotal. The actions reported often did not reflect how results were used to determine improvement. The portfolio would have benefitted from making the evidence for accreditation explicit in each category. The process items that should provide evidence for accreditation are mentioned on the AQIP website. Generally, the information presented in the systems

portfolio does not present a clear picture of processes that lead to measurable outcomes that are then reviewed against performance targets that are then utilized to identify improvements to the processes – and thus complete the continuous improvement loop. SCTCC could benefit from a more defined process that includes the steps it takes when setting targets and provides for stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of its planning processes. While SCTCC has established processes, identified some data for results, and embarked upon improvements, it did not demonstrate in this portfolio that this is being done in a systematic way that shows a clear linkage between process, results, and improvements. Additionally, as noted in several of the category statements which follow, it was unclear to the team in several areas whether performance benchmarks had been set for specific metrics – and if so, how were those set and were they met? If not met, what actions were taken to improve results? The portfolio seemed to lack a focus on external data elements as well as performance targets in general.

### **AQIP Category Feedback**

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

**AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn.** This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education institutions and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the 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 Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 1.

*The college is committed to placing students first and is guided by its mission to prepare students for life-long learning by providing career, technical, and transferable education. The College is aligned with the Minnesota State College and University Strategic Framework and its Associate of Arts degree is designed to meet the requirements of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. SCTCC involves constituents in processes to determine learning outcomes and has established College outcomes and competencies for all students. Although learning outcomes are assessed for career and technical programs, it is not clear how the College outcomes and competencies are assessed across the programs and for general education.*

*SCTCC has recently redirected efforts and increased college-wide focus to Helping Students Learn. While most processes are too newly developed to have produced many usable or meaningful results, the College appears committed to moving toward a more comprehensive and systematic approach. The College has an opportunity to examine how learning outcomes—as currently defined at the course, program, and college level—can be measured through direct assessments and how those assessment processes and plans can (or will be) sustained. The college has an opportunity to more clearly define the assessment process and measures, and to link this to the strategic plan.*

**1P1, S.** SCTCC supports a participatory process for continuous improvement involving faculty, staff, administrators, students, advisory committees and external stake holders. In 2012, the College drafted outcomes and competencies that were reviewed, adopted and approved by administration and appropriate college councils. These outcomes are aligned with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) and these competencies are integrated into the College's assessment process.

**1P2, S.** Program learning outcomes are developed by faculty, administrators and advisory committees consisting of industry experts and students. Outcomes adopted for the liberal arts are specifically related to the curriculum at SCTCC and correspond to outcomes and competencies established by the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

**1P3, S.** In designing new programs and courses SCTCC follows the required MnSCU process and in 2012, the College was granted HLC approval to offer three online degrees. The College uses Quality Matters standards in the instructional design of distance learning courses, and the SCTCC online committee has developed "methodology standards" for online courses.

**1P4, S.** SCTCC design process for academic programs is responsive to changing student needs, which is demonstrated by the recent reviews of 35 Associate in Applied Science degree programs to assure they were limited to 60 credits. The college has also reviewed academic programs through its SCTCC's participation in MnSCU's Veterans Education Transfer System program and through identification of 50 courses related to military occupations for which veterans could receive credit as recommended by the American Council of Education.

**1P5, S.** Students are admitted on the bases of high school graduation or GED completion. As required of all MnSCU colleges, SCTCC uses the Accuplacer placement exam for determining college-ready abilities in reading, writing and mathematics. Competitive admission standards are established for some programs revealing the College's careful consideration of the preparation required of students for specific curricula and programs.

**1P6, SS.** The college responded to data that identified areas of improvement in the process of communicating preparation requirements by forming an AQIP action project "Advising Audit" and forming a Team for Academic and Student Success (TASS). They have changed their student information sessions into educational system to help students succeed and have an on boarding system called the "Cyclone Experience" to help students stay on track with several specifically timed check points.

**1P7, S.** SCTCC assists students in selecting programs of study through a required online orientation session. The GPS LifePlan (Goals + Plans = Success) helps students set goals and design a course of study based on their needs and interests. Specialized, targeted orientation has been made available to displaced workers and veterans. During the mid-semester Student Success Day, students meet with their advisors to register for the next term; and advisors from the four-year institutions are available to talk with students considering transfer.

**1P8, S.** SCTCC recently entered into an innovative partnership with St. Cloud State University (SCSU) through *The Community College Connection Program* to address the needs of students who do not meet the admission standards of the university. The College has designed and offered a "Reading Boot Camp" and developmental reading and writing courses. In addition, the Mary Stangler Center for Academic Success (CAS) offers free workshops and tutoring, including support provided by professional and student tutors in core subject areas. SCTCC has demonstrated the success of these

services (Figure 2) and has used the success measures to promote use of the Center.

**1P9.** No comment.

**1P10, O.** The special needs of various student groups are the focus of the College's Diversity Committee. Although the College has the TRIO and Mosaic programs and while the faculty have worked to incorporate diversity across the curriculum, the full Diversity Committee meets only four times per year. As a result, ongoing and collaborative attention to the diversity plan could be a challenge. A more aligned or integrated approach to diversity—as reflected in the student body, staff, faculty, services, and curriculum—might help the College show its commitment to diversity.

**1P11, O.** The faculty evaluation process outlined in SCTCC policy includes a professional development plan that emphasizes effective teaching, a faculty self-reflection prior to the classroom observation, and informal peer-to-peer classroom observations. However, the link between this process and faculty assessment of student learning is not clear and SCTCC's large number of adjunct faculty appear not to be involved in assessment of student learning at the academic program level.

**1P12, S.** The College builds course delivery systems based on end-of-the-course surveys, CCSSE responses, and enrollment data in order to address students' needs. General education courses are built around program courses which are determined first. All courses must follow the Common Course Outline and meet the approved outcomes. A dedicated faculty liaison staff member provides support for D2L, the College's online learning management system.

**1P13, S.** All courses and programs are part of a 3-5 year assessment cycle. Program and course changes are determined using feedback from faculty, students, advisory committees, and appropriate external organizations. General education courses are aligned with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. Career and technical programs rely on the use of Technical Skills Assessments.

**1P14, O.** The College has an opportunity to improve its responsiveness to changing student needs by reducing its current 3-5 year academic program review cycle to 2-3 years, which better aligns with the length of its academic programs and the ever changing economy.

**1P15, O.** SCTCC uses surveys, Accuplacer testing, and the Starfish early alert system to identify learning support needs. Library collections and staffing meet the standards set

by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. It is not clear, however, how the College evaluates and addresses its needs for classroom and other instructional technology to support teaching or what processes are in place for faculty and staff to assess how well their technology needs are being met.

**1P16, S.** The college has a Student Life Office to help engage students in the campus environment for a more satisfying and successful college experience. They have partnered with St. Cloud University in the alcohol and drug education programming and show significant decreases from 2005 in students who identify themselves as high risk drinkers.

**1P17, O.** Individual course outcomes are designed to ensure that students meet the learning and development expectations of the college. While licensure and credentialing exams are used to measure the attainment of earning expectations in applied programs, there is no mention of how learning expectations are measured in the liberal arts and sciences.

**1P18, O.** Processes for assessing student learning was identified as an area for improvement in 2010. In response the College has identified an action project to help improve student learning through the continued enhancement of academic assessment. The college has opportunity to build this into a College Assessment Plan that links with budgeting and strategic planning

**1R1, O.** SCTCC uses the MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measures to indicate success rates (e.g. retention, licensure pass rates, etc.) over time and for comparison with peers, but results from direct measures of students' learning are not provided. Processes are described for collecting and analyzing data at the course, program, and college level, but little information is provided about how faculty uses results to make improvements. Change appears to be driven primarily by indirect measures (number of semesters needed and course grades). In addition, it appears only indirect measures of the College outcomes are collected on a routine basis.

