

Systems Appraisal Feedback Report

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

September 7, 2014

for

The Higher Learning Commission

A commission of the North Central Association

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Elements Of Northern Michigan University'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 Northern Michigan University

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.

Located in the city of Marquette, Northern Michigan University was founded in 1899 as a state-supported university and is one of the oldest of the State's autonomous universities. With a student population of approximately 9,200, NMU is a mid-sized regional public comprehensive master's institution that serves parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. NMU offers 155 programs for the award of vocational certificate and diploma, associate, baccalaureate, masters and specialist degrees. NMU will begin offering its first doctoral level program in fall of 2014. NMU is one of three Michigan public universities that offer community college programs as part of their university charter. Of the institution's 9,200 students, three-quarters of the students pursue baccalaureate degrees, 17% of the undergraduates are non-traditional students, and 90% of the undergraduate students are full-time. NMU is a one campus institution that primarily offers face-to-face classes. NMU has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1916.

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

Category 1:

The institution has progressed with the ongoing reformation of the General Education program, but evaluation of the new learning outcomes is uneven at the present time. It has also progressed in developing and measuring learning outcomes for both General Education and academic programs, but it has an opportunity to increase the number of programs with approved learning outcomes and approved methods of evaluation.

Category 2:

NMU has mature processes for designing its Other Distinctive Objective—Community Engagement—which involves feasibility studies, budget and personnel plans, and evaluation at a number of levels of leadership. Since the last appraisal, NMU established a Center for Innovation and Industrial Technologies and the Center for Rural and Economic Development in order to connect the university with community partners and enhance the student learning experience. The institution also has a number of measures (program evaluations, surveys, and participant data) to assess these programs. However, it is unclear how faculty and staff needs are met in these efforts, or how expectations are communicated. Finally, explicitly described connections between the reported results and improvements would enhance the maturity level in the category.

Category 3:

NMU performs well in reaching out to students and other key stakeholder groups to understand their needs, and has implemented a strong cadre of programs designed to build and maintain relationships. The institution has an opportunity to measure more than participation and satisfaction, which are important, but not comprehensive measures of relationship-building, and to conduct analyses by stakeholder segments. Finally, there is an opportunity to describe the integration of metrics, results, analysis, and decision-making for programmatic improvements across the institution.

Category 4:

NMU has invested in technology as a means of improving the knowledge and skills of its employees, reduced administrative positions, and made the institution a tobacco-free campus. NMU needs to collect data to determine the impact these changes are making on student learning, retention, and graduation. While NMU is to be commended for initiating an employee satisfaction survey in 2013, it should consider administering this survey on a regular basis.

There are multiple mechanisms for employees to learn about the history, mission and values of the institution. NMU would benefit from making this type of orientation required all employees in their first year. NMU also has numerous checks and balances in place to ensure that employees adhere to ethical practices. A mandated ethics training program for all employees on a regular basis, covering general matters such as gifts, conflict of interest, lobbying, and whistleblowing, would enhance the culture of ethical decision-making at NMU. The Equal Opportunity Office ensures that employee and student training occurs for harassment, labor law,

material safety, discrimination and equal opportunity although it is unclear whether this process is systematic and comprehensive.

Category 5:

While NMU has done a good job in leading and communicating, it recognizes that an opportunity exists to create more effective evaluation reporting tools for assessing communicating and leading. As a result, NMU has launched a new Action Project for collecting leadership communication data in January 2014. Decision making at NMU is inclusive.

However, the process by which leaders use collective input to set broad directions for the university is unclear. In addition, there is no evidence that leaders communicate mission and vision in such a way that would serve to deepen and reinforce that mission and vision.

The employee satisfaction survey conducted at NMU in 2013 provided modest support for leading and communicating processes and systems at NMU but no targets were indicated and there is clearly room for improvement. Improvements that were described by NMU do not appear to be recent or to be tied to any results provided.

Category 6:

Overall, NMU clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement processes in Supporting Institutional Operations. Departments and committees have an opportunity to identify meaningful measures, set targets, analyze data, and implement improvements based on the results. One such improvement grouped all units related to recruitment and retention under one vice president. Day-to-day processes in these key student support service areas created efficiencies and were designed to ensure that student needs are being met.

NMU compares performance results to Michigan peers for general fund revenues and expenditures per full-year equated students. Statewide rankings are used to set targets for budget adjustments and to identify opportunities for improved efficiencies. While NMU exceeds most of its Michigan peers in having lower tuition and greater per student appropriations, it lags behind its peers in a number of areas including individual academic expenditures.

Category 7:

NMU has invested in technology for facilitating the processes of measuring effectiveness. This was accomplished with eight new key improvement indicator dashboards, a new project management system, and a new collaborative intranet (SHARE). The investment in a laptop program and its enhanced county-wide wireless access makes NMU a unique campus among its peers. NMU's commitment to technology has addressed accessibility, stability, redundancy,

reliability, integrity, and security of its data.

Category 8:

The Board of Trustees and senior leadership conduct institution-wide planning guided by the Road Map to 2015 planning framework. Long-term strategies are selected during campus-wide planning sessions every five to seven years. University leadership analyzes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; reviews the university mission and the Road Map planning framework; and considers the availability of resources before revising strategies. There is an opportunity at NMU for broader sharing of organizational strategies and action plans across the organization's various levels. NMU needs to discuss how input from external stakeholders is considered when planning for continuous improvement. NMU needs to more formally assess the effectiveness of its planning processes. Targets for performance at NMU generally emphasize improvement but do not specify benchmarks or clear quantitative goals.

Category 9:

Clearly, NMU values its partnerships with local and regional organizations, especially educational partners. The admissions office at NMU has created a multi-level territory management model to guide processes for establishing, maintaining and evaluating relationships with schools from which students are recruited and attained. However, the University lacks a cohesive assessment plan to measure the effectiveness of its activities. Currently existing measures are ad hoc in nature and wholly dependent on the unit receiving/providing service.

NMU has an opportunity to create more specific processes with appropriate performance targets for their performance in Building Collaborative Relationships. No formal process is described for creating, prioritizing and building relationships with external organizations (bookstore, dining, etc.) that provide services to NMU students. The process for ensuring that relationships are meeting the varying needs of NMU partners seems to be mostly ad hoc and does not appear to be systematic or robust.

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

Strategic Challenges For Northern Michigan University

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. From these challenges, 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 Northern Michigan University 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:

- Performance results at NMU are often in the form of student satisfaction surveys and attendance records. More efficiency measures along the lines of processing time, response time, incidence reduction, and caseload per individual would help inform decision making.
- While NMU has discrete strengths in the area of technology and technology services, it is difficult to identify if their processes are systematic and comprehensive for measuring effectiveness. In this regard, NMU has an opportunity to better describe how technologies are integrated into actual decision-making and information gathering/analysis. In addition to addressing systems, utilizing data appropriately and performing meaningful analyses are vital.
- NMU has made some process changes that have resulted in higher ratios of full-year equated students to the following: a) full time equivalent administrators, b) faculty and c) service personnel. These changes have resulted in reduced costs but it is unclear if they have resulted in improved services. Looking at trends, in terms of student satisfaction along with these productivity ratios, would confirm that NMU is achieving the overall goal.
- Targets for performance at NMU are often vague or missing. Targets provided often involve qualitative goals, emphasize general improvement of performance, but clear benchmarks and specific quantitative goals are lacking especially in the areas of Planning Continuous Improvement and Building Collaborative Relationships. For most categories, NMU has an opportunity to answer I2 questions more fully, explaining in more detail how the institution's culture and infrastructure are used to select specific processes and targets for improved performance.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 1.

