



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

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March 23, 2011

Sue K. Hammersmith  
President  
Metropolitan State University  
700 E. Seventh St.  
St. Paul, MN 55106-5000

Dear President Hammersmith:

Enclosed is a copy of Metropolitan State University's *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. It begins with a concise Executive Summary, intended for those general readers that do not require a high level of detail. Your Systems Appraisal Team of quality experts provided extensive detail in the full report by identifying nine distinct groups of what they view as your institution's *strengths* and *opportunities for improvement*, one group for each of the nine AQIP Categories. We are also emailing your institution's AQIP Liaison a copy of this full *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.

To receive maximum benefit from your Systems Appraisal, you and your colleagues should plan to invest substantial time in discussing it, considering the team's observations and advice, and identifying which actions will best advance your institution.

To comply with federal requirements, we need the CEO of the institution formally to acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and to provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Limit your acknowledgement and comments to a maximum of two typewritten pages, and understand that your response will become part of your institution's permanent HLC file, to be shared with future peer reviewers who review your institution (including the next Systems Appraisal team, the next Quality Checkup visit team, and the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation panel). Email your response to [AQIP@hlcommission.org](mailto:AQIP@hlcommission.org); call me or Mary Green (at 800-621-7440 x130) if you have any questions about it.

We know you will gain real value from the Systems Appraisal Feedback and the activities it will stimulate within your institution, and we are proud to be working with you as you continue along the never-ending path to improvement.

Sincerely,

Eric V. Martin, Vice President for Accreditation Relations

# **SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

## **METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

March 23, 2011



Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

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

### **Category One**

- Metropolitan State University (MSU) has shown strong initiative in the development of a culture and infrastructure that supports and utilizes assessment as a core principle for Helping Students Learn. The institution has carefully designed processes that consider learning outcomes as the basis for program development and that support student needs. The institution also deserves credit for its development of an Academic Early Alert system and its work on a diversity plan.
- The full implementation of an automated process for the review of prerequisite completion is a good first step towards ensuring that students enroll in appropriate courses. MSU has the opportunity to build on this implementation by placing a high priority on processes that recognize different student learning styles and by measuring the impact of those learning styles on learning outcomes. This prioritization may lead to processes that emphasize the recognition, measurement, and analysis of student and faculty support needs.
- As MSU builds these processes and seeks to improve results, development and analysis of longitudinal data will allow the identification of trends, the comparison of processes and results with other institutions, and benchmarking. The use of this type of data aligns with the work of an institutional assessment committee.

### **Category Two**

- MSU has defined and embraced its Other Distinctive Objectives. It communicates its expectations regarding these objectives clearly, has established measurements of performance results in each area, and has defined how these results strengthen the University as well as enhance relationships within the community that it serves. Looking forward, MSU may be able to improve its performance in accomplishing these objectives by benchmarking performance results against other institutions and further defining and formalizing the assessment process and the role of its constituents.

### Category Three

- MSU employs a wide range of methods to Understand Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. Recent survey results show positive satisfaction results among first-year, senior, and adult students with regard to services and communication. Working towards a fully developed system of analyzing, utilizing, and reporting the volume of data collected through multiple internal and external surveys will promote continuous improvement and enhance a culture of teaching and learning excellence.

### Category Four

- MSU has many processes in place for Valuing People, including employee performance review, recognition of service and achievement, and a process to track areas of improvement or concern in employee perceptions. Working towards formalized and perhaps centralized processes and systems that measure and compare overall employee effectiveness, align evaluation with organizational goals, and enhance employee motivation and satisfaction may help to promote a culture of continuous improvement. The University has an opportunity to further analyze its processes and to increase employee satisfaction and development through the implementation of the new human resources strategic plan.

### Category Five

- MSU has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement in Leading and Communicating. The shared commitment to mission, vision, and values among employee constituents, as well as the connections between the mission and the university planning processes are evident. Survey data relevant to communication and leadership have provided important feedback on which MSU has taken action, demonstrated improvement in many areas, and acknowledged areas in need of continued improvement.
- Key opportunities for MSU moving forward appear to be the potential adoption of the Real-Time Strategic Planning process, establishing formalized processes and timelines for review of the mission statement, as well as reviewing and formalizing decision-making processes throughout the organization. These initiatives appear to support more targeted and timely response to a rapidly changing internal and external environment.

## Category Six

- MSU has access to comparison data on Supporting Organizational Operations that highlight best practices, and benchmark performance results. As an example, the University is maintaining its facilities and utilizing space efficiently and effectively in comparison to its peers. Having an established plan to self-reflect on comparison data has the potential to initiate improvement.
- MSU is building a culture and infrastructure that assists with the selection of processes and targets. For example, the University collects and analyzes financial, enrollment, technological use, employee, and other student, administrative, and organizational support information, and it has developed metrics for support service processes that it monitors and analyzes on a regular basis. Formalizing processes and systems to analyze and improve stakeholder support services, to select specific processes for improvement, and to set targets for improvement may promote continuous improvement and increased stakeholder satisfaction.

## Category Seven

- MSU has identified and developed key infrastructure and organizational groups that help select specific processes for improvement and to set targets for improved performance in Measuring Effectiveness. As a result, MSU has progressed in setting improvement targets for Measuring Effectiveness and in better utilizing data for budgeting and decision-making. The recent improvements in measuring effectiveness and the implementation of the DataSlice pilot emphasize the University's understanding that data security, accessibility, and accuracy is vital to running an effective and efficient institution.
- Although MSU cites the importance of information technology (IT) and the availability and timeliness of responses, the linkage with meeting the institution's needs in accomplishing its mission and goals is not clear. In addition, MSU identifies an opportunity to work towards a more effective coordination of the IR and IT departments. Developing more formalized processes and systems and tracking and accessing performance results may assist the institution in continued improvements in data management and a culture of data-based decision making. Comparisons of information and knowledge management systems used by other organizations, including

organizations outside of higher education, may assist MSU with the identification of strengths and opportunities in its data collection, management, and dissemination processes.

### **Category Eight**

- MSU has demonstrated progress toward building a culture for Planning Continuous Improvement through its integrated strategic planning process. The recommended implementation of the Real-time Strategic Planning Approach could introduce change, more formalized processes, and improvement throughout the planning processes. This change could enhance the linkage between planning, process, and implementation through the analysis of internal and external data and trends.
- As the institution fully implements some pilot projects and recommendations (such as implementation of the Real Time Strategic Planning, revision of the Planning and Budget Council and communication and timelines for decision-making), progress and performance results in planning, budgeting, and setting improvement targets may increase.

### **Category Nine**

- MSU provides many examples of Building Collaborative Relationships with community, business, state, and higher education partners that add value to the institution and its students. Developing collaborative relationships and then integrating them into the strategic planning structure of a complex organization presents many challenges along with opportunities for value-added outreach in the region. Continuing to build, prioritize, and implement formal processes and systems to create, prioritize, assess, and improve these relationships may not only promote a culture of continuous improvement, but enhance teaching and learning.