**1R2, O.** Although examples of potential assessment methods such as capstone or service learning projects are described, the College did not provide performance results for the common student learning and development objectives. The College has an opportunity to set benchmarks in their assessment process at the course level. Table 1.5 of CCSSE Benchmarks 2009, 2011, and 2013 indicate a downward trend of SCTCC results and in comparison to the MnSCU benchmark. This does not help faculty and

staff make changes to curriculum or processes that would show improved student learning.

**1R3, O.** Performance results for specific program learning objectives are provided only for the Health programs based on licensure rates, but no measures or results are provided for other programs. The College has an opportunity to develop and formalize systems to record and analyze assessment results for those programs that do not include national licensure or specialized accreditation. SCTCC has an opportunity to measure how faculty advising and frequent interaction with students lead to assessment results that can be acted upon. Finally, while most of the pass rates in Table 1.6 show SCTCC students exceed the national averages, the College has an opportunity to analyze declining or below average pass rates.

**1R4, S.** With information based on the MnSCU survey of recent graduates, Table 1.7 “Related Employment Rate” shows the overall placement rate for SCTCC graduates was 97% for 2012. These results provide evidence that the students completing programs have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills expected by employers.

**1R5, S.** The newly adopted Starfish Early Alert system is allowing SCTCC to track performance results for various learning support processes tied to advising. The Starfish system will allow the College to make continuous improvements to its advising and early intervention processes. Library usage has been tracked extensively since 2006.

**1R6, S.** SCTCC uses CCSSE and MnSCU comparisons to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement as mentioned in 1R2. These comparisons may help the College identify targets for improvement in its processes.

**1I1, O.** Although a recent Action Project is focused on assessment of student learning, the College has the opportunity to make the assessment processes more systematic and comprehensive in order to gather and make use of performance results in courses, programs, and College outcomes. In addition, in working on this Action Project, the College might consider how some of the College outcomes—and the AQIP Action Project goals—can be measured in order to make continuous improvement.

**AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.** This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution’s major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the

institution's character, it examines the 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 Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 2.

*As suggested in the feedback from the 2010 Systems Portfolio, SCTCC has identified other distinctive objectives beyond production of graduates to include the areas of student life, marketing and communications, training solutions, SCTCC foundation, and community service related to academic programs. The College also has the opportunity to identify other distinctive objectives following its transition to a comprehensive community college. While the institution has identified measurement tools for some of these objectives it is not comprehensive nor is the data collected systematically.*

*The portfolio appears to provide myriad pockets of success without explaining the process, data collection, and results analyses of the identified other distinctive objectives. Progress has been made and there is an opportunity to more cohesively assess objectives, determine faculty and staff needs related to these objectives, measure and analyze results, and close the feedback loop with the budgeting and planning cycle. A systematic process may help the College become proactive in improving these processes.*

**2P1, S.** Aligned with the Minnesota State College and University Strategic Framework, SCTCC serves the community in a variety of ways. The institution has implemented several projects including a branding project and foundation strategic planning. In addition, the institution partners with the community to provide services to students and contribute to the local community by offering free services for low-income individuals and their families as well as contract training for local employers. Advisory committees and community participation support the faculty programs. Students in various academic areas provide services and educational programs for the community.

**2P2, S.** MnSCU Board Policy requires SCTCC to operate and maintain advisory committees. The College gathers community input through advisory committees, monitoring labor markets, working closely with local workforce investment boards and the state DOL. Administrators are encouraged to participate in community activities and organizations and meet regularly with trade associations and host MnSCU and government-sponsored listening sessions and forums on campus.

**2P3, S.** The College Work Plan identifies initiatives to be accomplished. The College



has a Work Plan that is aligned with the annual Budget review which is the main source for communication of the expectations for these other objectives with internal and external audiences.

**2P4, O.** The College shares feedback from the community with departmental and executive leadership to analyze the progress and appropriateness of its objectives. The College Work Plans reflect department and division work teams' objectives. SCTCC's re-branding process was used to assess and review other distinctive objectives that resulted in the development of the Brand Implementation Plan. The re-branding process provides a model for the College to develop a systematic review process for other distinctive objectives.

**2P5, O.** While faculty and staff needs for meeting non-instructional objectives are assessed on an *ad hoc* basis, it is not clear whether these needs are also addressed in the annual budgeting process. The College mentions that staffing needs are considered when new programs and services are implemented, however, it is not clear that ongoing assessment of activities is conducted. A systematic process aligned with the annual strategic planning process may help the College identify priorities to address faculty and staff needs.

**2P6, S.** The Leadership Team meets weekly to discuss objectives and processes. If needed, adjustments are made to a project.

**2R1, O.** The College Pillars, Work Plan, and state strategic work plan are aligned to meet objectives. Other measures include public safety incident reports, enrollment in training courses, grants development, and community giving. While the College collects data related to their training solutions and private giving, it is unclear how SCTCC is measuring increased visibility related to the branding project or how the College is measuring student life and community service programs mentioned earlier in the portfolio. No results are provided for these programs.

**2R2, S.** The College reports scholarships and grants received in FY 2014, and that \$20M was secured since 2010. Attendance/participation data is presented in Table 2.3. Additionally the college has attracted or been part of attracting major international businesses to the community. SCTCC has also secured funding from national grant programs in support of its access, retention, completion, and community partnership objectives. SCTCC may further strengthen the reporting of results for each measure to identify trends and determine if its processes for other distinctive objectives are

improving.

**2R3, S.** Figures 2.1 – 4 provide comparisons with MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measures that assists the College in identifying trends and gaps in performance. The College may strengthen its comparisons to peer institutions within the MnSCU system to benchmark its performance and to add comparisons for grant performance mentioned in 2R2. Although lagging other MnSCU institutions in this category, SCTCC recognizes its situation and has plans to improve its standing. The College may also measure the impact of the co-curriculum activities and compare with national benchmarking such as CCSSE. National benchmarks on fund raising may be available through IPEDS or other national databases to provide comparisons beyond the state of Minnesota and with other entities outside of higher education.

**2R4, S.** Recognizing the need to reach STEM students, the institution created a program specifically for middle school students and those identified as not on a college track. This program assisted in strengthening the relationship between the college and the community. The College might want to identify other action projects that may have an impact on the College or communities within the region.

**2I1, O.** The College's Pillars of Success represent key priorities of the College and are aligned with the state framework and the college work plan. A number of programs are in place to promote community building and develop a skilled workforce. However, the five key measures and performance indicators identified for developing a skilled workforce should be reflected in the results. There is an opportunity for the college to move beyond basic participation numbers as a form of measurement and describe more fully how the feedback process is comprehensive and how the institution closes the loop to improve performance of these objectives. The indicators and measurements provide SCTCC the opportunity to identify trends and performance against high performing organizations in order to select targets for improvement in 2I2.

**2I2, S.** The college's culture encourages linkages between the Pillars of Success, Annual Work Plan, and individual plans to achieve desired results. The decision on choosing objectives and results stems from the Annual College Work Plan which is approved by the executive leadership.

**AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.** This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 3.

*The College appears to be focused on student success and uses data to make informed decisions for improving the understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs. The Orion project and other similar community projects indicate the College is engaged in the community and seeks input from the community. However, it is not clear if these processes are systematic. The College has an opportunity to examine more fully the data that are already collected and to take a more comprehensive approach in considering other stakeholders and their needs. Especially as the College has transitioned to its new mission, those groups who might be considered key stakeholders for the institution have likely increased. A flow chart or road map may help the College identify how measures and actions are used to effectively address students and stakeholders needs.*

**3P1, S.** SCTCC reviews national trends, IPEDS data, MnSCU student persistence metrics, the Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council data, and personal contact with individual students to determine employment trends. Tables 3.1-2 provide MnSCU and SCTCC data that are used to identify needs and actions for student groups. A TechQual survey is also used every other year to identify technology needs of students and faculty. The information gathered from these sources is shared at meetings among college divisions. Performance measures noted in Table 3.1 are also reported earlier in table 1.4.