NMU has made efforts to improve its assessment processes since its 2010 portfolio. Two new full time administrative positions (Associate Dean of General Education and Retention, and Director of Institutional Accreditation) have aided in this goal. General education is being reformed, and the University has held training sessions on the creation of measurable outcomes. Co-curricular programs such as the Superior Edge are award-winning and have been shared nationally.

1P1, S. After realizing that its learning outcomes were neither clearly defined nor easily measurable, Northern Michigan University (NMU) has defined a process for revamping its General Education Program. It has revised learning outcomes, developed an assessment plan, and appointed a Dean of General Education and a faculty-driven General Education Council to provide oversight.

1P2, S. Program learning objectives are determined by departmental faculty who use

discipline-related trends, accreditation standards, and faculty research as determining factors. Learning objectives undergo review by multiple oversight bodies at both the departmental and university levels before final approval, and must meet measurable standards.

1P3, S. Two committees, the Committee on Undergraduate Programs (CUP) and the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) oversee the program and course design process. NMU has a mature curriculum approval process, and program offerings are determined by factors such as student interest, job markets, and input from advisory committees.

1P4, S. Academic programming is driven by input from regional industry, advisory boards, regulatory bodies, trends at other universities, and specialized accreditation agencies which help NMU set standards for professional careers. Academic program review involves both an internal departmental self-study, external reviews, and curriculum components such as experiential learning. These help students as they enter the marketplace.

1P5, S. Program faculty members recommend the level of preparation needed and specific course prerequisites that are subject to the curriculum review process. Depending on the discipline, admission is determined by program requirements and the background of the student or by specific testing requirements, such as the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) in the School of Education.

1P6, S. Detailed information regarding admissions, financial aid, preparation, and learning expectations are communicated to prospective students via online resources, recruiter presentations, and through printed materials. New undergraduates participate in mandatory orientation sessions, and they receive information about program expectations, graduation requirements, career advice, and other information through the Academic and Career Advising Center as well as through a variety of online and print resources.

1P7, S. The Academic and Career Advising Center advises students in career paths based on their skills, abilities, and values. NMU's career exploration process, the IDEAL (Investigate, Discover, Experience, and Link) Path, provides various assessment tools and opportunities to investigate careers. Students have access to FOCUS career planning software, career/job fairs, job shadowing opportunities, and interview workshops to help them define career interests.

1P8, SS. NMU uses the COMPASS placement exam to determine at-risk students, and employs four admission categories -- "regular" (full admission) and three non-regular (probationary) classifications which carry restrictions on coursework and progression. Non-regular admits receive specialized advising, are placed in developmental reading, writing, and math courses tailored to need, and are required to meet various exit criteria before being fully admitted to a degree program.

1P9, O. While 80% of NMU classes have 30 or fewer students and faculty use various lecture formats in a number of technology-enhanced learning spaces, only a faculty survey is cited as a driver of preferred pedagogy. It is unclear how faculty members individually or collectively detect students' learning styles and then address them.

1P10, SS. NMU strives to be an inclusive community where differences are recognized as assets. It employs multiple means to meet the needs of a wide variety of student subgroups. NMU not only serves the needs of handicapped students, but also provides resources and special programs for Native American students, international students, LGBTQ students, commuter students, distance education students, and senior citizens.

1P11, S. Beginning with a faculty candidate's initial interview, NMU focuses on excellence in teaching. The importance of classroom performance is reinforced during orientation and through first-year meetings with the Dean, department head, and faculty mentors. Faculty teaching expectations are outlined in the Master Agreement and in departmental bylaws. NMU provides numerous avenues for internal and external faculty development, including programs offered by the Teaching and Learning Advisory Council.

1P12, S. Over 90% of NMU's courses that are delivered are traditional, face-to-face, 15-week semester classes that are hosted on a single campus, although its distance education offerings are growing. Courses are scheduled to meet the needs of students by offering classes during the day, evening, and on weekends. A higher percentage of online courses are offered in the summer to accommodate working students' schedules. NMU monitors class size to retain effective delivery.

1P13, S. In 2012 NMU instituted a seven-year cyclic Academic Program Review process which involves department heads, deans, the Provost, and members of an educational policy committee. In addition, specialized accrediting bodies and licensure demands have additional review schedules.

1P14, S. The institution, its faculty, and various committees have the opportunity to recommend elimination or suspension of courses and programs. Recommendations for suspension may also result from program reviews, and when courses lie fallow for more than two years.

1P15, O. The Student Affairs and Academic Information Services divisions coordinate many forms of campus-wide learning support at NMU. However, it is unclear how data are utilized for determining support needs in either the aggregate (departmental) or individual (student) level, nor does there appear to be any assessment of the appropriateness or efficacy of the support programs. NMU has an opportunity to identify specific sources of assessment data and responsible oversight groups to ensure programs are best meeting learning support needs.

1P16, S. Community engagement and encouraging students to become productive citizens are major components of NMU's mission and strategic plan, and the institution provides students with a number of co-curricular opportunities to encourage leadership, citizenship, and interpersonal skills. Co-curricular programs are aligned with curricular outcomes, and each program regularly conducts effectiveness evaluations.

1P17, O. While the portfolio outlines the process used for degree audits to ensure completion of program requirements, the extent to which the institution measures student success in meeting learning objectives and program goals is unclear. There is an opportunity to provide more comprehensive evidence of student learning in the discipline.

1P18, S. Since 2009, NMU has completed five Action Projects related to student learning outcomes, and the institution has demonstrated significant improvements its processes for assessment of student learning. Assessments now occur at the course, program, General Education, and institution levels. Methods of assessment include embedded tests, capstone courses, licensure and external discipline-specific examinations, and graduate school admissions.

1R1, S. NMU administers the NSSE every three years, and has recently adopted the ETS proficiency profile exam as part of the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). It also collects retention data, graduation rates, and degrees awarded, and all cohort measures are reviewed in a multi-year context.

1R2, S. NMU collects retention and graduation rates by admission status, as well as

graduation rates of first-time, full-time freshmen. It also administers components of the EBI Student Affairs Assessment suite. Data show that, despite NMU's improved processes for helping students learn, these have not resulted in measurable improvement. Overall, rates of success as defined by NMU appear about the same in 2011/2013 as in 2005/2006.

1R3, S. NMU demonstrates (via samples) the breadth and depth of its program assessment data. While it is difficult to determine an overall assessment of results from the wide variety of data presented from many programs, it is evident that NMU is focusing on measuring achievement on specific outcomes within programs.