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

## ELEMENTS OF METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY'S FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

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

**Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis:** Strategic issues are those most closely related to your institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement



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

**Critical Characteristics:** Your Systems Portfolio's Organizational Overview provides context for the team's knowledge of your institution's identity, mission objectives, strategic goals, and key factors related to improvement. Critical Characteristics are those features most important for understanding the institution's mission, environment, stakeholders, competitive position, goals, and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in the Report.

**Category Feedback:** The Report's feedback on each of AQIP's nine Categories specifically identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your *Systems Portfolio*, offer brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report.

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## STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

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

**Issues Affecting Compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*.** An important goal for the Systems Appraisal was to review your institution's compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. The peer quality experts who served on the team were all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission's *Criteria*, and the Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the *Criteria* as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your institution's systems and processes under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the *Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the *Criteria* and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.

The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Metropolitan State University has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five *Criteria for Accreditation* and each of their Core Components. Although the Systems Appraisal does not in itself constitute a review for continued accreditation, the team's conclusion upon reviewing your Portfolio against the Criteria will serve as a telling piece of evidence during the Commission's next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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

- MSU is in the early stages of formalizing and standardizing processes and systems that promote a culture of continuous improvement. Developing more formalized processes and systems that integrate tracking and accessing performance results may assist the

institution in promoting continual improvements in all areas. These processes and systems may also strengthen planning and data-informed decision making.

- As MSU builds processes and seeks to improve results, the institution may wish to consider building and analyzing longitudinal data that allow the identification of trends, the comparison of processes and results with other institutions, and benchmarking.
- MSU has not yet developed processes for tracking and utilizing comparison results with organizations outside of higher education where appropriate. Developing and implementing these processes may assist MSU with the identification of strengths and opportunities throughout the organization. Benchmarking with these other organizations allows for the identification of best practices and may assist with setting targets for improvement.
- MSU lists a number of aspects of its culture and infrastructure that assist with the selection of processes and targets. Yet, the institution has not demonstrated how these elements assist them in determining targets for improvement. Additionally, the elements provided do not clearly indicate how MSU's culture and infrastructure help to select specific processes to improve and set targets for improved performance results throughout the University. Developing and integrating a formalized system that connects a supportive culture and infrastructure with strategic planning and setting improvement targets may enhance performance results across the institution.
- Like many higher education institutions, MSU faces an increasingly competitive higher education environment as well as projected reductions in funding for the foreseeable future. Additionally, with four major locations, several additional instruction sites, and five collective bargaining units, MSU has a complex and challenging environment in which to ensure integration of planning and consistent communication university-wide. In order to respond to these challenges, it appears important that MSU continue to improve its processes for ensuring departmental and unit objectives/goals are aligned with institutional objectives/goals. Reviewing and formalizing decision-making processes throughout the organization may allow the University to respond in a more systematic and timely manner to emerging opportunities and challenges.

## USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

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

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

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

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

## CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

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

### Item Critical Characteristic

- OV1a MSU has established common learning student outcomes, known as General Education and Liberal Studies (GELS), which are consistent with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum for all Minnesota public colleges and universities and set forth ten general education goal areas.
- OV1b MSU is a comprehensive, urban, public, university of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, which consists of seven state universities and 25 two-year community and technical colleges on a total of 53 campuses. The University offers degree programs at the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels. By state statute the doctoral programs are applied degrees.
- OV2 It is central to the mission of MSU to recruit underserved populations and to provide the support structure to assist them in completing degree programs. The University's strategic vision is to grow significantly by 2020 with emphasis on baccalaureate degree completion, graduate education, online programs, and continued alignment and offerings on the sites of MnSCU's ten two-year community and technical colleges in the metropolitan area.
- OV3a According to students who answered a Noel-Levitz survey, the top ten items of importance are: 1) Knowledgeable faculty; 2) Excellent instructional quality; 3) Valuable major course content; 4) Reasonable tuition rates; 5) Clear and applicable major requirements; 6) Convenient class times; 7) Few registration conflicts; 8) Instructional

commitment to instructional excellence; 9) Competent academic advisors; and 10) Online, fax, and telephone registration functionality.

- OV3b In 2009-2010, Metropolitan State enrolled more than 10,000 students with nearly 79 percent residing in Minnesota and 71 percent residing in the metropolitan area. The average student age is 31 and approximately 59 percent are women. Twenty-nine percent of all students are people of color, and this enrollment is continuing to grow. Approximately 91 percent of students were undergraduates, while part-timers constituted 64 percent of students.
- OV4a Key factors affecting Metropolitan State's organizational structure include the following: the divisional structure, the five employee bargaining unions, a heavy reliance on part-time community faculty, the four campuses as well as additional teaching locations, the diverse commuter student population, the commitment to inclusive diversity and civic and community engagement, and the MnSCU policies and structures and legal matters.
- OV4b Metropolitan State offers other programs and services including applied research and collaborative education efforts with neighborhoods and community organizations such as Advance IT Minnesota and professional development assistance to business, government, and the nonprofit sector.
- OV6 MSU has four major locations located in St. Paul, Minneapolis, a midway campus located between St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice College in Brooklyn Park. It also has several additional instructional sites in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. The operating budget for all campuses and sites is nearly \$57 million.
- OV7 Metropolitan State utilizes a MnSCU homegrown Student Information System (ISRS) which neither integrates well with commercial software nor is modification-friendly, thereby creating a heavy reliance on the IT department. As the current system limits the institution's ability to generate data to inform decision making, MSU is working towards improvement of reporting functionality.
- OV8 A major constraint affecting MSU is its ability to support quality and sustainable enrollment growth while facing declining state allocations, the projected loss of federal stimulus revenues in 2012 and beyond, and the lack of clarity on the institution's ongoing ability to raise tuition to offset these revenue sources. Given its many locations, MSU

recognizes the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and well informed university community as well as maintaining consistent institutional branding.

OV9 MSU's "unwavering commitment to civic engagement" is central to its mission and is communicated to its constituents through well defined overarching goals, partnerships, and collaborative relationships to the local community. The University offers other programs and services including applied research and collaborative education efforts with organizations such as Advance IT Minnesota, along with professional development assistance to business, government, and the nonprofit sector.

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## CATEGORY FEEDBACK

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

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## AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

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

learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

**Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Metropolitan State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:**

***Item Critical Characteristic***

OV1a MSU has established common learning student outcomes, known as General Education and Liberal Studies (GELS), which are consistent with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum for all Minnesota public colleges and universities and set forth ten general education goal areas.

OV1b MSU is a comprehensive, urban, public, university of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, which consists of seven state universities and 25 two-year community and technical colleges on a total of 53 campuses. The University offers degree programs at the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels. By state statute the doctoral programs are applied degrees.