**3P2, S.** The College asserts that it is committed to placing students first. Faculty play a key role in making this happen both inside and outside the classroom. Relationship development begins with the application process and is strengthened through various student-oriented programs such as the Cyclone Experience. Additional assistance is provided by the Academic Advising Center, the Starfish Early alert system, electronic communications, and student organizations which are required to provide community service. A flow chart or roadmap illustrating students' progress through the College may

help identify how the various touch points are integrated and are effective.

**3P3, S.** The College uses climate surveys and established relationships with alumni, community members, and industry to analyze the changing needs of key stakeholder groups. The collaboration between two academic divisions and a local health care resulted in an innovative program that provided jobs for SCTCC graduates. A systematic process for the analysis of the nine items used to determine the needs of key stakeholders and the climate survey may help SCTCC identify key stakeholders' needs in a timely manner.

**3P4, S.** SCTCC personnel participate in many community activities, and community leaders serve on a number of campus advisory committees. The administration meets with the bargaining units, student government and other groups to maintain internal communications. External communications are maintained with regional and local professional and community groups. To maintain relationships with external audiences, the 2012 award-winning *In the Works* magazine is mailed to approximately 20,000 alumni, donors, business partners, and elected officials.

**3P5, S.** The College reaches out to many stakeholder groups for guidance. Orion, an example explained previously in 2R4, may serve as a model for meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders. The Orion Project is used to focus on students who are interested in STEM but not otherwise academically strong to be successful.

**3P6, S.** SCTCC has a complaint/grievance policy that is disseminated through the College Catalog, Student Handbook, and the College website. The procedures outlined identify timelines for decision-making and responses to the complainant(s) as well as the SCTCC position titles for those who are responsible for steps in the process. This summative evaluation process may serve as a model for how other process reviews are to occur and results analyzed.

**3R1, O.** Although SCTCC administers a Student Feedback Survey (Class Climate) and the Baldrige Survey mentioned in 3I2 no results of these surveys are reported in 3R2-6. Providing results of this survey may help the College identify strengths and opportunities for improvement for the class climate. The College may also identify other stakeholders such as transfer institutions to learn about the preparedness of SCTCC transfers.

**3R2-3, S.** The College determines the levels of student satisfaction through administration of the biennial Community College Survey of Student Engagement.

Tables 3.3-5 provide CCSSE results for 2009, 2011, and 2013 that indicate improvements in student engagement in services, support and relationships with the College. These positive trends suggest that the processes that build relationships with students are improving. The College is encouraged to learn from these process improvements to identify best practices that could be used for other processes at the College such as helping students “cope with non-academic responsibilities,” “thrive socially,” and child care services.

**3R4, O.** Although employer feedback surveys are mentioned, only the ADN and Practical Nursing programs’ results are reported. The College acknowledges that feedback from advisory committees is considered “non-formalized.” SCTCC has the opportunity to develop a feedback process that generates results to determine stakeholder satisfaction. Results from all programs may help the College identify high performing programs and processes that may serve as models of best practice.

**3R5, S.** The College has collected positive persistence and transition data on the Connections program with SCSU and has evidence of increasing course success (pass) rates when students make use of the Center of Academic Success. The College’s Starfish system project appears to be improving student retention and satisfaction. While highlights of some good results are listed, SCTCC may wish to consider results from other measures.

**3R6, S.** The College compiles comparative data with respect to other institutions in the MNSCU system, and with its CCSSE cohorts. Tables 3.6-8 provide comparative CCSSE data with MnSCU Colleges and CCSSE cohort colleges. The comparisons are favorable to SCTCC and provide an opportunity for the institution to identify targets for improvement and best practices.

**3I1, S.** SCTCC uses the All College Day and AQIP Action Projects to discuss results and identify improvements. The improvement actions are integrated into SCTCC’s Work Plan. Using this process, the College initiated several programs led by the Team for Academic and Student Success to improve student retention. The details of these programs are described in 1P6.

**3I2, S.** SCTCC has worked to develop a “culture of assessment” and has used the development of the College priorities and “Pillars of Success” to emphasize and create a student-focused culture. SCTCC’s use of CCSSE and MnSCU data, the Baldrige survey, and participation in CQIN help to reinforce the College’s focus on making

improvements in identifying and meeting students' and stakeholders' needs. The administration, faculty, and staff have embraced continuous quality improvement and have implemented process improvements.

**AQIP Category 4: Valuing People.** This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 4.

*SCTCC prides itself on having employees that want to improve themselves and the College. Hiring and employee management are in compliance with Minnesota statutes and the MnSCU system. Many processes are determined by collective bargaining agreements.*

*The institution has implemented a PACE climate survey to systematically gather data to guide its efforts. PACE survey results indicate that while SCTCC is relatively highly rated for its student focus, the College needs to address negative perceptions of the institution's consultative environment. The second implementation of the survey results will be available soon to assist them in additional analysis of recent improvements.*

**4P1, S.** SCTCC is in compliance with Minnesota Management and Budget Personnel Rules, and complies with four collective bargaining agreements covering ninety-five percent of all employees. Faculty are required to meet the minimum MnSCU Credentialing Guidelines. The College distinguishes between minimum qualifications and preferred qualifications. An Appreciative Inquiry process is used in an effort to find employees that will continue to promote positive working culture tied to the institution's mission, vision, and strategic plan.

**4P2, S.** In most cases, hiring committees are used as a way to make certain that the people SCTCC employs possess the necessary credentials, skills, and values. The committees include members from underrepresented groups and usually include a least one member from each bargaining unit. Affirmative action procedures and goals are

established at the state level and are overseen through established processes at the College which require hiring supervisors to provide rationale for their decisions on selected candidates.

**4P3, O.** The institution has identified a need to diversify its workforce in order to reflect the diversity of the community it serves. Little progress has been made in the past four years to increase employee diversity. The College has an opportunity to examine patterns and address the potential internal challenges that might have led to the 45 voluntary separations that occurred between July 2012-June 2014. It might be helpful to analyze the more specific reasons for resignations and transfers to determine whether there is a trend that can or should be acted upon in a particular area of the College.

**4P4, S.** New employees are acclimated to the College through an orientation with human resources, the employee's supervisor, and a team member. College mission, values, and priorities are provided through an information booklet and on an MVP card for the employee to reference. In addition, yearly performance evaluations offer time to set goals and outline professional development opportunities. It is unclear if employees are given an opportunity to provide feedback on the orientation process.

**4P5, O.** SCTCC has identified the need to create a succession plan. Using the MnSCU developed model and process, the College is slated to begin the process in 2015. In this context there is an opportunity to make strategic decisions about the desirable full-time to part-time faculty and staff ratios as well as to collect and analyze data regarding likely retirements.

**4P6, S.** Through its day-to-day activities, departments meet to discuss processes and suggested improvements. Policies and procedures are available to guide employees in their work. Peer groups meet with other MnSCU employees to discuss best practices and professional development is also available for employees to discuss issues related to functional areas with colleagues in an effort to improve processes. The College also has begun administering the PACE survey to assess the college environment.

**4P7, O.** While SCTCC ensures ethical practices by monitoring completion of required training on data security, the employee code of ethics, and sexual harassment awareness and reinforces this training through speakers, IT policies, and security access checks; it is unclear if there is a mechanism in place for employees to anonymously report unethical behavior.

**4P8, O.** There is an opportunity for the institution to ensure that all employees are being evaluated on an annual basis. This is important for both productivity assessment as well as for the employee to discuss professional development opportunities. While the College reports an increase in this area, one-third of those responding to the survey did not comply with this annual review component stated earlier as a campus expectation. In addition, there is no mention of opportunities for faculty training and development.