1R4, S. NMU Career Services collects a considerable amount of employer data and student placement rates at the institution, college, and discipline-specific levels. Survey data suggests that most NMU graduates are employed or pursuing additional education within 14 weeks of graduation, and NMU student pass rates on many licensure exams exceed the national and/or state averages.

1R5, S. NMU provides performance results as well as analysis of the data for its many learning support processes, including tutoring, the library, FYE, advising, and its laptop program. Significant support is provided for at-risk students, enabling increasing numbers to be "able to return" to NMU in subsequent semesters. Seventy-five percent of library users were able to locate sources and synthesize ideas to complete research, and 90% of students rated the laptop program and internet access positively.

1R6, S. NMU demonstrates strong performance of active learning assessment in relation to its Michigan Compact peers, and NSSE results are generally on par with its Midwestern peers. NMU outperformed on active and peer learning, learning support processes, and co-curricular programs. Other areas of comparative data include critical thinking, technology application, and communication.

1I1, S. Several improvements have been made in Helping Students Learn, including improvements in assessment, developing a new model for General Education, the implementation of Quality Matters rubrics for distance education, and the creation of the positions of Assistant Dean of General Education and Retention, and Coordinator of Academic Assessment and Learning. A culture of inquiry is in place and there are numerous metrics to support NMU's self-reflection and tracking of student learning outcomes.

112, O. NMU has an opportunity to provide a more detailed explanation of how its culture and infrastructure are used to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in Helping Students Learn.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 2.

NMU considers community engagement one of its key four elements on its roadmap to 2015. This is realized through customized training, outreach, and economic development. NMU has consolidated several service centers (per 2010 System Appraisal) to increase their effectiveness.

2P1, S. NMU uses both "top-down" and "grass roots" initiatives to design and operate key non-instructional units. NMU has 13 non-instructional centers that extend the institution's reach beyond its campus. Community and corporate members are involved in the activities of the centers. Of significance is the Center for Rural Community and Economic Development that combines research, public service, education, and training to support economic development and improve the quality of life in the Upper Peninsula of the state. Each Center has a Director, an Advisory Board, and are funded through base budget allocations. Activities are guided by strategic plan goals, and reaffirm the institution's commitment to community engagement.

2P2, S. NMU determines its major non-instructional objectives through a process which includes advisory committees, needs identification and feasibility assessment, a review of existing objectives, and feedback from program participants. Broad-based environmental scans occur at the institutional and center levels and decisions are made with community interaction. Institutional senior-level staff also meets regularly with corporate leadership in the region to discuss economic development issues. This community interaction results in identification of additional activities.

2P3, O. Information about initiatives is disseminated via a number of channels including

email, social media, and NMU websites. An opportunity exists, however, to provide more direct outreach to the community through community-based media.

2P4, O. While a concerted effort is made to assess non-instructional processes related to economic development including surveys and direct assessment activities, there does not appear to be a systematic process across the multiple assessment efforts. Thus, while current efforts are positive, it is difficult to gauge the impact/effectiveness of one program relative to another.

2P5, O. While NMU provides support for faculty participation in initiatives in the form of sabbaticals and sponsored funding, it is unclear how these needs are determined beyond self-identification. The institution also has an opportunity to address the needs of staff involved in this Other Distinct Objective.

2P6, S. Faculty and staff play an important role in planning process and the development of objectives for non-instructional projects. Before each project is approved, resources, personnel needs, and outcomes are thoroughly evaluated by multiple levels of leadership. Initiatives with insufficient resources are scaled back or delayed until more capacity can be created.

2R1, S. NMU uses a number of metrics to evaluate community engagement objectives including participation in service learning courses, internship and field placement work, participation in contract training, program evaluation, and community-based scholarship grant proposals funded. These metrics are appropriate and comprehensive.

2R2, O. NMU primarily provides numbers of participants and programs offered for a variety of programs and projects. Except for Academic Service Learning (ASL), no specific performance results on evaluation of services were provided, nor were NSSE data or continuity of partnerships and number of companies to which contracted training was offered. There should be a clearer tie between metrics established in 2R1 and performance results in 2R2.

2R3, O. NSSE data collected by NMU in 2010 and 2013 compare mostly favorably to results for all NSSE peers, however a specific comparison group that shares compelling characteristics would be more helpful to the institution. NMU has a stable pool of researchers with new participants each year with high annual awards rates. While these results are favorable, no comparison is made to other organizations.

2R4, S. Significant student participation in Superior Edge, Student Leader Fellowship

Program, Academic Service Learning, and internships at NMU provides learning beyond the confines of the traditional classroom and strengthens the overall organization and its partnerships. Many NMU partnerships are long-lived but new partnerships have also been recently formed. The Northern Center for Lifelong Learning (NCLL) contributes to the community through enrichment programs focused on seniors, offering over 80 programs annually.

2I1, O. Several centers were merged and/or realigned to better meet the strategic plan goals through more integrated efforts, including the creation of the Center for Innovation and Industrial Technologies and the Center for Rural and Economic Development. A new American Heart Association (AHA) Basic Life Support Community Center was created. In addition, internship procedures were improved through a 2010-12 Action Project and assessment procedures have been improved. While these are important improvements, a strong tie between metrics, results, and improvements is lacking.

2I2, O. Community engagement is part of NMU's established role in the Upper Peninsula. The interactions between internal and external constituents enhance the reputation of the institution and strengthen community partnerships. It is unclear, however, how this culture of community engagement leads to process improvements and more refined targets for performance.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 3.

NMU has identified and analyzed the interrelatedness of all units serving students and has created the position of VP of Enrollment Management and Student Services to oversee many of these functions including Orientation and Admissions.

3P1, S. NMU has established processes through which students' needs are identified. These processes include an appropriate mix of in-house and national surveys,

interviews, staff observations, student forums, focus groups, feedback from students, and suggestion boxes. Student retention and graduation are priorities at NMU. As a result, NMU has created two administrative positions, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services and Associate Dean of General Education and Retention. These individuals have been charged with the responsibility of overseeing student retention and graduation.

3P2, S. NMU's methods for relationship building with students begins with pre-enrollment communication and continues through orientation, first-year programs, and other campus-life activities. All student support processes at NMU are overseen by Enrollment Management and Student Services and Academic Affairs. There are over 20 cross-unit committees that address building or maintaining student relationships. A variety of communication methods are used depending on the type of student and the circumstances. Class sizes at MNU are typically small and the Dean of Students office is involved in numerous relationship building activities. NMU employs approximately 30% of its student population in a given year.

3P3, O. NMU has identified alumni, parents, employers, the community, and university employees as key stakeholder groups. The institution uses surveys, evaluations, and alumni board meetings to identify expectations and satisfaction. Data are reviewed periodically and used to improve services. However, the processes by which results are analyzed and improvements determined are undefined. The institutional also does not describe a systematic approach designed to assure that actions are appropriate to the university's mission and the defined needs of students, and the examples provided are not clear as to how actions taken are aligned across the college's programs and departments.