OV3b In 2009-2010, Metropolitan State enrolled more than 10,000 students with nearly 79 percent residing in Minnesota and 71 percent residing in the metropolitan area. The average student age is 31 and approximately 59 percent are women. Twenty-nine percent of all students are people of color, and this enrollment is continuing to grow. Approximately 91 percent of students were undergraduates, while part-timers constituted 64 percent of students.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1P1, 1P2	S	The MSU General Education Committee led faculty efforts to update common learning outcomes for all undergraduate students during the 2009-2010 academic year. Faculty determine program-specific and program-associated learning outcomes. Learning outcomes for programs



- with specialty accreditation standards or externally recognized standards align with those standards.
- 1P3            S        MSU has provided two detailed policy statements (Policy 2070 and Policy 251) which guide the processes for designing new programs. They outline a consecutive review process from the faculty up through either the Graduate Programs Committee or the Academic Affairs Committee. Graduate programs have the added element of being reviewed by the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Vice Provost as well as being vetted through their System Programs Office having engaged in an external review.
- 1P4            S        The Program review process, on a standard five-year cycle (outlined in University Procedure 255), is based on data collected by the University's Office of Institutional Research as enrollment reviews, student demographics, full-year equivalent information, and retention/graduation rates.
- 1P5            O        The University determines student preparation for specific curricula, programs, courses, and learning through a variety of methods (e.g. assessment of student learning outcomes, student performance in classes, and completion of specific prerequisites). However, the University might benefit from a more strategic assessment that combines the information of all assessment methods.
- 1P6            S        A comprehensive admission process is in place for communicating to prospective students the required preparation, learning and development objectives for programs, through face to face, written publications and on-line resources. This process is supported by the admissions office, registrar's office, the Diagnostic Assessment Department and academic advising. The one-stop Gateway Student Services provides a single point of contact for students with questions or uncertainty on where to go to find appropriate information.
- 1P7            SS       MSU provides multiple methods of helping students select programs of study that match their needs, interests, and abilities that include courses,

internships, service learning, the Travelers Pathway Program, Career Services, Cultural Coordinators, and ISEEK.

- 1P8 O Full implementation of the automated process for review of prerequisite completion will better ensure students are enrolled in appropriate courses. Furthermore, systemic implementation of the Academic Early Alert system may allow for a more formal process for early intervention of students having academic difficulties.
- 1P9 O MSU has provided different education delivery formats to meet students' needs. However, a specific focus on addressing the different learning styles of its diverse student population may further enhance student learning outcomes.
- 1P10 S A number of programs are available for special needs groups such as multicultural, veteran, disability, underprivileged, international, etc.
- 1P11 S MSU communicates expectations about standards for teaching and learning through internal conferences and development workshops, professional development reports, the President's Circle of Engaged Learning, and the College of Management Teaching Academy.
- 1P12 O Table 1P11-2 lists how the institution builds an efficient course delivery system that addresses the University's requirements but does not appear to include processes for ensuring that students' needs are met. Without this component the institution may not actually have an effective system that can be adjusted when changing student needs are identified.
- 1P13, P14 S MSU has processes in place for assessing student learning outcomes, a five-year program review, and an intentional strategy of using Community Faculty and Advising Boards. These processes help ensure that programs and courses are up-to-date and responsive to changes including, if necessary, program closure.
- P15 O The portfolio fails to provide evidence of how MSU determines and addresses learning support needs of students and faculty in their student learning, development, and assessment processes. Student feedback is

- the main process used to measure student satisfaction. It is unclear how faculty needs are measured.
- P16 S MSU has a focused approach to co-curricular activities that includes a wide variety of programming and review by the Faculty Work Group of the Center for Community-Based Learning and the Deans and Directors Council.
- P17 S At MSU, DARS checks for the completion of courses and other requirements while capstone courses are used to synthesize and demonstrate students' learning in their selected majors.
- P18 S In 2004-2005, the faculty and University Assessment Committee redefined student learning outcomes and created assessment plans for the majority of programs. The program proposal review process is utilized for assessing student learning in programs that were established since 2004-2005. Additionally, the University Assessment Committee communicates annual reporting deadlines, tracks report submissions, and offers assessment workshops for faculty.
- 1R1 S MSU measures four areas of student learning: student persistence and completion rates; retention, transfer, graduation, success, and "lost" rates; Bachelor's awards comparisons between graduates of color and white graduates; and underrepresented undergraduate graduation rates.
- 1R2 O The University implemented The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 with unsatisfying results and now has an opportunity to identify another instrument fitted to its data needs.
- 1R3 O Most data results were only for one year making it difficult to provide any succinct longitudinal assessments. Providing longitudinal data allows trends to emerge and enhances strategic and operational planning.
- 1R4 O MSU provided both one-year and multiple-year examples of graduate performance on licensure exams. Tracking and assessing longitudinal data provides the opportunity to benchmark, compare, and identify trends

which lead to more formalized processes based on continual improvement.

- 1R5            S        In surveys administered in 2010, students rated Testing Center evaluations as “helpful” or “very helpful” by 95.3%. Similarly, more than 70% of students rated their experience with their advisor as “very useful” or “somewhat useful”; or that their advisor respects their goals, questions, and concerns; or their advisors return their calls or emails within a reasonable time.
- 1R6            O        MSU has threaded both formal and informal results in Helping Students Learn with other colleges and universities throughout the results section. However, a succinct measurement of the University’s comparisons with the outcomes of other institutions would provide a clear opportunity for results.
- 1I1            S        MSU has provided a list of significant recent improvements that overall appear to be the result of the development of systematic and comprehensive processes that produce performance results for Helping Students Learn. Some of these improvements include the University Assessment Committee’s process for providing written feedback to academic program reports its leadership role in assessing common student learning outcomes, the pilot of an Academic Early Alert system, and the redesign of academic scheduling.
- 1I2            S        MSU has created a culture and infrastructure designed to improve and set targets to enhance student learning.

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## **AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES**

*Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution’s major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of your mission. Depending on your institution’s character, it examines your institution’s processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives,

alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

OV2 It is central to the mission of MSU to recruit underserved populations and to provide the support structure to assist them in completing degree programs. The University's strategic vision is to grow significantly by 2020 with emphasis on baccalaureate degree completion, graduate education, online programs, and continued alignment and offerings on the sites of MnSCU's ten two-year community and technical colleges in the metropolitan area.

OV4b Metropolitan State offers other programs and services including applied research and collaborative education efforts with neighborhoods and community organizations such as Advance IT Minnesota and professional development assistance to business, government, and the nonprofit sector.

**Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Metropolitan State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.**

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
2P1	S	MSU has two areas of distinction in both instructional and non-instructional priorities (diversity and civic engagement) that are central to its mission and that distinguish it from other institutions. University-community partnerships and Advance IT Minnesota are key overarching non-instructional initiatives that are designed to fulfill these priority areas. MSU is the only university in Minnesota which houses both a university and a public library, which is home to the Gordon Parks Gallery.
2P2	S	While the Advance IT Minnesota initiative utilized a separate collaborative planning process that produced five strategic goals, the University

Advancement and Alumni Relations division and library partnership used the university planning processes to determine objectives. All initiatives involved other stakeholders in the development of the objectives, both internal and external.