**4P9, S.** SCTCC trains and develops employees by conducting twice-yearly in-service workshops focusing on improving student success, requiring online training for code of conduct, ethics and diversity, and encouraging faculty and staff to participate on teams to address strategic issues. The variety of training options offered both through the System and the College ensures that employees have opportunities throughout their career to grow professionally. Funding is allocated for these activities in addition to tuition waiver benefits for collective bargaining employees and tuition assistance for administrators completing graduate and doctoral programs.

**4P10, S.** SCTCC's design and implementation of the personnel evaluation system is based on Minnesota statutes and MnSCU policies. Performance evaluations are conducted annually and the process is aligned with the College's strategic plan and the "Pillars." The faculty evaluation system is thorough and involves self-assessment, formal and informal classroom observations by academic deans, student feedback surveys, and professional development plans.

**4P11, O.** While the College mentions ongoing recognition through media and an end of the year Celebration, it is unclear how employees are being recognized, what criteria is used, and whether these are meaningful and rewarding to employees.

**4P12, S.** Using results from the Baldrige Express Survey in 2011 the institution identified the PACE survey as an instrument to collect more data regarding workforce engagement issues. The initial results indicated a need for more informal and formal communication which resulted in creation of the Employee Engagement Pillar, coffee with the president, and opening the faculty shared governance meetings to all employees. Feedback is also received after training and through departmental meetings.

**4P13, S.** The College provides information on health and safety on its website. The 2012 PACE survey showed that improvements in communication were needed. Since then the College has worked to provide more opportunities for improving internal communication.



**4R1, S.** SCTCC uses a variety of measures to assess how the institution values people. Recent survey information as well as retention, professional development completion, lost time, and diversity are assessed.

**4R2, O.** The College reports positive results from the surveys and says they rank well among peer institutions. There is an opportunity to show the results and to list some plans of action based on the average rating stated for communication to staff. It is unclear how results are tied back to the individuals and departments. In addition, while the institution uses professional development participation as a metric to assess value, there is an opportunity to dig deeper to determine how the professional development activities are assisting the employee in helping the institution meet the student success goals. What is the impact of the professional development to the employee and the college?

**4R3, OO.** While the college has embarked on a number of new projects to improve productivity and effectiveness which include a new course feedback form, advising audit action plan, several new programs of study, and a new employee evaluation system, no results were provided about the metrics presented demonstrating the productivity and effectiveness of the faculty, staff, and administrators in helping SCTCC achieve its goals.

**4R4, O.** Comparison data from the PACE survey show that the institution is on par with the other colleges; however, there continues to be opportunities to address concerns regarding advancement, communication, and motivation. In addition, there is an opportunity to explore the fact that faculty appear to have the lowest view of the institution.

**4I1, S.** SCTCC's development of the SCTCC Pillars of Success, the development of an Affirmative Action Plan, establishment of a diversity committee, and the creation of a Faculty and Administrator Evaluation system and course feedback process, all align with MnSCU and SCTCC priorities and are tied to the College Annual Work Plan. The links between the College priorities and employee performance and staff development further strengthen the systematic and comprehensive processes for Valuing People.

**4I2, O.** While the MnSCU strategic framework is mentioned in alignment to the SCTCC Pillars, it is unclear how the college is using the PACE and other data measures to determine priorities. There appears to be an opportunity to further define this process for the institution.

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

*SCTCC has concentrated on revising its mission/vision and outcomes since undergoing an institutional change to a comprehensive community college in 2010. The College has been able to leverage resources and information to assist in targeting improvement efforts. It has gathered information from stakeholders and focused its efforts to improve "leading and Communicating" as evidenced by its use of PACE, CCSSE, and other tools that help gauge the effectiveness of current processes. While the results of a 2012 PACE survey indicate that there is a high level of perceived productivity and satisfaction, and a healthy campus climate compared to the norm, the College acknowledges that there are opportunities for improvement. It will be helpful when the College receives the results from the 2014 PACE survey so it can move forward to better aligning its communication plans, Pillars and strategic goals to improve the College environment.*

**5P1, S.** SCTCC's mission and vision have been reviewed and redefined through its transition to a comprehensive community college. Approval for this transition was granted by the MnSCU Board of Trustees and the Higher Learning Commission. Appropriate internal and external groups were involved in this process. The adoption of new College outcomes gained the approval of all pertinent governance groups and included a 'gap analysis.' Currently, program and department outcomes are reviewed annually and course outcomes are reviewed on a 3-5 year cycle.

**5P2, S.** Statutes, state regents, and institutional partners impacted the mission revision process. SCTCC balances state coordination with institutional autonomy. Executive leadership sets direction for the College based on MnSCU's strategic framework and the College's mission, values and priorities. The College's strategic plan, its Pillars of Success, and its annual Work Plan all align with MnSCU system priorities. A MnSCU dashboard is used by the College to determine effectiveness in accomplishing its goals.

**5P3, S.** The needs and expectations of current and potential students, and key stakeholder groups are addressed through Annual Work Plans that are developed both by a bottom-up and top-down process. The CCSSE survey results and data on student engagement inform the process. MnSCU has a “Student Involvement in Decision-Making” policy affording students opportunities to be represented on key committees and task forces that address student interests. External stakeholders are involved through advisory committees and through other groups such as K-12 partners, St. Cloud State University, legislators and economic development councils.

**5P4, S.** Discussion and engagement with a variety of internal and external constituencies, as well as environmental scans, help the College identify opportunities and build plans for the future. While new programs and services are developed to align with the College’s mission and values, the College might want to strengthen its focus on learning in these endeavors.

**5P5, S.** A number of groups meet monthly that assist in communicating information to and among senior leadership. Faculty through a shared governance model are offered opportunities within the process to address issues pertaining to planning and deployment of resources. Decisions, however, occur at the senior leadership level following the monthly meetings. The College has an opportunity to refine how faculty/staff learn how their feedback has been utilized in the decision making process.

**5P6, S.** Internal data sources, employer surveys and comparative measures provided by MnSCU, CSSE and PACE help the College evaluate data. The College incorporates its own performance results to determine trends and inform its decision making.

Figure 8 shows alignment between SCTCC Pillars, MnSCU Strategic Framework, and AQIP categories. This kind of tracking reveals the College’s focus on gathering usable data for continuous improvement toward established goals.

**5P7, O.** SCTCC acknowledges that communication is viewed negatively among its faculty and staff. While the College lists its print and electronic tools, the appearance is a very top down communication flow. The College acknowledges these negative perceptions, and it may want to continue its pursuit to determine why this is a problem.

**5P8, S.** The College uses employee orientations, in-services, the Annual Work Plan, and standard print and electronic communications to inform stakeholders of its focus and priorities. SCTCC leaders communicate a shared mission, vision and values that

deepen and reinforce the characteristics of high performance organizations through strategic planning and decision-making processes involving both internal and external stakeholders.

**5P9, S.** Professional development is encouraged of all employees throughout the system. The College allocates funds for faculty, staff and administrator development, and sponsors regular training programs and opportunities for updating skills.

**5P10, S.** SCTCC is supported by MnSCU in leadership development and succession planning. In addition to the Luoma Leadership Academy, the System has implemented an executive leadership development program to prepare employees for high level system leadership positions.

The College has already identified the need for succession planning and will use the MnSCU toolkit that is being beta tested.

**5R1, O.** Results of the PACE survey conducted in 2012 showed SCTCC below the norm in key areas of communication, decision making and spirit of cooperation. In the next administration of the survey, added questions and further analysis would help the College to identify specific areas for improvement. In addition, the College is working with the CQIN summer institute to train staff to focus on employee engagement.

**5R2, S.** The College reports that the results of the PACE survey also show that it has a relatively high level of perceived productivity and satisfaction, and a healthy climate compared to the norm. (Results presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2)

**5R3, O.** SCTCC's scores on the 2014 PACE survey and the CCSSE 2009-13 surveys indicate that its overall mean score is near the Norm Base. The College acknowledges, however, that there are opportunities for improvement in the areas of institutional structure, supervisory relationships and students' perception of the faculty.