3P4, S. NMU builds and maintains relationships with key non-student stakeholders by involving them in university initiatives, alumni events, parent participation in orientation, and ongoing communication and analysis of employer partnerships. The WildCATS program connects alumni to students through workshops, classroom visits, and networking activities. NMU offers a Parent Orientation Program, and sponsors a Parent Partnership and Parent Portal in Banner. Employers serve on advisory boards and are directly involved with students through internships and other experiential learning activities.

3P5, S. NMU uses a variety of strategies to determine if it should target student and

stakeholder groups with its educational offerings and services. Various leadership teams offer input into specific strategies and have identified four target areas for new student growth: veterans, internationals, new geographic regions, and potential graduate students.

3P6, O. NMU provides a number of formal and informal ways for students and other stakeholders to express complaints. This is manifested through a formal process for the complaint's intake, the university's response and an appeal process for the student. The processes for analyzing aggregate data based on these policies, however, are less clear, as are the methods for resolving complaints. On an annual basis, or possibly more frequently, it would be useful to analyze collective data looking for trends and outliers.

3R1, O. NMU utilizes multiple methods for collecting data on student satisfaction including NSSE, an orientation survey, and other indirect measures. Prospective students' event attendance is also measured. While the measures of student satisfaction appear robust, no measures of other stakeholder satisfaction are provided. Additionally, units and departments seem to collect their data in isolation with little evidence of systematic or comprehensive analyses across units or data sources.

3R2, S. NMU presents a variety of event participation numbers, satisfaction survey results, and program evaluation scores which indicate generally positive levels of student satisfaction.

3R3, O. No evidence is presented regarding the institution's results in building relationships with students.

3R4, S. Positive performance results for parent satisfaction are presented and results for alumni and employers satisfaction are described. Alumni satisfaction data for the *Northern Horizons* magazine is dated and no analysis is present. The description of attendance at events does not indicate satisfaction levels from stakeholders involved with these activities. While alumni satisfaction of the WildCATS program was 100%, NMU did not identify how many alumni participated in this initiative. Finally, the Parental Orientation Evaluation Results do not indicate which years the data covered. Providing appropriate context for the results would improve their interpretation.

3R5, O. No evidence is presented regarding the institution's success in building relationships with other key stakeholders.

3R6, S. NMU's three day orientation program is successful compared to its Michigan peer institutions. NMU ranks in the top 15% of higher education and trade schools in terms of welcoming military service members. In the EBI Satisfaction Ratings for Business, NMU falls below peers in advising, extracurricular activities, and career services; however, in other areas in business, NMU is on par with peer institutions. With regard to the EBI for Nursing, NMU surpasses its peers. In the NSSE, NMU is on par with or slightly exceeds its Midwestern peers.

3I1, O. NMU has made a number of changes in this category in the past four years. The institution would benefit from a more explicit linkage between measures, results, and changes in this category. An explanation of why changes were made facilitates discussion about whether the changes had the desired effect. Also, the institution did not present evidence as to how systematic and comprehensive processes are for understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs. Examples provided do not show processes in place or inclusion in the decision making process.

3I2, O. The culture and infrastructure for measuring and improving student and key stakeholder services is clearly improving with the use of the institutional dashboard and growing integration of services and measures. While NMU describes interlinked service units and an organizational structure which puts student support services in one unit, it has an opportunity to describe how this helps it to select specific processes and targets for improvement.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 4.

NMU has 955 full time faculty and staff and 270 part time faculty and staff. The vast majority of the institution's workforce, including faculty, is unionized. Since 2010, NMU has made improvements to their hiring processes, particularly in the faculty line positions. Human

Resources (HR) at NMU has developed and now centrally coordinates an 11-step employee recruitment and selection process. HR has also updated position descriptions for all campus leaders and supervisors.

4P1, S. NMU has institutionalized an eleven-step hiring process that is coordinated by Human Resources. This eleven-step process includes job designs and creating position descriptions that establish minimum and preferred credentials for new hires. Job design and position descriptions are approved after leadership review and then finalized by HR. A selection committee is used in the search process with the final decision to hire faculty made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs; the Human Resources Department approves hiring of staff. NMU has updated position descriptions for all campus leaders and supervisors in the last three years. Analysis of peer data for productivity, wages, and benefits is conducted regularly.

4P2, S. Specific position qualifications, including required credentials, education levels, minimum experience, skills, abilities, are established based on the needs of the department, expected work tasks, and the university's strategic direction. Selection committees are composed of knowledgeable peers, supervisors and, in some cases, students participate in the process. HR staff members oversee the selection process including communication of the appropriate protocol, navigation of the PeopleAdmin software, provision of information on diversity and affirmative action goals, and management of initial screening, advertising, and background checks. Initial interviews are conducted by phone and Skype and the highest rated candidates are invited to campus for final interview.

4P3, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to fully discuss what it does to retain its employees. Although the processes of recruiting and hiring were outlined, it is unclear what NMU does to retain its employees other than citing low employee turnover rate.

4P4, S. New employees undergo online orientation that can be accessed through the Human Resources' website. A day-long face-to-face new faculty orientation takes place before the beginning of fall semester. Also, benefits orientation is organized for new employees who receive various handouts during the orientation.

4P5, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how it plans for changes in personnel, other than anticipating retirements. This sub-category was not specifically addressed as required.

4P6, S. NMU uses both humanistic and mechanistic job design methodologies to optimize employee satisfaction, organizational efficiency, and productivity. Each job opening provides an opportunity for redesigning work through job enrichment or process improvement.

4P7, O. Although NMU has a published Employee Responsibilities and Employment Rules/Standards of Conduct and a General Personnel Policy Statement, the Portfolio does not indicate if ethics training is mandatory, and if so, how the University affirms that all employees attend. A well-articulated process may guide employee behavior to report issues appropriately and in a timely manner. An opportunity exists for NMU to determine how well its employees understand the policies and how the policies apply to their work as a step to ensuring ethical behavior.

4P8, S. Individual training needs of staff are determined by supervisors through an annual performance review process. On the part of faculty, each faculty member develops individualized targets for training. Campus-wide initiatives are aligned with targeted priorities, including leadership development and use of classroom technology. The Equal Opportunity Office ensures that employee and student training occurs for harassment, labor law, material safety, discrimination, and equal opportunity.

4P9, S. Expectations for maintaining skill sets are established in position descriptions, collective bargaining agreements and the Personnel Policy Manual. Faculty and staff are encouraged to remain professionally active and are supported for the necessary training and development. This includes providing funds for conference attendance, release time, and sabbaticals.

4P10, S. Service unit assessment and administrative evaluation are conducted on an annual basis. Employee objectives are established and approved through an upwardly cascaded process which ultimately ties individual goals to the university's mission, vision, and objectives. Faculty members are evaluated according the AAUP Master Agreement and departmental by-laws. Student evaluations, peer review, appraisal of student learning outcomes, and a statement of future plans are included in faculty evaluations.