- 2P3            S        Advance IT Minnesota communicates its expectations through its main website as well as through strategic partnerships and affiliate Web sites and strategic partnerships. The University Plan which incorporates future plans and expectations is reviewed and communicated amongst its internal constituents through its shared governance structure. The annual Budget Book also provides important information to stakeholders about fundraising and development efforts.
- 2P4            O        MSU states that objectives and results are assessed and reviewed through annual updates of the University Plan and regular meetings; however, little detail is provided that illuminates the process and indicates how data are gathered and evaluated for assessment of their key distinctive objectives. Clarifying the assessment process may help MSU in making improvements in these areas.
- 2P5, 2P6      O        Although MSU lists a variety of ways that faculty and staff meet with or provide information to the institution's administration, the actual processes for determining employee needs and incorporating feedback into improvement efforts are not provided. Formalized and standardized processes for determining employee needs, analyzing and assessing feedback, and making improvements can help promote a culture of continuous improvement.
- 2R1, 2R2      S        MSU has identified measures and performance results for Advance IT Minnesota, Advancement and Alumni Relations, and the library partnership that provides important feedback in regard to effectiveness and to the continuous improvement process.
- 2R3            O        MSU has an opportunity to develop processes that identify measures that can be tracked to allow for the comparison of performance results with

- other institutions where appropriate. These measures would allow MSU to benchmark its results against other institutions in key areas such as Advancement and Alumni Relations.
- 2R4            S        MSU performance results for the processes of Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives strengthen the University and enhance relationships by engaging members of the community in areas of diversity, civic engagement, service learning, and technology education. Relationships fostered from these processes create strong ties between members of the community and MSU and connects the people of MSU to the broader community. Additionally, funds raised by the University provide direct support for university initiatives, educational programs and scholarships which benefit both MSU and participating members from the community.
- 2I1            O        Although MSU has identified three recent improvements in this category and has well documented performance results for its key objectives, it has not clearly exhibited that processes are systematic and comprehensive. More clearly defining assessment processes in relation to Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives may help MSU target key improvement areas that add value to the institution on a consistent basis.
- 2I2            O        Although MSU provides a list of key elements of its culture and infrastructure that support its Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives, it does not describe how these elements help and interact to select specific processes to improve and to set targets for improved performance results in this category.

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### **AQIP CATEGORY 3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS**

*Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs* examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification, student and

stakeholder requirements, analysis of student and stakeholder needs, relationship building with students and stakeholders, complaint collection, analysis, and resolution, determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

OV3a According to students who answered a Noel-Levitz survey, the top ten items of importance are 1) Knowledgeable faculty; 2) Excellent instructional quality; 3) Valuable major course content; 4) Reasonable tuition rates; 5) Clear and applicable major requirements; 6) Convenient class times; 7) Few registration conflicts; 8) Instructional commitment to instructional excellence; 9) Competent academic advisors; and 10) Online, fax, and telephone registration functionality.

OV3b In 2009-2010, Metropolitan State enrolled more than 10,000 students with nearly 79 percent residing in Minnesota and 71 percent residing in the metropolitan area. The average student age is 31 and approximately 59 percent are women. Twenty-nine percent of all students are people of color, and this enrollment is continuing to grow. Approximately 91 percent of students were undergraduates, while part-timers constituted 64 percent of students.

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

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
3P1a	S	MSU's Student Senate is used to gather student feedback on issues that may impact students through a monthly Leadership Team meeting with senior-level MSU administrators and student representation on all key committees as well as consultation with students on other issues that impact them. In addition, MSU utilizes several nationally recognized



- surveys and feedback-gathering methods and some locally developed surveys to identify students' needs.
- 3P1b      O      MSU has a comprehensive array of student services to identify the changing needs of student groups; however, it is not clear whether the institution has a systemic process for analyzing the information and selecting a course of action with regard to these needs. Although Student Senate is "an integral part of governance," it is not clear whether they and other decision-makers have access to an analysis of the evidence of the changing needs of students gathered by student support services.
- 3P2      S      MSU has identified many channels through which it builds and maintains relationships with students. These channels include the new position of dean of Student Affairs, a low student-to-faculty ratio of 17 to 1, redesign of its Gateway Student Services Center to provide "one-stop" services (such as academic advising, student leadership, and development), and campus events and the use of technology for better communication.
- 3P3, 3P4      S      MSU has processes in place to analyze and take action on the changing needs of key stakeholders while maintaining these relationships through regular communication and interaction with their key stakeholders including employees, partner organizations, alumni, and the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood.
- 3P5      O      MSU has established strong relationships with professional and community-based organizations, and the University has conducted analyses of enrollment levels, trends, and projections, admissions data and placement test results that have assisted them in identifying new student and service areas, in addition to the work of its SERM committee. However, the project that has been started that will culminate in the creation of a three year enrollment management plan and improvement of marketing and admissions processes will likely help MSU to formalize processes for identifying new student groups to be served and improving its effectiveness in marketing and attracting these student groups.

- 3P6 S MSU has formalized processes in place to collect and analyze feedback on complaint information from students and other stakeholders. The College's Continuous Improvement Coordination Team (CICT) has worked on an Action Project which developed a more systematic approach to address informal complaints in order to track complaints and analyze the data for patterns. Communication of processes is handled through the university website and student portal.
- 3R1 S MSU has a schedule of administering both internal and external surveys gathering student satisfaction results on a number of different issues as well as surveying students in some targeted and specific instances. The NSSE and Noel-Levitz surveys, in particular, enable the institution to measure progress in student satisfaction over time as compared to peer institutions.
- 3R2 O MSU provides performance results for student satisfaction from the "Adult Student Priority Survey" from 2009 and two years (2006, 2009) of performance results from the NSSE. Given the number of student satisfaction surveys that are regularly conducted, student satisfaction could be documented, analyzed, and reported longitudinally to provide a more complete understanding of whether the institution is meeting student needs. It would be helpful to incorporate those data into the summary table in order to identify institutional trends in student satisfaction over time.
- 3R3 O MSU provides data to show improvement in student performance and or completion from two groups—TRIO and American-minority students. The data read as if there are only isolated results and not part of a systematic gathering and analysis of data. MSU might consider how to aggregate data for identifying and reporting overarching trends.
- 3R4, 3R5 O Although MSU was able to document some performance results, including a Silver Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the institution does not yet have formalized processes and systems for collecting, analyzing, and reporting performance results for

relationship building and stakeholder satisfaction. Building these processes and utilizing the information will allow the University to enhance a culture of continuous improvement. While MSU has some evidence of alumni satisfaction (such as distribution numbers for alumni communications and peer recognition of its alumni magazine), no data are presented with regard to alumni development support, one of the standard indicators of alumni satisfaction. Collecting and analyzing data such as the percentage of alumni who donate will help the institution make decisions in building relationships with this key stakeholder group.

- 3R6a      S      MSU provides NSSE results for the performance of its processes for Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' needs compared with other higher education organizations. When compared to institutions in the same Carnegie class, MSU rated higher on 2009 NSSE results. MSU compared favorably with other MnSCU institutions with regard to university portrait results.
- 3R6b      O      MSU provides limited information on the performance results related to student satisfaction; however, those results provided suggest areas for improvement in certain student services, including financial aid, services for maintaining school-life balance, co-curricular education and enrichment, and student/faculty interaction.
- 3I1        SS      Metropolitan State has undergone a total transformation of their student services in the last two years including physical reconfigurations, reorganization of staff and other personnel, creation of new services for students (Veterans Center), customer service training for staff, developing new policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and other improvements. The list of changes made by the University shows a great commitment to improving student services.
- 3I2        O      The cultural and structural elements listed describe what but not how these elements inform the meta-process of selecting and setting performance targets for processes related to Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. The meta-process provides an

opportunity to reflect on the “big picture” (i.e., culture and infrastructure) institutional processes. One approach to the meta-process is to turn each bulleted phrase into a sentence that answers how this element helps MSU inform decision-making related to understanding student needs. For example, “student-focused mission” might become “MSU’s student-focused mission directs us to understand the higher education needs of the Twin Cities and greater metropolitan population, especially the needs of underserved groups such as adults and communities of color.”