**5I1, S.** As the College's mission changed, operational needs and operational efficiencies were clearly identified and SCTCC responded with leadership support for key areas by hiring a Communications Director and a Director of Academic Accountability to advance leading and communicating. While these hires suggest that these matters are priorities for the College, it is not clear how systematic and comprehensive they are related to leading and communicating.

**5I2, S.** Survey data and other measurements are reviewed and assessed by the executive leadership team to identify processes for improvement and action.

**AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations.** This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 6.

*SCTCC relies on committees, which include students in identifying institutional operational needs. Shared governance and guidance from the MnSCU system help to determine how and where it should direct its resources to support its operations. Learning of best practices from MnSCU institutions and SCTCC departments may help with improving student engagement, which lags peer institutions.*

*CCSE and the TechQual surveys show that the College has improved its operations over the past few years. The College might want to consider refining its overall data collection and report generation processes. The College might want to consider presenting actual numerical data for the entire student services surveyed.*

*The portfolio also provides details to demonstrate financial viability. Although the College indicates it is focused on sustainability in Supporting Institutional Operations, further clarification about this priority is not included in this category, and what is meant by sustainability is not fully developed. In addition, the organization's continuous improvement efforts would be strengthened if specific targets were set as goals for key support processes.*

**6P1, S.** MnSCU policy calls for student representation on college committees and participation in the decision-making processes. Additionally, SCTCC holds frequent listening sessions and forums. Their representation provides an opportunity to learn of student needs. SCTCC also uses external and internal measures such as the CCSSE, *Foundations of Excellence*, and other survey results to identify student needs and are shared during Student Affairs annual planning sessions and during All College Days. SCTCC administrators' connections with Community organizations are also involved in the identification of needs of various external stakeholders.

**6P2, O.** Although the College identifies the TechQual survey, the semiannual budget discussions, and the Space Network Committee as ways of determining support service needs of employees, it is not clear how these entities are aligned to identify

administrative support services. A systematic approach may help the institution identify services that are needed across the institution. SCTCC has an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive approach for identifying the specific administrative support service needs of faculty, staff, and administrators.

**6P3, S.** Safety polices are developed and ongoing. The college safety and security people monitor buildings, parking lots and provide emergency response; notices are also communicated through ongoing training and through a “safety” webpage. . The college operates a text based emergency notification system and first aid stations are available labeled and maintained, photo id’s are required and the college provided counseling services through the employee benefits programs. Buildings are inspected for OSHA compliance and first aid stations are available labeled and maintained. The college through the employee benefits programs includes and EAP.

**6P4, S.** Regular meetings of various College groups serve as the primary means of managing student, administrative, and organizational support service processes on a day-to-day basis. The college executive leadership team identifies the needs of faculty, staff, administrators, and other key stakeholder groups through identified planning structures: Space Network Committee, SCTCC’s committee designed to address equipment needs; Executive planning and identification of needs from the College’s Annual Work Plan focused on attaining a shared set of goals derived from MnSCU strategic goals., Facilities Planning, and Action Projects; and academic and student services Vice Presidents, deans, directors and mangers are in constant contact with the personnel assigned to their division or area of responsibility. The newly improvements include the CAS and other specific student guidance functions. The College can point to specific improvements that have resulted from the systematic review of these goals

**6P5, O.** SCTCC documents its support processes to encourage knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment as reflected in its use of evaluations that are gathered and analyzed following in-services or other training opportunities. While there is mention of ongoing meetings to share information, it is unclear if key processes across the college are documented to ensure business continuity. Surveys about staff learning are administered after professional development events to determine the effectiveness of the events. The regularly scheduled team and committee meetings provide an opportunity for staff to share information from other internal or external groups (such as MnSCU updates) and to explore innovations. It is unclear how the documents of the

process are shared publicly.

**6R1, O.** The College lists an impressive number of measures and reports used to assess support services, and have an opportunity to articulate clearly the kinds and uses of information these processes generate. Several national, state, and internal measures are deployed by SCTCC to assess effectiveness of support services. CCSSE and state data provide an opportunity to benchmark performance. A “sampling” of the data, measures, and reports used to assess the effectiveness of support services is provided. There are no indications of who participates in the processes and how frequently surveys are conducted.

**6R2, S.** SCTCC’s performance results for student support service processes are established through CCSSE. The most recent CCSSE results showed improvement since the 2009 survey for the “Support for Learners” category. The College used the previous CCSSE results to identify and implement improvement strategies such as the Center for Academic Success (CAS), the new intrusive advising and support system, and a revitalized orientation and advising structure.

**6R3, S.** SCTCC has examined performance results for some administrative support service processes such as those related to IT. The TechQual survey results provided in figures 10, 11, and 12 show SCTCC performed better than peer institutions. The College also maintains a solid financial position. Results provided include the Composite Financial Index, Facilities Condition Index, and Institutional Support Expenses. SCTCC has made a commitment to maintaining its facilities to avoid considerable deferred maintenance. Table 6.1 provides data for the MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measure: Institutional Support Expenses and identifies the College’s projected goals for these measures through 2017.

**6R4, S.** The college has used information and results to improve services to key student, administrative, and organizational support service areas. For example, the TechQual Survey to assess and plan for technical issues related to students and staff. The college acknowledges that improvements were needed and is committed to administering the survey yearly and responding to the needs expressed. This matches with discussion in earlier sections of the Portfolio describing how Starfish and the Center address student retention concerns for Academic Success

**6R5, S.** SCTCC’s CCSSE results are much improved since 2011. Although still slightly below the norm group, the College’s scores are essentially in line with MnSCU colleges

and the CCSSE Cohort, as illustrated in Table 6.2. Comparative data are also provided for SCTCC's financial position. Table 6. 4 identifies the "MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measures: Stewardship of Financial & Physical Resources." Both the Composite Financial Index (CFI) and the Facilities Condition Index (FCI) indicate SCTCC's careful planning and sound financial management.

**6I1, S.** In addition to the other recent improvements mentioned above, SCTCC's GPS Life Plan and Student Success Day have been implemented to provide additional comprehensive support to students. The MnSCU policy related to "Student Involvement in Decision-Making" and the College's own practices ensure that students are involved in key decisions such as the annual review of tuition and fees. In addition, SCTCC has put in place mechanisms for gathering feedback to determine the effectiveness of these processes.

**6I2, O.** SCTCC's systems and infrastructure established through the Pillars, strategic plan, and Annual Work Plan guide the selection of processes for improvement. Although key measures related to Supporting Institutional Operations are provided, SCTCC has an opportunity to identify specific targets or goals in areas such as space utilization, instructional cost per FTE, and perhaps—most important—enrollment. Finally, while changes in enrollment are tracked over a three-year period, setting specific targets for recruitment and retention and for headcount or total credit hours might help the College identify which processes are most likely to increase tuition-generating enrollment so essential for the institution's financial stability. (DN)

**AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.** This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 7.

*SCTCC has been working to improve its processes for collecting, measuring, examining, and analyzing data, as evidenced by a recent AQIP Action Project ("SCTCC Institutional*



*Effectiveness”) that is focused on gaps identified in the 2010 Systems Portfolio. Specific steps have been taken –such as participation in the Foundations of Excellence, CCSSE, PACE, and Baldrige –that demonstrate the College’s commitment to and investment in continuous quality improvement.*

*External audits have identified several deficiencies in information systems operations that led to changes in procedures. Surveys of primary users showed that SCTCC does well compared to its peers. Progress was noted in meeting the goals established by the Board of Trustees and the System Chancellor. These processes show SCTCC has a robust system for measuring effectiveness that relies upon national and MnSCU system data for comparisons and benchmarks.*

*MnSCU provides oversight and services for each of the 24 two-year colleges within its system. While ensuring a certain level of consistency among the institutions, it also provides a challenge for SCTCC to evolve as an institution focusing on the unique needs of its stakeholders. The College has an opportunity to set specific targets data such as dis-aggregated gender, race and ethnicity in order to measure institutional effectiveness with greater precision and more nuanced, specific strategies for improvement*

**7P1, S.** SCTCC selects, manages, and distributes data and performance information to support instructional and non-instructional programs and services based on particular operations or functional areas’ presumed needs. The College provides a number of examples to demonstrate that systematic collection and data analyses inform the decision-making processes. SCTCC is assisted in the dissemination of performance data by the MnSCU system, which has identified 22 key measures used by individual colleges to set strategic benchmarks and stretch goals. The MnSCU system provides 22 measures of accountability that allow SCTCC to compare itself to other colleges in the state in areas ranging from diversity to quality of graduates and meeting workforce needs.