4P11, S. NMU has a compensation and benefits package that is nationally competitive which enables it to recruit and retain high performing faculty and staff. Faculty and staff compensation is established using national survey data. NMU has recently improved its salary structure to fall with the range of 80% to 120% of the market mid-point for faculty

and staff salaries. NMU recognizes employees through multiple awards, celebrations, and ceremonies. Recognition programs for faculty focus on teaching, research, public service, teaching effectiveness, and use of technology.

4P12, S. NMU provides ample opportunities for identifying issues related to motivation including the employee survey and discussions between the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) and union members. Issues are analyzed and courses of action selected through special conferences, grievance discussions as well as resolution at the President's Council, Provost Cabinet, or divisional meetings.

4P13, S. NMU uses a number of data points, such as employee turnover, grievances, and arbitration to assess employee satisfaction. Health issues have been addressed by making NMU a tobacco-free campus and by providing employee access to the university's Health Center and the Physical Education Instructional Facility. In addition, the school has adopted a zero tolerance policy for workplace aggression, violence, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination. An emergency response system that provides automatic messages to cell phones, campus networks, electronic bulletin boards, and web sites alerts the campus community in the event of an emergency situation.

4R1, S. NMU regularly collects and analyzes employee retention and turnover, grievance and arbitration rates, performance and evaluation outcomes, promotion and termination rates, and others measures. In addition, NMU started administering an employee satisfaction survey in 2013.

4R2, O. NMU's employee satisfaction survey indicates that only 65% of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with their employment. Even lower percentages report receiving encouragement for suggesting new or better ways of doing things. Results for engagement in campus activities, another measure reportedly used, were not reported.

4R3, O. While changes made by NMU have resulted in reduced costs, it is unclear if they have resulted in improved services to students and other stakeholder groups. Students' satisfaction measures do not reflect productivity and effectiveness.

4R4, S. NMU showed how its results for the performance processes of valuing people compared with the performance results of other institutions. For example, NMU's 6% turnover rate is lower than the national average of 20.3% across all industries and 11.9% in the education sector.

4I1, O. NMU has made a number of changes recently related to valuing people, but the links between the processes, results, and changes reported are not evident.

4I2, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how its culture and infrastructure are used to set targets, analyze the data collected, and develop strategies for improvement based on identified gaps. From information presented, it is unclear how the culture and infrastructure of the institution are used to select processes to improve or targets to meet.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 5.

NMU functions under a shared governance model. The President's Council comprised of cross-functional representation meets bi-monthly to discuss leadership, administrative and informational items. Union contracts specifically require representation on key university committees. Main leadership improvement projects include succession planning, hiring and more data-informed decision-making. The Academic Senate at NMU is composed of 39 senators who represent all academic schools and departments as well as three student government representatives.

5P1, S. NMU stakeholders revisited its mission and values in 2008 and again in 2012 with the arrival of a new interim President. The Road Map to 2015 has set the directions for NMU for the last six years. The institution's "Rethink, Renew, Reconnect" campaign has been used to highlight specific areas of the NMU mission and values to promote strategic initiatives outlined in the Road Map to 2015. The development of a new strategic plan that began in 2013 has made the division leaders to collaborate in developing a planning document that will be in alignment with the institution's mission, vision, and important strategic objectives.

5P2, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to clarify how the institution's leaders use

collective input from stakeholders to set directions which align with its mission, vision, and values. It is not sufficient to just discuss the composition of the board and how it hires and delegates authority to the president.

5P3, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how it takes into account the needs and expectations of potential students in setting directions. While NMU utilizes committee services, it didn't clarify how the needs and expectations of current students, potential students, and other key stakeholder groups are factored in while setting directions.

5P4, S. Leaders at NMU, including the Board of Trustees, communicate with individuals and groups involved in economic and workforce development in the state of Michigan in determining workforce trends, academic opportunities, and research demands. The senior leadership team communicates with the Presidents' Council of State Universities of Michigan to discuss the state of higher education as well as fiscal and educational policies with the objective of better serving students. Internal efforts include a retention initiative focused on competence in reading, writing and analytical skills. NMU's General Education program is being revised to ensure delivery of a quality liberal education.

5P5, S. NMU's decision making process involves initiatives developed by leadership committees and ad-hoc task forces. The shared governance model at NMU, mandated in faculty collective bargaining agreements, supports inclusive decision-making. AQIP Action Projects involve a team charged with investigating and fulfilling the action plan proposal. The team is composed of faculty and staff to ensure appropriate expertise and representation. When the project is completed, a standing committee may be created or an existing committee is charged with ongoing support.

5P6, S. NMU uses data provided by an Assistant Provost for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment in decision-making, reporting of state mandated metrics such as IPEDS, and required HLC reports. The state performance metrics which are used to determine state appropriations and funding drive institutional planning and decision-making. In 2013, NMU launched an online dashboard system which helps leadership monitor alignment with Upper Peninsula and Michigan priorities, program sustainability, student success, and financial effectiveness. Academic departments undergo program review every seven years which requires analysis of departmental trend data.

5P7, S. NMU uses a variety of channels to communicate between and among the different levels of the organization. These channels include the President's Council, web,

hard-copy material, newsletters, and WNMU radio and television, WUPX radio, and email listserv. In addition, the Office of Communication facilitates top-down information sharing. Also, the Provost meets bi-monthly with the faculty union leadership to enhance collaboration.

5P8, O. Other than posting NMU's mission and vision on the institution's website, there is no clear evidence that leaders communicate mission and vision in such a way as to deepen and reinforce the characteristics of a high performance organization to all stakeholders.

5P9, O. There is no evidence of how NMU communicates and shares leadership knowledge, skills and best practices. An opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how it communicates and shares leadership knowledge, skills, and best practices among its constituents. This is a critical aspect of this sub-category.

5P10, S. A new AQIP Action Project on leadership and succession planning was launched in January 2014 with the goal of promoting a climate that will attract, hire, and retain employees with diverse leadership skills as well as train and mentor a pool of current employees who may be promoted from within. The university is transitioning between presidents and has created a transition team that will ensure a smooth transition, and maintain and preserve institutional mission, vision, values, and performance.

5R1, S. NMU regularly collects and analyzes data on various measures of leading and communicating. These measures include performance evaluations for senior leadership and employee satisfaction surveys. An AQIP project in 2012 focused on strengthening administrative processes and increasing the level of staff engagement through improved leadership-guided communication. In 2013, an employee satisfaction survey was conducted that had several questions related to leading and communicating.

5R2, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to analyze and present data for informing process changes, setting targets, and assessing progress toward meeting the institution's goals in leading and communicating. Also, NMU recognizes that an opportunity exists for creating more effective reporting tools in leading and communicating.

5R3, OO. An opportunity exist for NMU to discuss how its performance results for leading and communicating compare with those of other organizations within and outside of higher education. This is a critical aspect of this sub-category that should be

addressed.

5I1, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to discuss recent improvements it made in this area. Improvements that were described by NMU do not appear to be recent or to be tied to results provided and process described earlier. Significant improvements date back to 2008 and 2010.