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#### **AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

OV4a Key factors affecting Metropolitan State’s organizational structure include the following: the divisional structure, the five employee bargaining unions, a heavy reliance on part-time community faculty, the four campuses as well as additional teaching locations, the diverse commuter student population, the commitment to inclusive diversity and civic and community engagement, and the MnSCU policies and structures and legal matters.

**Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Metropolitan State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 4, Valuing People.**

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
4P1	S	Faculty credentialing, position expectations, needs, and descriptions are set by bargaining unit agreements and the Minnesota classification specifications. Administrator positions are not covered by collective bargaining, and the hiring manager determines the credentials and skills needed and then works with the HR office before submission to the MnSCU office of the Chancellor for final review and approval.
4P2, 4P3	O	Although MSU has processes and procedures for recruiting applicants and hiring as outlined in University Policies #5010 and #5020, there is currently no formal retention program in place. Exit interviews are not conducted for all employees who leave, and there is no systematic review of the interview results. Building formalized processes and systems to ensure quality hiring and retention of credentialed individuals may promote a culture of valuing people. For example, if not already done, Metropolitan might want to consider collecting data on how applicants learn of the position openings to determine the best methods to advertise.
4P4	O	It is unclear whether all or a subset of employees receive an orientation to core information about MSU (e.g., mission, history, accreditation process, key policies, etc.). It is also unclear as to the consistency of the orientation information since department chairs, deans, and supervisors may orient new employees and "how this is undertaken varies." New employee orientation is a key element in communicating essential information about the organization to employees and may help to improve employee satisfaction as measured by the Valuing People survey discussed in 5R1 and 5I1.
4P5	O	MSU's personnel are spread across multiple locations, and the University has a large cadre of community faculty (more than 550). These factors, as well as others, create unique challenges from a human resource

perspective planning perspective. Among other benefits, the development of a comprehensive strategic human resource plan may help formalize and create a more systematic process for planning for personnel changes. For example, the University also has an opportunity to review and improve processes for assigning adjunct faculty to courses.

- 4P6a        S        MSU's adoption of Lean quality improvement principles for large-scale improvement projects provides a formal process for improving organizational productivity and effectiveness. The involvement of personnel who own, or are co-owners of, a process in the improvement projects increases buy-in as well as employee empowerment and satisfaction. Faced with funding shortages and budget reductions a focus on process improvement to improve efficiency is an important proactive step.
- 4P6b        O        Metropolitan readily admits the school lacks a systematic way to document across the culture improvement within individual departments. Developing such a tool could help currently siloed departments to learn from each other and to increase improvement momentum.
- 4P7         S        MSU promotes the ethical practices of all employees with a variety of policies, processes, guidelines, training, and an organizational conduct code. The University's Diversity Learning Task Force works with stakeholder groups to promote inclusion, equity, and cultural competency.
- 4P8         O        Although training needs are identified by the HR office and various committees and through improvement projects and various surveys, the University does not yet have a formalized and consistent process that ensures alignment of employee training with short- and long-range organizational plans. Providing this integration may strengthen instructional and non-instructional programs and services.
- 4P9         O        Using feedback from two online surveys focused on organizational climate, a Statement on Employee Development rededicated efforts for employee development. An Employment Development Steering Committee is being formed to plan, promote, and market the development

- processes which creates the opportunity to train and develop all employees systematically and effectively throughout their careers with the institution.
- 4P10      O      Currently employee groups have different evaluation processes with faculty and staff evaluations determined by collective bargaining agreements. The University has the opportunity to design an evaluation system for administrators that aligns with objectives for both instructional and non-instructional programs and services. This system for evaluation may in time encourage this alignment for all personnel evaluations and could serve to focus employees on institutional goals.
- 4P11      S      MSU has developed recognition awards, including the Innovator Award, the Measurable Difference Award, and the “Metamorphosis” Award, that are aligned with continuous improvement accomplishments. The institution’s compensation plans vary based upon collective bargaining units; however, administrators’ annual pay increases are entirely merit based.
- 4P12      O      MSU, like many other higher education institutions, is faced with declining state financial support. Maintaining the morale of employees is challenging in this economic environment. In addition to the many forums through which senior leadership interacts with employees and hears their concerns and ideas, MSU may benefit from accelerating the creation of a systemic process for aggregating and analyzing the “Valuing People” survey as well as aggregating feedback regarding motivational issues gleaned from annual reviews and employee exit interviews. Comprehensive analysis of this information may assist the administration in prioritizing resolutions to the most common morale issues and concerns.
- 4P13      O      While MSU has some tools for collecting information about employee satisfaction (“Valuing People” survey, MnSCU system survey) and health and safety (annual crime report, ergonomic assessments, participation in safety training), it is not clear whether the organization has a systemic

process for using this information to evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being.

- 4R1      O      While employee retention may be an indicator of how well an organization values people, the data presented in Table 4R1-1 are insufficient to analyze and draw conclusions in this regard. Many variables may affect length of service (e.g., institutional history of size and growth, funding, etc.). The data may be more useful in comparison with other organizations of comparable size, type, employee demographic, and budget.
- 4R2      O      Results from the “Valuing People” 2006 and 2009 surveys (as described in Table 4R1-3) show significant decrease in satisfaction with communication about organizational policies, MnSCU policies and procedures, and state and federal laws that affect the employees’ work. Using these results may help address issues of employee morale as indicated by lower satisfaction scores.
- 4R3      O      Although MSU has processes to determine the productivity and effectiveness of employees, there is no formalized system to analyze these results to determine that overall employees are achieving organizational goals. Developing a system that aligns employee evaluation results with organizational goals could improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- 4R4      O      It is not clear that all of the comparison data presented in Tables 4R4-1 and 4R4-2 represent key indicators for Valuing People. Student-to-faculty ratios, class size, and percentage of faculty with terminal degrees may correlate to institutional academic performance more closely than to Valuing People. A narrative description of the significance of these comparison data points, including longitudinal data, would clarify the relevance of the data to this category.
- 4I1      O      While MSU is developing systematic processes for Valuing People, the processes are not yet comprehensive, and collection and analysis of performance results are still in development. As MSU plans for growth in



- a volatile funding environment, effective processes for Valuing People will be essential to building a motivated and productive workforce.
- 412            O     The University provides a list of elements of its culture and infrastructure that support valuing people; however, it is not clear how the organization selects specific processes to improve and set targets for performance results in this category. Formalizing these processes may allow for a system of continual improvement in valuing people and promote a culture of excellence.