**7P2, O.** The College selects, manages, and distributes performance information by aligning SCTCC Pillars and strategic priorities with MnSCU’s performance measures and AQIP (as illustrated in Figure 15). Although performance measures for SCTCC’s Pillars and MnSCU are defined, the College it is not clear what procedures are in place to link data collected with planning and improvement. The college has an opportunity to set performance targets and goals in order to support planning and determine improvement strategies for specific categories of students such as part-time, full time or

students of color.

**7P4, S.** At the organizational level, the College provides some opportunities for constituents to analyze data and information regarding overall performance. Performance data are shared throughout the organization by way of regular meetings and work groups. The College's performance is also part of the College president's annual performance review, as required by MnSCU. Through its AQIP Action Project, SCTCC is working on finding better ways to share and use data across campus, since some performance data continue to be reviewed and acted upon primarily at the Executive Leadership level. (DN)

**7P5, S.** SCTCC benchmarks data from national and statewide sources. National measures such as IPEDS, CCSSE, PACE, and TechQual as well as the MnSCU dashboard provide SCTCC with comparative data to determine if its processes are producing desired outcomes. Local measures are collected to allow for "focused interventions" as part of the College's Institutional Effectiveness Action Project. Performance reports are regularly provided for the executive leadership and for faculty through the College's shared governance processes.

**7P6, S.** The college has designated the MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measures as the overarching metrics to determine success of the College's operational and tactical plans for all departments. It links these with the Pillars and the college has identified specific areas that required attention and responded by collecting data and putting practices in place such as their early alert and special advising sessions for transfer students. Disaggregated data such as Early Alert System for students of color may provide usefulness information for specific sectors of students.

**7P7, S.** The central office established and hosts the databases used for student records, financial data, and reporting data security information. The MNSCU CIOs developed security policies to be followed by all the institutions in the system. The system developed and local institutions implemented additional policies to ensure data security.

**7R1, S.** In addition to having the support of the MnSCU system, which hosts and monitors the most mission critical systems (ISRS and D2L), SCTCC measures the performance and effectiveness of its own systems for information and knowledge management. The College's IT staff monitors the performance of servers and the network through logs and software such as Google Analytics, VMware management

software, and Cisco reporting tools. In addition, a security audit was conducted by security professionals and another audit is planned in the next two years. So, while much IT system support and security is provided by the MnSCU system, SCTCC has gone further to enhance and measure performance of its information systems.

**7R2, S.** External audits of SCTCC knowledge and information systems determined that the systems were effective for protecting data systems, but also revealed opportunities for improvement upon which the College has acted. The audit process is a continuous quality process. SCTCC has performed well comparatively in the TechQual survey indicators. The Information Technology department analyzed the information and did make several improvements both in terms of infrastructure to support learning and in security. The college updates classroom technology and training for faculty on using those technologies, and tracking of helpdesk customer requests. The evidence of effectiveness is demonstrated by the MnSCU Management Reports and Dashboards that allow the college to measure progress toward goals. The Dashboard is web based and available to the public.

**7R3, O.** Figures 16 and 17 provide comparative longitudinal and benchmark data regarding student persistence and completion and instructional cost per fye. These comparisons have helped SCTCC identify opportunities for improvement and take actions to improve institutional effectiveness. While the institution is held to looking at the First Time, full time cohort persistence and graduation rate, there is an opportunity to develop appropriate outcomes and measures for the increasing part-time students. This population may be completing its intended goals as well and is an opportunity to broaden the metrics the institution uses to measure its effectiveness. The college has an opportunity to include developing appropriate outcomes and measures specific to programs. The college could show that certain populations may be completing their intended goals.

**7I1, S.** The college has worked to develop measures that relate to the Annual Work Plan, which is tied to the strategic plan and the overarching MnSCU Strategic Framework. These measures are used by the leadership to establish targets for improvement in such areas as diversity and student engagement. This evidence suggests that SCTCC is trending toward a data informed institution.

**7I2, S.** The College leadership appears to be communicating goals that align with the strategic plan through its Pillars and the MnSCU Strategic Framework and Accountability

Dashboards. SCTCC continues to value and model continuous improvement. When the college faculty and staff is setting specific targets for improved performance results, the importance of AQIP is demonstrated. Other training and performance activities like CQIN and cross-functional teams reinforce the message to all parts of the college community.

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

*The MnSCU Strategic Framework is a key factor in SCTCC's continuous improvement planning processes. Since the MnSCU system determines the overall strategic direction for its 24 community colleges, campus autonomy for continuous improvement at SCTCC is demonstrated by developing short-term strategies and pursuing tactical projects. Still, the College has an opportunity to identify processes and measures needed for accomplishing its own unique goals in service to SCTCC's unique mission, particularly through the transition to being a comprehensive community college. SCTCC has improved its processes by utilizing the parameters provided by MnSCU to focus on specific performance targets.*

*It has established an All College Day dedicated to planning and identification of action plans. Beyond the All College days, SCTCC has an opportunity to define how it will evaluate its process of continuous quality improvement and provide concrete measures of effectiveness, particularly with respect to the processes for helping students learn. Finally, although the portfolio frequently mentions SCTCC's participation in CQIN, it is not clear how involvement in this organization has enhanced the College's continuous improvement efforts.*

**8P1, S.** SCTCC's key planning processes include development of goals and initiatives to support MnSCU's strategic plan as well as an annual Work Plan for the MnSCU System Office. The annual Work Plan sets the direction for and coordinates various unit plans such as the Facilities Master Plan, the Master Academic Plan, the Diversity Plan, the Personnel Plan, and the Technology Plan. To support these planning efforts, SCTCC staff participate in an "All College Day" once a year. Using Appreciative Inquiry, SCTCC

employees generate ideas on ways to improve processes and activities related to student success.

**8P2, S.** The College selects long-term strategies through its mission, vision, Pillars and the MnSCU Strategic Framework (“Charting the Future”). Short-term strategies are determined based on more immediate operational needs. The College provides the example of a current project to refine developmental education through a Reading Bridge Program and the pairing of developmental and college level courses. The campus determines its short term strategies by analyzing student and other stakeholder feedback. A flow chart might to help the College identify how information and criteria are used to determine short and long term strategies.

**8P3, S.** The College’s key action plans to support organizational strategies include budget meetings in the fall and again in the spring if reallocation or adjustments are needed. The Space Network Committee determines by consensus how to distribute the equipment dollars taking into consideration safety first. Individual departments develop plans in an inclusive manner to address current needs of students and other stakeholders.

**8P4, O.** SCTCC coordinates and aligns planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans across the organization’s various levels by aligning action plans to the Pillars and the MnSCU Strategic Framework. Although the College indicates that departmental meetings, All College Days, and in-service events constitute a system to support communication and plan development, SCTCC has an opportunity to clarify how internal plans are shared and coordinated among departments throughout the academic and calendar year.