5I2, O. An opportunity exists for NMU to fully discuss how its culture and infrastructure help it to select processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in leading and communicating. In addition, there is a dearth of targets for improved performance presented in this category.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 6.

Institutional operations are guided by principles in the strategic plan. Technology has played a large role in recent improvements -- new security systems; the implementation of Electronic Health Records and Patient Portal technology in the Health Center; and an electronic tracking system to ensure compliance with training needs. The University acknowledges a need to refine metrics and reestablish targets for new processes instituted to support institutional operations.

6P1, S. There are multiple communication paths by which leadership identifies support service needs of students. These include student participation on service committees, feedback sessions with the president, focus groups, and surveys. Student health care needs are identified through surveys, orientation meetings, and through census data and medical reports received from off campus providers and the university Health Center. Needs of alumni are assessed through periodic surveys and alumni gatherings.

6P2, S. NMU has clearly identified processes for identifying faculty, staff, and administrator needs that align with the college's strategic planning and approval process.

The methods include regular strategy meetings, the use of external consultants, occasional surveys, input from faculty through department heads, collective bargaining, and annual evaluations.

6P3, S. NMU has multiple means for ensuring physical safety and security including police services, text and direct messaging of alerts, HAZMAT tracking, mandatory safety training of key employees, crisis planning, and scheduled maintenance of key security infrastructure. Various campus entities work with the Public Safety and Police Services Department in designing, developing, and implementing new safety and security initiatives.

6P4, O. Key services are managed through information garnered from annual outcomes assessment reports that provide evaluation data from service users. However, day-to-day data collection appears to occur only in the areas of facilities, the IT help desk, and with financial systems. More frequent data collection is warranted.

6P5, O. The institution documents support processes and distributes the information with a variety of means; however, it is unclear if the availability of information results in knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment.

6R1, S. NMU collects a variety of data to increase efficiencies and student satisfaction. Data is collected from the following units: Financial Aid, Public Safety and Police Services, the Health Center, and the IT Help Desk.

6R2, O. While exit surveys from the Academic and Career Advisement Center indicate that students are generally satisfied, an opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how it uses other methods besides surveys and attendance numbers to measure performance results for student support services.

6R3, S. NMU compares its performance results, tuition rates, and state allocations with nine peer institutions in Michigan. NMU uses the data to set targets, such as budget reductions and reallocations.

6R4, S. NMU has utilized data from Budget and Financial Services, Facilities, and Technology Services to make improvements.

6R5, O. While NMU's resource and expenditures are competitive with its state peers, it is unclear how its performance for supporting institutional operations compares with other institutions.

6I1, O. While NMU has worked to improve the physical plant and services to students, it

is unclear how systematic and comprehensive these improvements are in supporting institutional operations.

6I2, O. While NMU's infrastructure enabled the institution to set targets for improvement, they failed to address how the process is integrated with the institution's culture.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 7.

NMU has expanded the use of centralized services and integrated software including an upgraded Banner ERP system, a campus portal, a shared intranet, and migration to a new course management system. Three recent action projects resulted in the creation of a web-based dashboard tool. NMU has been a national leader in connectivity and technology support for fifteen years with the adoption of the laptop university plan. In 2011, NMU launched a wireless initiative for rural communities. NMU is operating its own WiMAX wireless network projecting broadband access to its constituents throughout the county.

7P1, S. NMU selects data and performance information based on external reporting requirements, institutional administration, and the needs of academic and service departments. Instructional data is managed by Academic Information Services and the Information Technology department.

7P2, S. NMU's department of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment collects and distributes data based on external state and federal reporting requirements. Additional information management is used to effectively and efficiently fulfill the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the university. Data is distributed via key performance indicator dashboards that are created with the Cognos software suite.

7P3, S. The institution uses a combination of surveys, focus groups, and advisory councils to determine departmental needs regarding the collection, storage, and accessibility of data and performance information. In addition, an IT department

developed schema aids in prioritizing various projects.

7P4, S. Key stakeholder groups meet regularly to discuss performance data and progress towards strategic goals. Data is shared via web-based dashboards, reports, campus forums, newsletters, emails, and the SHARE intranet collaboration tool.

7P5, S. NMU determines the needs and priorities of comparative data through its Board of Trustees, university administration, and state performance requirements. The selection of data is driven by processes, principles, initiatives, and planning. For comparison purposes, NMU has identified local, regional, national, and aspirational peers. NMU also participates in EDUCAUSE's Center for Analysis and Research to obtain additional comparative data.

7P6, S. Departmental and unit goals are aligned with organizational goals through strategic planning processes and established Service Unit Assessment processes. The Office of Institutional Research Planning & Assessment shares the data via the institution's intranet.

7P7, SS. NMU has a well-developed and extensive set of procedures and policies which ensures the accessibility, integrity, currency, accuracy, security, and redundancy of its data, information systems, and related processes.

7R1, S. NMU collects and analyzes several key performance indicators for its IT systems and processes. These include response times, dashboard usage data, course management system statistics, security scans and reports, and website analytics.

7R2, S. NMU demonstrates that its system of measuring effectiveness meets institutional needs.

7R3, O. While NMU's technology services meet or exceed those offered by its Carnegie peer institutions, they do not indicate how the performance of those services measure effectiveness.

7I1, O. Although NMU has developed eight new key performance indicator dashboards, implemented a new project management system, and has employed new SHARE collaborative tool to disseminate information, they did not address systematic and comprehensive processing for measuring effectiveness.

7I2, O. Although NMU is a technology-enriched campus which facilitates the improvement of processes and performance results in terms of measuring effectiveness, the institution missed an opportunity to describe how its culture and infrastructure helps

select specific processes for improvement and its targets for improved performance.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 8.

NMU has integrated assessment into new and changing processes. There has been a focus on building/improving Road Map benchmarking, identification of key performance indicators, and implementation of dashboards. Planning for the next President of the university is underway.

8P1, S. NMU's key planning processes are guided by its mission, vision, and strategic roadmap, and incorporate cascading goals and feedback loops. The University uses a formal process to implement its strategic plan which includes divisional and functional levels of the organization. The President's Council is the key authority for managing continuous improvement. The Road Map and strategic plan are guideposts for ensuring alignment and long-term vision of direction.

8P2, S. Long term strategies are selected during campus-wide planning sessions every five to seven years. University leadership analyzes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; reviews the university mission and the Road Map planning framework; and considers the availability of resources before revising strategies. Short term planning is done by the academic units through an annual assessment cycle and the cyclical program review. Service units develop both an assessment plan and an improvement plan annually. Improvements are linked explicitly to a university strategic plan goal or an AQIP category. The annual planning and assessment procedures for academic and service units are reviewed for coherence and quality and feedback is provided. Reports are then published on the assessment website and the intranet.