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### **AQIP CATEGORY 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING**

*Leading And Communicating* addresses how your institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction setting, future opportunity seeking, decision making, use of data, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

**Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Metropolitan State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:**

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- OV4a    Key factors affecting Metropolitan State's organizational structure include the following: the divisional structure, the five employee bargaining unions, a heavy reliance on part-time community faculty, the four campuses as well as additional teaching locations, the diverse commuter student population, the commitment to inclusive diversity and civic and community engagement, and the MnSCU policies and structures and legal matters.
- OV8     A major constraint affecting MSU is its ability to support quality and sustainable enrollment growth while facing declining state allocations, the projected loss of federal

stimulus revenues in 2012 and beyond, and the lack of clarity on the institution's ongoing ability to raise tuition to offset these revenue sources. Given its many locations, MSU recognizes the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and well informed university community as well as maintaining consistent institutional branding.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
5P1a	S	Historically MSU has defined and reviewed the institution's mission and values statement using a collaborative approach involving all employee groups.
5P1b	O	MSU may benefit from formalizing timelines to ensure consistent and regular review of the mission statement.
5P2	S	All university planning is prefaced by the mission, vision, values and goals and based on a commitment to continuous improvement that leads to better teaching and learning and promotes linkage between the mission documents and the planning process.
5P3	S	MSU has developed many surveys and forums that ensure that the directions of the University take into consideration the needs and expectations of current and potential students, as well as other stake holders such as alumni and the greater community.
5P4	O	The University has piloted and is now considering institutionalizing a Real-Time Strategic Planning process that utilizes tools specifically designed to ensure continued alignment of the mission, vision, and values with organizational strategies, selecting and prioritizing future opportunities to pursue, and guiding institutional response to challenges. If adopted, this process may further strengthen the overall institutional strategy, planning and resource allocation alignment with the University mission, vision, and values.

- 5P8            S        MSU's leadership commitment to a shared mission, vision, and values that reinforce the attributes of a high performing institution is demonstrated by actions in the face of very limited fiscal resources. The President openly sharing her annual presidential work plan, the leadership team's commitment and participation in empowerment training for all interested employees, process and quality improvement training, and UQIP project initiatives, are all indicative of a university committed to high performance and continuous improvement.
- 5P5            O        MSU is able to document multiple processes for recommendation and decision-making throughout the institution. However, these processes are not necessarily formalized or consistent across departments or divisions, nor consistently connected to institutional action. In a rapidly changing and competitive environment, moving from recommendation to decision and execution in a timely manner is paramount. Building a model of formalized decision making and implementation that involves relevant stakeholders may aid MSU in meeting its goals and objectives.
- 5P6            S        The example of the development of the MSU Master Plan using national, regional, local, and institutional data sources demonstrates data-driven and informed decision making.
- 5P7            S        MSU provides evidence of multiple methods of communication between and among the levels and units of the institution including electronic, face-to-face, and written communication processes.
- 5P9            S        MSU faculty, staff, and administrators are provided a variety of tools and resources to help develop leadership abilities including the state system sponsored Luoma Leadership Academy, empowerment training, Lean training, MnSCU-provided supervisory and leadership training, attendance at professional conferences, annual professional development plans, department and committee chair positions, and opportunities for internal interim appointments to vacant administrative positions.

- 5P10 O It is not clear whether MSU has a process for succession planning. The development of a formal succession plan may help to ensure consistency of core functions and further minimize disruption of services during changes in leadership.
- 5R1-5R2 S MSU collects data on performance measures regarding Leading and Communicating through the Valuing People Survey and President's Cabinet Characteristics Survey. The results of the Valuing People Survey showed overall improvement from 2006 to 2009 among most employee constituent groups and the President's Cabinet Characteristics Survey identified areas in need of improvement as well as areas of strength. Continued benchmarking using these results will provide valuable information with regard to performance in this area.
- 5R3 O No evidence is provided that MSU is benchmarking performance results with other organizations. Comparison of performance results, like the University does in many other areas, may provide valuable information regarding its effectiveness in Leading and Communicating.
- 5I1 S In response to the 2006 Valuing People Survey, which revealed the need to improve communication within the University, MSU initiated a multitude of initiatives to improve in this area. The improvement in results among most employee groups in the 2009 survey (with the caveat that the professional and administrative categories were recorded separately in 2009 which makes comparative improvement difficult to ascertain) indicate that these activities have had positive institutional impact and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 5I2 O MSU has identified and developed cultural and structural elements that support the leading and communicating process. However, it is not clear how the University uses these elements to select processes and set targets for improving performance results.

## **AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS**

*Supporting Institutional Operations* addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

**Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Metropolitan State University that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:**

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- OV6 MSU has four major locations located in St. Paul, Minneapolis, a midway campus located between St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice College in Brooklyn Park. It also has several additional instructional sites in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. The operating budget for all campuses and sites is nearly \$57 million.
- OV7 Metropolitan State utilizes a MnSCU homegrown Student Information System (ISRS) which neither integrates well with commercial software nor is modification-friendly, thereby creating a heavy reliance on the IT department. As the current system limits the institution's ability to generate data to inform decision making, MSU is working towards improvement of reporting functionality.
- OV8 A major constraint affecting MSU is its ability to support quality and sustainable enrollment growth while facing declining state allocations, the projected loss of federal stimulus revenues in 2012 and beyond, and the lack of clarity on the institution's ongoing ability to raise tuition to offset these revenue sources. Given its many locations, MSU recognizes the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and well informed university community as well as maintaining consistent institutional branding.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
6P1a, 6P2a	S	MSU has processes to identify the support service needs of students and other key stakeholder groups. Strategies include governance, communication and collection and analysis of service data.
6P1b, 6P2b	O	While MSU seems to have opportunities for feedback from various stakeholder groups; the University does not provide information about systematic processes that support employee needs.
6P3	S	In alignment with MnSCU recommendations, MSU maintains and communicates key support processes regarding safety and security to stakeholders through the Continuity of Operations, Emergency Preparedness, and Crisis Intervention plans. MSU's website informs students and employees how to deal with emergency situations including evacuations, campus lock downs, bomb threats, and assisting students in crisis.
6P4	O	MSU manages support service processes day to day through the divisions of Student Affairs and Administration and Finance. The divisions gain feedback from surveys, forums, work orders, and help desk requests. However, without formalized processes and systems in place for management of these support services, performance results may be inconsistent and difficult to assess.
6P5	S	MSU uses the university and program websites, portals and shared networks, and the DataSlice knowledge base to document and share information about student support processes. Meetings, councils, forums and work groups also communicate information about support processes and encourage knowledge sharing and empowerment.
6R1	S	MSU regularly collects and analyzes financial, enrollment, technological use, employee, and other student, administrative, and organizational

- support information, has developed metrics for support service processes. The institution also monitors and analyzes this data on a regular basis and compares this benchmarking data with other MnSCU institutions. As an example, Composite Financial Index (CFI) ratios allow MSU to measure its financial performance over time and in comparison to other MnSCU institutions.
- 6R2a            S    MSU has results from surveys, including the NSSE and Noel-Levitz surveys, to measure satisfaction with student support services and to identify opportunities for improvement. In addition, MSU has established important metrics in the measurement of effectiveness of technology infrastructure, obtained results, and identified service areas in need of improvement.
- 6R2b            O    MSU provides limited information on the performance results related to student satisfaction; however, those results provided suggest areas for improvement in certain student services, including financial aid, services for maintaining school-life balance, co-curricular education and enrichment, and student/faculty interaction.
- 6R3             O    As indicated in Table 6R1-1, MSU regularly collects and analyzes several measures for administrative support service and financial processes. However, the limited results data presented in the tables in 6R1 and in 6R3 do not provide a clear picture of performance results for financial support services. In addition, the portfolio provides very little information about the consistent and comprehensive evaluation of results for administrative support services.
- 6R4             O    MSU collects and reports comparison data on key stakeholder support areas and has identified financial metrics used to assess performance in student, administrative and organizational support. As an example, tables 6R4-1 and 6R4-2 provide comparison data for MSU's expenditures per FYE student to the average FYE expenditures of its MnSCU peer institutions. However, the institution has not explained how this data is used to improve services.