**8P5, S.** SCTCC defines objectives, selects measures, and sets performance targets for organizational strategies and action plans through MnSCU’s strategic framework and performance measures. Individual departments create their own objectives and measures through their action plans that align with the College goals. SCTCC’s Executive Leadership reviews strategic goals annually in conjunction with the development of the annual Work Plan. Although Figure 8.1 outlines the alignment of SCTCC Pillars with the MnSCU Strategic Performance Measures, most of these are measures of outputs with only one measure (licensure exam pass rates) of student learning. The College might strengthen its continuous improvement processes through direct measures of student learning for all academic programs. In addition, the College

might consider further the most appropriate targets and measures of success for the “Community Building” Pillar. Private giving and grants may not fully measure how SCTCC is “enhancing its presence and engaging with the community it serves.

**8P6, S.** Taking into account the levels of current resources and future needs, SCTCC links strategy selection and action plans by preparing an annual “Trends and Highlights” report for the MnSCU Board of Trustees. The Board approves the system-wide annual budget, and the College President monitors the institution’s budget to ensure accuracy and a balanced budget. The President is also responsible for assuring proper delegation of authority to employees in compliance with state statutes. The fiscal planning process is designed by MnSCU and SCTCC works within these parameters to link their action plans to the broader strategy goals.

**8P7, S.** SCTCC assesses and addresses risk as part of its planning process. The Office of Internal Audit is maintained by the MnSCU system, and auditing activities are conducted in compliance with system policies and procedures. An annual audit plan is provided to the Audit Committee based on a system-wide audit risk assessment. At the College level, the Vice President of Administrative Services leads the risk assessment process (through planning), and SCTCC conducts environmental scans to determine trends, risks, and opportunities.

**8P8, S.** SCTCC develops and supports faculty, staff, and administrators to address changing strategies and action plans through annual employee reviews that include professional development planning. The performance review forms are designed to align employee performance and goals directly with the College’s key priorities. In addition, the College provides financial support for both staff and faculty professional development. Although the MnSCU system allocation of \$250 for each full-time equivalent faculty position for professional development is rather limited, the funding does provide SCTCC some financial support for ongoing faculty development.

**8R1, O.** Although the College’s measures of the effectiveness of planning processes and systems include up-to-date management, enrollment, and cost reports, SCTCC has an opportunity to identify the specific kinds of information, as well as the types and frequency of reports, that are needed for the various areas identified for improvement.

**8R2, O.** Although SCTCC states that performance results for accomplishing organizational strategies and action plans are developed through the planning process and are tied to intended project outcomes, SCTCC has an opportunity to communicate

and learn from results beyond those for veteran services (provided in Table 8.2). It is not clear if this approach is deployed to other initiatives for planning continuous improvement. Table 8.2 may serve as a good model for other initiatives.

**8R3, S.** SCTCC uses the MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measure to determine its desired trajectories for growth, which allows the College to make useful comparisons with peer institutions in the state. Specifically, SCTCC continues to concentrate on increasing the persistence, transfer, and completion rates of students as well as increasing capacity for offering credit coursework. Figures 18 – 19 illustrate how SCTCC compares its performance on student persistence and completion and space utilization with other MnSCU colleges. These comparisons identify opportunities for improvement and stretch targets for SCTCC.

**8R4, O.** SCTCC has an opportunity to compare its results in this category with other higher education organizations through the “Trends and Highlights” meetings that are scheduled by the Finance division of MnSCU. While “Trends and Highlights” meetings include the presidents and other representatives from three to six MnSCU colleges, SCTCC presents limited-comparable data or results. In addition, since these meetings do involve other MnSCU colleges and are specifically designed to establish individual benchmarks to assess financial health, the College has an opportunity to gather and make use of the comparative data.

**8R5, O.** The College asks employees for feedback regarding the All College Day, and these days serve as the mechanism for identifying areas for action projects and measurements of effectiveness. However, no results from these All College Day surveys are presented, and the surveys appear to solicit feedback on the day’s activities, not necessarily on the organization’s improvement processes. The College has an opportunity to develop more targeted measures and gather evidence that its systems for planning continuous improvement are effective.

**8I1, O.** SCTCC has an opportunity to identify and document recent improvements it has made to ensure continuous improvement processes and performance results are systematic and comprehensive. While the College points to the clearer direction provided by the system office, no specific results for SCTCC are presented.

**8I2, S.** SCTCC’s use of Appreciative Inquiry helps the College to select specific processes to improve and set targets for improved performance. In addition, SCTCC identifies areas of improvement and looks at these in the context of national trends and

local needs. The College has varied communication methods including division meetings, work group meetings, and faculty meetings. Continuous improvement efforts will be strengthened by SCTCC identifying targets and processes for improvement related to helping students learn. While the MnSCU System focuses on process and output measures, SCTCC through its outcomes and competencies can focus on assessment of student learning for all academic programs.

**AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships.** This category examines the institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution accomplishing its mission. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, and building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **St. Cloud Technical and Community College** for Category 9.

*TCC has built relationships with high schools, the local university, and community businesses in an effort to provide services, jobs, and improve academic programming, such as Partners for School Success, the Orion Project, and the SCSU Connections Program. In addition, partnerships with the Veteran's Resource Center, Campus Childcare Center, the YMCA, the Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council, and St. Cloud Metro Transit provide key services to external stakeholders and students. However, the College's outreach efforts do not appear to be coordinated or systematic.*

*The College has an opportunity to develop more robust and systematic measures. The use of feedback, analyzing results from these measures may help the college identify improvement strategies to strengthen these and selecting improvement strategies from these collaborative relationships*

**9P1, S.** SCTCC focuses on building relationships with the high schools in the six counties that provide traditional students. Non-traditional students tend to come from several agencies in the College's service area. SCTCC is proactive in developing relationships with agencies and businesses. Faculty, staff, and administrators have memberships in a variety of agencies, professional organizations, and special projects.

**9P2, S.** SCTCC has created relationships with businesses whose employees serve on program advisory committees as well as St. Cloud State University which accepts



transfers and also supplies students in need of developmental education. The Connections Program with SCSU is a unique opportunity for students to experience university housing and campus life, while strengthening their basic skills at SCTCC.

**9P3, S.** The college has invested in creating relationships with institutions and local agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Veterans' Affairs, Sterns-Benton Employment and Training Council, SCSU, and the YMCA to provide service to students, including free transportation, affordable fitness and health services.

**9P4, S.** SCTCC has been strategic in building relationships with organizations that supply materials and services to the College. For example, thanks to SCTCC's relationship with CentraCare Health, the College has acquired a clinic building and medical equipment for education in various health programs. Also, the Whitney Recreation Center has provided a facility for student athletes. In addition, the statewide Campus Service Cooperative (CSC) supports MnSCU's goal of providing high value and affordable higher education. SCTCC is taking advantage of the state contracts for supplies and managed print services.

**9P5, S.** The College holds various memberships in organizations and is involved in large number of business and civic organizations at various levels within the community. They collaborate with groups and topic experts in order to bring multiple speakers on a broad variety of topics to the campus. These endeavors help support the diverse populations of the College community.

**9P6, O.** Although SCTCC indicates that it uses a variety of surveys and feedback mechanisms, it has an opportunity to develop a systematic process for selecting feedback mechanisms, reviewing and analyzing the feedback, and using it to inform improvements in its relationship with partners.

**9P7, S.** Development of the Biomedical Equipment Technician program is an example of SCTCC building relationships between and among departments and ensuring integration and communication across various areas. The program was developed through collaboration between the College's health division, the energy and electronics program, and St. Cloud Hospital. In addition, the College encourages interactions through various means such as the co-location of faculty from different disciplines in office suites, a professional social network site (Yammer), and the shared governance structure.

**9R1, O.** While several sources are mentioned, it is not exactly clear what measures are collected and analyzed.

**9R2, OO.** SCTCC has an outstanding opportunity to identify and analyze the performance results in building key collaborative relationships, beyond graduate job placement rates. For example, the college could analyze performance results for transfer students, ABE and support services offered and setting targets in these areas.