8P3, S. NMU develops action plans through standing committees and councils. After approval at appropriate administrative levels, these groups also incorporate the goals and strategies into university operations. Proposals at all levels must include major actionable events, including appropriate benchmarks and measures. AQIP action projects are selected through a new systematic project selection process. The Director

of University Accreditation and Assessment creates a slate of potential projects which is prioritized by the President's Council and selected by university leadership.

8P4, S. NMU's Board of Trustees has developed an annual planning schedule that requires each division to present strategic initiative documents, results, measures, and improvement plans. The President's Council then aligns plans across the organization. All policies, projects, and planning proposals are reviewed and feedback is communicated back to the departments/units.

8P5, O. While NMU has outlined the process for selecting objectives, it is not clear if specific quantitative targets are set for organizational strategies at NMU. An opportunity exists for NMU to document how all stakeholders make input in defining objectives, selecting measures, and setting performance targets for its strategies and action plans.

8P6, O. While NMU has a clear planning process that factors in resources and future needs, it is unclear by what process decisions are made to select and fund a proposal – especially if the effectiveness is deemed positive yet does not generate a greater efficiency from which costs can be recovered. The process of allocation was not outlined in sufficient detail.

8P7, S. NMU assesses and addresses risk in its planning processes using various quantitative risk models to monitor parameters identified as critical for financial and program success. In addition, risk in planning processes is addressed through academic programs and finance. Also, mandated internal and external audits, and accreditation reviews are used to assess and address risk in planning processes.

8P8, O. While NMU engages in planning processes that address the setting of objectives and the means to assess them, an opportunity exists for NMU to discuss how it develops and nurtures its faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities to address changing requirements demanded by the institution's strategies and action plans.

8R1, O. NMU does not appear to have regular, formal assessment of its continuous improvement planning process. While NMU administers the NSSE and other instruments to collect program assessment data, it is unclear how it measures the effectiveness of its planning processes and systems.

8R2, S. Performance results are provided in all four framing themes of the NMU Road Map to 2015, innovation, meaningful lives, community engagement and campus attributes.

8R3, S. Along with new presidential leadership which began in July 2014, NMU has identified a number of specific targets and action plans for the next three years focusing on enrollments, facilities, and endowment levels.

8R4, O. NMU presents performance comparisons for degree completions, funding performance, and six year graduation rates, but there are no results presented for success in Planning Continuous Improvement. Additional metrics, related to the improvement processes themselves, along with specific targets would be useful in terms of planning continuous improvement.

8R5, O. While NMU's system for Planning Continuous Improvement is maturing, it is unclear as to the effectiveness of the projects and the extent to which they tie into central planning and overall vision/mission. For example, only 40% of the 20 projects attained their intended desired impact levels. There is an opportunity for NMU to increase the number of successful projects.

8I1, S. The Road Map to 2015 has been useful in identifying areas for improvement in the planning processes at NMU. The most important improvements involve re-chartering the President's Council and requiring structured and consistent strategic initiative planning documents from the five divisions. Two additional staff positions, an AQIP coordinator and a Director of Institutional Accreditation and Assessment have allowed NMU to develop more systematic and comprehensive improvement processes.

8I2, O. NMU has a student-centered culture which has helped the institutional select processes to improve including those related financial aid structuring. NMU is in a state with declining population and budgetary difficulties which also drives improvement processes related to cost-containment. However, the institution does not address how its culture aids in setting targets and in fact does not provide quantitative targets in many cases. Qualitative targets that only specify improvement as a goal are less useful in guiding decision making.

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 Northern Michigan University for Category 9.

The institution furthered its focus on centralization for coordination purposes by creating a central repository for policies, handbooks, and application and evaluation instruments for internships and work experiences. NMU assumes a vital role in linking education institutions, businesses and service agencies throughout the region and beyond. NMU has worked to improve processes involved in identifying, prioritizing, building and evaluating its relationships.

9P1, S. The institution uses a territory management model to prioritize high school and community college relationships. Relationships are built and maintained through both outreach activities and bringing school representatives to campus. Noel-Levitz has evaluated and approved this approach. To assist transfer students, the NMU admissions website offers an interactive course equivalency database searchable by community college and course.

9P2, S. NMU career services coordinates placement and employment opportunities for their students using Cat Career Tracks (CCT), a software system designed to management full and part time employment opportunities, internships, and on-campus employment. CCT allows students, alumni, and employers to communicate and exchange documents. Career services staff attend various events in the state to attract employers and solicits employer contacts from alumni networks. NMU's School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service (SELPS) maintains connections with many other educational institutions in the Upper Peninsula.

9P3, O. While NMU's partners offer many health and social services to its students, no formal process was described for creating, prioritizing, and building relationships with external organizations (bookstore, dining, etc.) that provide services to their students.

9P4, O. Procurement of materials and services at NMU is coordinated with university purchasing departments throughout the state. Through participation in the Educational and Institutional Cooperative, NMU is able to use a vendor and contract database to obtain quotes for goods and services. While best practices are espoused including effective communication and clear specifications, no formal process is described for creating, prioritizing and building relationships with these vendors.

9P5, O. While NMU has relationships with education associations, external agencies, accrediting bodies, and the general community, it does not appear that there are

systemic processes in place to create, prioritize, or nurture relationships.

9P6, O. NMU relies on ad hoc surveys and advisory boards to mutually ensure needs of partner organizations. While these efforts are positive, there is no clear sense of alignment or coordination with the broader mission/vision, or with the long-term strategic plan. The process for ensuring that relationships are meeting the varying needs of NMU partners seems to be mostly ad hoc and does not appear to be systematic or robust.

9P7, S. Shared governance, the Academic Senate and its subcommittees, and a Centers structure help NMU create and build relationships between and among units. NMU is deliberate in requiring that members of the various governance groups include broad representation. Academic and service departments enter into partnerships to aid in providing services to stakeholders. Committee documents are available to the campus community on NMUs SHARE drive.

9R1, O. Although NMU collects a variety of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate external collaborative relationships with employers, there was no evidence provided that related to regular data collection and evaluation of internal relationships.

9R2, O. While NMU presents satisfaction results from employers and international students, these do not measure success in building key collaborative relationships.

9R3, O. While NMU has received numerous competitive awards and recognitions, it is unclear how the institution uses the awards to compare its performance to other higher education institutions. NMU does not provide comparative data for the results described in R1 and R2.

9I1, O. While NMU provides a list of improvements in campus assessment, territory management, and Career Services, it does not indicate systematic and comprehensive processes and performance results for building collaborative relationships. A more robust set of assessment measures of performance results in Building Collaborative Relationships would provide data to guide NMU's selection of areas to target for improvement.

9I2, O. While NMU's strategic plan provides guidelines for collaborative relationships, it is unclear how the university's culture and infrastructure helps it to select processes and targets for improvement.

Accreditation Evidence Northern Michigan University

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

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

NMU stakeholders revisited its mission and values in 2008 and again in 2012 with the arrival of

a new interim President. The Road Map to 2015 has set the directions for NMU for the last six years. The institution's "Rethink, Renew, Reconnect" campaign has been used to highlight specific areas of the NMU mission and values to promote strategic initiatives outlined in the Road Map to 2015. Development of a new strategic plan began in 2013. With that said, there is room for improving alignment and integration with stakeholders at all levels and not only at senior-leadership levels.