- 6R5            S        MSU has benchmarked data in regards to Organizational Operations against other MnSCU institutions that indicate that the University is maintaining its facilities and utilizing space efficiently and effectively in comparison to its peers. MSU provides comparison results for the performance of processes for Supporting Organizational Operations including a Faculties Condition Index Score and space utilization.
- 6I1            S        The University has enhanced services and gained efficiency through improvements in classroom utilization, standard work processes, financial management, information technology, and facilities, safety, and security. Annual budget and monthly update reports are accessible to the university community.
- 6I2            O        Building formalized and centralized planning processes and systems for Supporting Organizational Operations that are regularly assessed and improved may promote setting targets and a continuous improvement culture.

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## **AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***



- OV7 Metropolitan State utilizes a MnSCU homegrown Student Information System (ISRS) which neither integrates well with commercial software nor is modification-friendly, thereby creating a heavy reliance on the IT department. As the current system limits the institution's ability to generate data to inform decision making, MSU is working towards improvement of reporting functionality.
- OV8 A major constraint affecting MSU is its ability to support quality and sustainable enrollment growth while facing declining state allocations, the projected loss of federal stimulus revenues in 2012 and beyond, and the lack of clarity on the institution's ongoing ability to raise tuition to offset these revenue sources. Given its many locations, MSU recognizes the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and well informed university community as well as maintaining consistent institutional branding.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
7P1	S	Due to reporting requirements from external entities (e.g. Department of Education, MnSCU) and internal need, MSU collects data in many and various ways. The University has selected institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for instructional and non-instructional programs and services.
7P2	O	MSU has begun to manage and distribute data through DataSlice. However, processes for management and distribution of performance data are decentralized and make it difficult to access data across the organization. MSU has an opportunity to formalize, align, and centralize the selection, management, and distribution of data and performance information to support programs and services along with overall institutional improvement. The development of a more systemic and comprehensive process for managing and distributing performance information to support instructional and non-instructional programs and services, as well as informing planning and improvement efforts, may improve strategic planning, budgeting, and continuous improvement

efforts and assist with effectively and efficiently tracking performance results and enhancing data informed decision making.

- 7P3a        S        Using the IT Advisory Council, the Office of Institutional Research, and the IT Department, MSU has begun to proactively address departmental and unit needs for the collection, storage, and accessibility of data and performance information.
- 7P3b        O        MSU has an opportunity to establish a more comprehensive and formal process by which the Institutional Research and Information Technology departments work with university constituents to determine data collection, storage and accessibility needs. Although DataSlice has begun to provide a systematic method to determine the data needs of departments and individuals, there is an opportunity to fully implement DataSlice and integrate the current multiple processes that are now utilized. A centralized and accessible system that is fully understood campus-wide may enhance a wider usage of data for planning and decision-making.
- 7P4         O        MSU has established processes in many functional areas to analyze data and information regarding overall performance and has made a concerted effort to help better ensure access and accuracy of information available to its constituents. However, implementing initiatives underway to ensure a more systematic and comprehensive process for distributing and providing access to information throughout the institution would help further promote data informed decision making across the institution. As stated in 7P4, “[b]etter “alignment of IT and IR data and reporting processes” will result in improved efficiency.
- 7P5         O        MSU has developed comparative data, information, and benchmarking with MnSCU institutions and other identified peer universities and has standardized test benchmarking and program specific comparison groups where appropriate. However, no comparison data or groups outside the higher education community have as yet been defined or tracked.

- Developing this capacity may provide examples of best practices in other industries that would enhance services or practices at MSU.
- 7P6 O MSU has provided some evidence of processes for ensuring departmental analysis of data and information that aligns with institutional goals. However, it is not clear exactly how the administrative structures, reporting lines, and standard reports provide stakeholder buy-in and compliance. Additionally, there is no description of how the analyses are shared. Formalizing these processes may help strengthen alignment with institutional goals.
- 7P7 S MSU established a Data Integrity Group (DIG) composed of key institutional representatives with breadth of knowledge and cross-functional perspective to analyze and account for timely, accurate, reliable, and secure reporting. The combination of the IT Department and DIG has accomplished several improvements and has mechanisms in place to identify the strengths and weaknesses in organizational processes related to the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and security of information systems.
- 7R1-7R2 S MSU provided multiple measures of performance and effectiveness of its system for information and knowledge management that are regularly tracked and analyzed along with performance results indicating the institution's needs are met in this area.
- 7R3 O MSU does not provide comparison results for the performance of processes for Measuring Effectiveness with other organizations in relation to knowledge management systems. Developing a process for benchmarking with other institutions may provide examples of best practices that could be incorporated at MSU.
- 7I1a S MSU has made several improvements in processes related to Measuring Effectiveness that are well documented. Improvements that affect the entire enterprise, such as selection of Key Performance Indicators, implementation of consistent coding practices, and the DataSlice pilot,

indicate a systematic and comprehensive approach to improving these processes.

- 711b            O    MSU does not seem to have well defined systematic and comprehensive processes for managing effectiveness. Full implementation of DataSlice technology and formalizing processes for identifying data needs and ensuring appropriate access and timeliness will further support assessment and improvement efforts.
- 712            S    MSU accepts the need for accountability; elements to support this culture and infrastructure are identified as the President’s Council and Cabinet, Office of Institutional Research, IT, DIG, “Data Warehouse”, AQIP Action Project Teams, Cost Allocation Team, IT advisory Council and the Continuous Improvement Coordinating Team (CICT).

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## **AQIP CATEGORY 8: PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

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

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

***Item    Critical Characteristic***

- OV6    MSU has four major locations located in St. Paul, Minneapolis, a midway campus located between St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice College in Brooklyn Park. It also has several additional instructional sites in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. The operating budget for all campuses and sites is nearly \$57 million.