**9R3, O.** The college does not provide evidence and the lack of data does not provide evidence of the effectiveness of the processes for this category and makes it difficult for the College to identify targets for improvements. SCTCC has an opportunity to identify measures and collect data that will allow it to make comparisons with other institutions that will be useful in building collaborative relationships.

**9I1, S.** The College has made improvements in this category such as the hiring of a multi-cultural advisor, and a dean to further support manufacturing programs. They have recently developed a Biomedical Equipment Technician program and enhanced their Veterans Services.

**9I2, O.** While SCTCC uses its Pillars, mission statement, and vision to select targets for improvement, there is an absence any real measurable data and it is unclear how the institution will select future targets for improvement. The College involves staff and students in several ways as described throughout the portfolio; however, how the data and information gathered are used to inform the development of quality relationships with the students and community is unclear. The College could benefit from benchmarking data points on a regular basis and to map changes based on implemented improvements.

### **Accreditation Evidence St. Cloud Technical and Community College**

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components, or that it may face difficulty in meeting the Criteria and Core Components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

No evidence issues noted by the team.

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

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

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

SCTCC established College outcomes and competencies addressing research, thinking, and application of knowledge. These outcomes are integrated into the assessment process. Faculty document alignment through curriculum mapping.

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

SCTCC has program advisory committees to provide insight on career technical programs that also include student representatives. Curriculum maps link the course, program, institutional, and learning activities. In 2013 the College implemented an Assessment Day to standardize assessment across the College. The College has an opportunity to have clearly stated learning assessment goals and to show consistently how information gained from assessment is used to improve student learning.

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

SCTCC provides credit for citizens who serve in the military. In addition, the College Diversity Committee provides services for students that are disabled, or color, and underrepresented. The College diversity plan aligns with the MnSCU system Strategic Diversity Plan 2013-2015 to try and achieve a balance of attracting and retaining diverse students with overall preparation for success in a global society.

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

The College recently added transfer degrees to its portfolio of offerings. As much as possible the institution keeps degree programs to 60 credit hours per the mandate of the MnSCU. The technical and vocational programs range in disciplines and are often accredited by program accrediting bodies.

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

The Institution reviewed all associate degree programs to ensure compliance with Minnesota legislation and took appropriate action to reduce 14 programs to meet the established 60 credit hour limit.

The Career programs are mapped to a Technical Skills Assessments. Numerous programs are programmatically accredited.

The College also created an action project entitled *Improving Student Learning through Continued Enhancement of Academic Assessment Processes.*

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

The institution displays information on their website regarding programs, requirements, costs, and accreditation. There is a Program Cost Sheet available for each program detailing tuition, fees, books, and supplies. SCTCC conducts orientations, recruiting visits, and one-on-one advising with admission staff for prospective students.

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

SCTCC requires all students to complete an online orientation session as well as conducts a Student Success Day at the midpoint of each semester for students to meet with their advisor. The institution has provided more access to full online journals in the library and increased its eBook collection by over 100,000 titles. The College also implemented the Starfish early alert system so instructors could help identify students struggling early in the semester. New faculty members are required to complete coursework in course construction, teaching and instructional methods, student outcomes assessment and evaluation, and philosophy of community and technical college education.

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

**There is not a reference to academic freedom in this section of the portfolio. SCTCC does have policies regarding professional development plans for faculty as well as a faculty evaluation process to support in-field currently, importance of effective teaching, and assist faculty in providing best learning opportunity for students.**

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

Although one of the College outcomes is to Apply Knowledge and there are professional development opportunities to discover and apply knowledge in their positions, there is no reference to an Institutional Review Board or other mechanism to ensure responsible research. It is unclear whether the college provides training to students on the use of information resources.

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

The College incorporates student representatives on key committees including hiring and policy making committees. The College has stated outcomes and competencies for students to demonstrate personal and social responsibility and to understand social and global perspectives by practicing civic involvement and social responsibility. Student clubs are required to participate in a philanthropic project with the college community or greater St. Cloud area.

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

The College captures student retention, persistence, and completion data as part of the MnSCU Strategic Framework Performance Measures. Advisory Committees meet to provide insight into program strengths and where improvements might be made. In addition, the institution reallocated staff to provide early support for most at risk students, created a centralized advising center and implemented Starfish Early Alert Program.

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

The mission of the institution is focused on students and the community. The College created an innovative Orion Project to provide outreach to students failing in STEM areas. The College offers life- long learning courses in addition to credit offerings.

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

SCTCC uses the College Faculty Credentialing guidelines provided by MnSCU to ensure that faculty and staff meet the qualifications. The college utilizes search committees with rationale to justify selection. Together with the human resources department, the supervisor conducts orientation for new employees. The College also has in place an evaluation process for employees.

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

MnSCU policies and procedures provide the foundation for ethical behavior and operating with integrity. Mandatory training on data security, employee code of ethics and sexual harassment awareness is provided to employees. The college maintains delegation of authority forms for financial transactions.

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

Mandatory data security training is provided.

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

The College underwent a multiyear effort to seek input in changing their mission which was adopted in 2009 by the MNSCU Board of Trustees. Process included all campus governance groups, external stakeholders and the MNSCU Board of Trustees following their policy related to approval of mission, vision, and value/purposes. The Annual Work Plan goals which are created by departments are aligned to the mission and vision.

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

There is no reference to this in the portfolio.

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

The College has key performance measures that align institutional efforts. The strategic priorities that directly relate to these performance measures are aligned to the mission, vision, and values. The Annual Work Plan is created to further illustrate departmental goals and specific strategies. The College then determines the human, physical, and financial resources to support the Annual Work Plan.

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

The mission is communicated publicly through the website as well as at Board of Trustee meetings, staff and governance meetings. It is also included on printed pieces for external stakeholders. The Mission is also included in the Annual Work Plan.

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

SCTCC and its faculty have a shared governance model which allows for collaborative input on decision making. This model also includes student representatives on key committees, including hiring committees. Input is gathered through monthly meetings. The Academic Affairs and Standards Committee (AASC) reviews and recommends all proposed changes to course and

program curricula. There are also committees that discuss information technology needs and campus space utilization. Based on the survey results from the PACE Survey it appears as though faculty members would benefit from increased communications and involvement in the decision making process as the lowest scores noted were “Information is shared within the institution” and “decisions are made at the appropriate level of this institution” as noted in Table 4.7.

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

The institution has key performance indicators aligned with the College’s priorities. The MnSCU Accountability Dashboard allows the institution to see how the institution’s performance in these areas compares with the other colleges in the state. The College would benefit with more time to collect data, review trends and take actions as appropriate as they work toward developing local measures to help measure progress with focused interventions on campus.

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

The budgeting process is governed by the MnSCU guidelines. The College must present a balanced budget per the procedure. The current need to higher more professional staff will be offset by reductions in clerical staff through attrition and adjustments to work processes.

**Quality of Systems Portfolio For St. Cloud Technical and Community College**

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

- *In some cases, the evidence provided that the institution was meeting the core component was little more than a restatement of the core component in affirmative terms. The institution should strive in future portfolios to provide further evidence of how it is meeting the core components through its processes, results, and improvements.*
- *The portfolio overall could have been checked for errors more thoroughly.*



- *As noted in several of the category statements, it was unclear to the team in several areas if performance benchmarks had been set for specific metrics – and if so, how were those set and were they met? If not met, what actions were taken to improve? The College seems to have a vast array of places from which it might seek external benchmark data (MnSCU, TSA, etc.) – but the portfolio seemed to lack a focus on external data elements. Since this was the second portfolio submitted by St. Cloud, the team would expect that processes presented would be more mature and more consistent in their presentation. Processes such as the overall planning process, process improvement process, etc. should be readily explainable and clearly understood by any reader when an institution is embarking upon its second portfolio. Where verbal explanations may not suffice, graphical representations may also aid the institution in making a process clear to the reader.*

### **Using the Feedback Report**

The AQIP Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for institutional improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution, the Commission expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

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

The Commission's goal is to help an institution clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.