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

NMU's mission, vision and values are posted on the university's website, and have been communicated during public and private speaking engagements. Additionally, the Road Map has been used to guide campus units in developing and achieving annual performance goals. However, there is concern that the mission is used mostly as a tool during performance evaluation and is not integrated in day-to-day operations.

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

NMU recognizes that being a "right to try" institution comes with a special responsibility to support underprepared students. NMU offers a wider than average array of support services for its various student populations, including Native American, disabled, LGBTQT, commuter, distance, and senior citizens and has the stated goal of identifying "an academic curriculum that balances successful programs with new offerings at the undergraduate and graduate level to meet the needs of students, as well as improve career opportunities after graduation."

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

NMU has a mission that is community-based with the goal of providing quality learning opportunities to meet the social and economic needs of the stakeholders. NMU maintains a good presence in its community and in the Northern Peninsula where it collaborates with industry and business groups with the intention of improving social and economic well-being of the stakeholders in the area. There is room for improvement, however, in the methods by which it systematically measures the appropriateness of the actions it takes in defining and serving stakeholder populations.

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.*

A system of mandated checks and balances, including both internal and external audits, is in place. Employees participate in appropriate ethics training, and the personal policy manual includes chapters on employee standards and conduct, including human subject research, intellectual property issues, FERPA regulations, and a computer network acceptable use policy. It is unclear, however, the extent to which said training activities are mandatory for all faculty, staff, and administrators and what formal process determine who receives what training.

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 Registrar's office and the Office of Graduate list all degree requirements, admission and academic policies, accreditations, and a list of faculty. This information is available online, in print, and communicated face-to-face. All new students must attend a mandatory orientation which provides information about academic programs, career advice, financial aid, social activities, and academic honesty.

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

The 8-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor serve for a staggered period of eight years. The staggered appointments ensure continuity in the Board's actions. The Board of Trustees is autonomous and gives the administrators a free hand in the day-to-day management of the institution, while maintaining oversight. However, there is room for improvement in the degree and directionality of communication between the Board and members of the NMU community.

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

NMU's mission statement highlights freedom of expression and pursuit of truth. NMU challenges its students and faculty to think independently and critically and to develop lifelong learning skills. The "Faculty Master Agreement" entitles faculty to full freedom in research and other scholarly or creative activities. NMU clearly outlined the academic and learning responsibilities of faculty and students.

1P11 & 4P7. HLC Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to “think independently and critically, [and to] develop lifelong learning habits.” They are provided the freedom of expression to examine and discuss all topics of interest, but must be tolerant of diverse opinions. The Student Handbook describes its expectations or policies on academic honesty and integrity. However, an opportunity exists for NMU to determine how well its employees understand the policies and how the policies apply to their work as a step to ensuring ethical behavior.

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

NMU program offerings are determined by a combination of student interests, job markets, placement rates, area needs, programs offered at other institutions of higher learning, accreditation agencies, employers, and advisory boards.

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.*

NMU clearly describes the intended outcomes of its general education competencies of Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis, Social Responsibility in a Diverse World, Integrative Thinking, Human Expression, Perspectives on Society and Scientific Inquiry. This is done within a context wherein the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which its students live and work.

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

NMU has the number of faculty and staff needed for providing effective teaching and learning and other services to the students. NMU annually reviews the faculty mix to determine if the institution has adequate faculty to meet enrollment trends and position elimination as a result of declining population and reduced state appropriations has been handled through attrition and reorganization. NMU has invested in technology for efficiency which has led to improved delivery of services.

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

Student Affairs and Academic Information Services divisions coordinate campus-wide learning support at NMU including tutoring, advising, a First Year Experience, a laptop program, and COMPASS placement tests. While “IDEAL Path” career exploration and first-year programs are

utilized, it is unclear the extent to which needs are systematically assessed by student subpopulations to determine appropriate additional services needed and their subsequent efficacy.

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

NMU provides multiple opportunities for enriched educational experiences through co-curricular activities, clinical/work experiences, and student activities that “encourage leadership, citizenship, and interpersonal skills.” NMU has established Centers to cater for the needs of various student groups, including students with disabilities and international students.

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

Academic program review involves both internal departmental self-study and external review by the Educational Policy Committee. NMU’s seven year program review cycle helps ensure that programs are up-to-date. Licensure and national disciplinary exams are used in 49 programs to verify learning of content. Employers give NMU feedback on program effectiveness.

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

NMU has developed strategies for the assessment of student learning outcomes. Changes have been made on the assessment processes and oversight. An assessment evaluation rubric for effective use of data to improve programs is in use.

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.*

Recruitment and retention efforts at NMU have been strengthened through the creation of two new administrative positions that help leadership monitor key performance indicators of student success. Several of the university’s action projects over the years have focused on student retention, persistence, and completion.

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.*

NMU understands the need to balance program offerings and affordability. NMU sets realistic goals in light of its resources and takes into consideration levels of current resources and future needs in linking strategy selection and action plans. Unit leaders reallocate any savings and absorb unanticipated expenses within the unit and are responsible for maintaining, managing, and balancing their primary budgets and allocating resource streams to replace and enhance the capital base. However, it is unclear by what processes decisions are made to select and fund proposals.

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.***

NMU's governance and administrative model promotes shared governance. The faculty collective bargaining agreements facilitate faculty input on almost all academic issues. Faculty and staff are given opportunity to assume leadership roles which enables the institution to fulfill its mission. However, there is no evidence of how NMU communicates and shares leadership knowledge beyond passive means (web posting, file-sharing, etc.)

5P2 & 5P6. Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component **5.C. *The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.***

Leadership committees and ad hoc task forces use relevant data to develop and implement new initiatives. Task forces lead new initiatives, investigating feasibility and making recommendations to the appropriate administrator. NMU also has a number of advisory and planning committees which are involved in decision-making efforts. NMU gathers a significant amount of relevant data that is made available to committees to help guide their activities. However, an opportunity exists for NMU to clarify how the institution's leaders use collective input from stakeholders to set directions which align with its mission, vision, and values.

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

Three AQIP Action Projects in the last five years focused on building sustainable knowledge management, data systems, and Key Performance Indicators. These were designed to provide data to analyze performance and enable evidence-based improvement decisions. NMU has invested in technology and management systems. These are used to improve coordination of user needs and to disseminate various data through an intranet sharing system, newsletters, and campus emails.

Quality of Systems Portfolio For Northern Michigan University

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 Northern Michigan University with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

- In many cases, questions posed in the categories were edited, shortened or combined resulting in an incomplete answer. In some cases, there were two questions posed but only one of the questions answered. Answers were sometimes found in a section other than the section where the question was asked which complicated the review.
- Context for results and targets for performance were not always provided in the portfolio. These items would help the reader connect the dots. There should be a clear connection between the processes described, the measurements conducted, the results reported, and the improvements indicated.

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.