OV8 A major constraint affecting MSU is its ability to support quality and sustainable enrollment growth while facing declining state allocations, the projected loss of federal stimulus revenues in 2012 and beyond, and the lack of clarity on the institution's ongoing ability to raise tuition to offset these revenue sources. Given its many locations, MSU recognizes the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and well informed university community as well as maintaining consistent institutional branding.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
8P1	S	MSU has dedicated resources and time to strategic planning. The University's key planning processes include the integrated University Planning process, the yet-to-be-adopted Real-time Strategic Planning Approach, and the Master Planning for Facilities process. Other key processes include a comprehensive Academic Plan and a College of Management (COM) strategic plan.
8P2, 8P3	S	MSU selects short- and long-term strategies through an inclusive process that includes an all-university planning forum, proposals by objective leaders and strategy managers, recommendations by the P&B Council, and adoption by the president. The Strategy Screen developed as part of the pilot Real-Time Strategic Planning process established criteria by which it is anticipated all strategies and action steps will be evaluated to ensure alignment with the mission and key institutional objectives and goals.
8P4a	S	MSU utilizes the University Planning process and the P&B Council to coordinate and align planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans across the institution's various levels.
8P4b	O	Although planning processes are integrated at the university level, the portfolio suggests a gap between the university and departmental/unit planning. Formalizing the connections and alignment between university

planning and department-level planning may be improved through the Real-Time Strategic Planning process.

- 8P5 O Although MSU has identified objective leaders, strategy managers, and others to select measures and performance targets, it is not clear these employees have the expertise or tools to select appropriate measures and performance targets. Without appropriate measures and targets, the data provided through this process may not effectively inform decisions in implementing the University Plan.
- 8P6a S MSU has developed a process improvement focus to create greater efficiency and utilization of limited resources in order to help free up resources for new initiatives and future plans. The University Plan and its strategies and action plans are linked to the budgeting process.
- 8P6b O Although MSU addresses the linkage between planning processes, the integrated strategic plan, and the budget, the linkage to the analysis of data and continuous improvement is not evident.
- 8P7 S MSU has improved risk-management processes related to compliance, operations, and public relations. Leveraging MnSCU resources such as supervisor training, financial review by external auditors, and the statewide record system helps to minimize institutional risk.
- 8P8 O Although all employee groups participate in some type of professional or individual development plan, the University does not have a formalized and consistent process that ensures alignment of employee training, development, and capacity building with changing organizational strategies and action plans. Providing this integration may strengthen employee contribution to the success and effectiveness of the organization.
- 8R1,8R5 S MSU has made significant progress in the completion of action steps in the University Plan, with 58% of the action steps completed or meeting deadline for completion at the end of FY10 (as indicated in Table 8R1-1).

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|---------|----|---|
| 8R2     | S  | Table 8R2-1 identifies MSU's accomplishments in areas of strategic importance to the institution, including enrollment management, academic programs, facilities management, fiscal stewardship, and administrative leadership. These accomplishments support the University's mission to "provide accessible, high-quality ...education to the citizens and communities of the metropolitan area." |
| 8R3,8R4 | OO | Although the institution plans to implement projections and targets for performance through its yet-to-be-adopted Real-time Strategic Planning approach, MSU does not indicate any projections or targets for performance of its strategies and action plans for the next one-three years.  |
| 8I1     | O  | With the implementation of the four major recommendations of the 2010 Joint Initiative Group, MSU will no doubt move towards systematic and comprehensive processes and systems that produce performance results for Planning Continuous Improvement. This development may promote an alignment institution-wide on systems involving short- and long term planning and assessment.                 |
| 8I2     | O  | Although MSU implements continuous quality improvement in a number of ways, the institution may help that improvement through the consistent analysis and application of data and trends. Establishing a process for identifying these will help MSU to become more effective in continuous improvement.  |

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## **AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

*Building Collaborative Relationships* examines your institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship

creation, prioritization, building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

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

***Item Critical Characteristic***

- OV4b Metropolitan State offers other programs and services including applied research and collaborative education efforts with neighborhoods and community organizations such as Advance IT Minnesota and professional development assistance to business, government, and the nonprofit sector.
- OV9 MSU's "unwavering commitment to civic engagement" is central to its mission and is communicated to its constituents through well-defined overarching goals, partnerships, and collaborative relationships to the local community. The University offers other programs and services including applied research and collaborative education efforts with organizations such as Advance IT Minnesota, along with professional development assistance to business, government, and the nonprofit sector.

**Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Metropolitan State University's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.**

<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>S/O</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
9P1a	S	MSU has multiple processes for creating and building relationships with the educational institutions and other organizations from which it receives students including the Center for Community-Based Learning that coordinates the PSEO/College in the Schools program.
9P1b	O	The processes for prioritizing collaborative relationships are not clear. With 95% of its undergraduate students transferring to MSU, the implication is that relationships with two-year institutions are high priority. The creation of the Metro Alliance liaison position provides an opportunity to build relationships with educational partners with the ten MnSCU two-year institutions.



- 9P2            S        The University utilizes a variety of formal and informal processes to create, prioritize, and build relationships with educational institutions and employers that receive their students. Three of the formal processes include a career partnership with the LISC, Travelers Pathways Program, and MnCPA.
- 9P3, 9P4       S        In compliance with Minnesota State bidding regulations, MSU has a process in place for creating, prioritizing, and building relationships with organizations that provide services to students and that supply materials and services to the institution.
- 9P5            S        Consistent with its mission, MSU has developed formalized guidelines for the building and maintaining effective community relationships. The Center for Community Based Learning and the President’s Circle of Engagement are both innovative and integral approaches to support and encourage the development of partnerships with external entities.
- 9P6            O        Implementation of the University-Community Partnership Agreement and its evaluation structure, as well as implementation of the assessment tools developed for students and faculty engaged in community based activities, may provide valuable feedback in regards to evaluating the needs of the involved constituents and overall effectiveness of partnerships and engagement activities.
- 9P7            O        With four major locations, several additional instruction sites, and five collective bargaining units, MSU has a complex organizational environment. MSU also has complex processes for creating and building relationships between and among departments and units, as exemplified by the lists of cross-functional groups, standing committees, committee assignments across bargaining units, university-wide events, the chart of key internal collaborations, and examples of enterprise-wide communication tools. It is not clear whether these complex processes assure integration and communication across the institution or make them more difficult. Processes that simplify building relations across the

organization will help MSU to assure integration despite the complexity of its environment.

- 9R1-9R3a     S     MSU indicates that its measures of collaborative relationships include community relations, community organization and employers, service learning opportunities, consortiums of educational institutions feeder and destination institutions, supplies and service providers and internal relations within their institution.
- 9R1-9R3b     O     Although MSU has developed many innovative collaborative relationships and collects some data that can be compared longitudinally, initiatives underway through the university-wide implementation of the University Partnership Agreement, as well as the assessment tools and measures established for students and faculty involved in community based activities, will help provide further insight into the effectiveness of the collaborative relationships and how they are meeting the needs of involved constituents.
- 9I1             S     MSU has made many improvements in their efforts to build collaborative relationships including a new partnership agreement process including a partner data collection form, new courses affiliated with civic engagement, a new Metro Alliance liaison, among many other improvements.
- 9I2             O     MSU has created many processes to improve relationships including attention to its culture; however, it may benefit from developing deeper, more integrative processes to observe opportunities to reinforce the culture of improvement, innovation and commitment to civic engagement and Community-Based Learning.