



August 17, 2012

James Lee Rasch
President/District Director
Western Technical College
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PO Box C-0908
La Crosse, WI 54602-0908

Dear President/District Director Rasch:

The enclosed *Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option Feedback Report*, which we are also emailing your institution's AQIP Liaison, constitutes a Higher Learning Commission peer review team's evaluation of your *Baldrige Option Summary*. It also includes the team's advice on any actions you might take to strengthen the evidence that you meet accreditation requirements well before we next review your institution for reaffirmation of its accreditation. Since our peer team also had the materials from your state quality review, the team tried, as appropriate, to refer to, echo, and augment the feedback you received in your state quality report.

To receive maximum benefit from your *Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option* review, 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. In doing so, you will naturally want to also include the quality improvement feedback you received from the state quality program; the goal of the AQIP Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option pilot program is to discover whether receiving feedback on quality improvement and quality assurance from different sources (i.e., the state program and AQIP, respectively) gives institutions optimal guidance in their pursuit of continuous quality improvement.

The enclosed *After Your Appraisal* details what lies ahead and how to use these Feedback Report most effectively. However we plan to hold a special Strategy Forum for institutions that have participated in the *AQIP Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option*. *Since we had two institutions (one of which was yours) receive feedback reports from AQIP in August 2012, and have two others who will receive feedback reports in December 2012 or January 2013, we anticipate holding this special Strategy Forum in Spring 2013. Please plan on participating then; Dean Dube from our office (ddbube@hlcommission.org, 800-621-7440 x158) will be in touch with you soon about the schedule for that Strategy Forum.*

To comply with federal requirements, we need the CEO of the institution formally to acknowledge receipt of this *Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option Feedback Report* within the next two weeks, and to provide us with any immediate comments you wish to make about it. Please read the enclosed *After Your Appraisal* suggestions *before* you decide how to respond. 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; call me or Mary Green (at 800-621-7440 x130) if you have any questions about it. We will also be setting up a phone conference call in mid-September to debrief the institutions that have just participated in this *Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option* review and the peer reviewers who conducted the review. We hope that conference call will give us insights into how we can improve the pilot test of this new process so that institutions will find it more valuable.

Sincerely,

Stephen D. Spanghel
Vice President for Accreditation Relations

AQIP Systems Appraisal – Baldrige Option

Western Technical College

Feedback Report

August 13, 2012

Ncahlc.org/AQIP/AQIP-Home



Higher Learning Commission
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The AQIP Baldrige Option offers an institution the option of incorporating its state or federal Baldrige Application and feedback report into an alternative to AQIP's standard Systems Appraisal process. The overall goals remain the same as any AQIP Systems Appraisal: to give impartial and independent guidance to institutions committed to continuous quality improvement on their current strengths and the opportunities for improvement that would further increase their ability and performance for achieving their goals; and to alert institutions early to any need to strengthen the evidence they need to demonstrate compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and other expectations. Western Technical College is one of the first institutions to choose this option, and this report addresses the Assurance Review component of the process, which analyzes how well the institution can demonstrate fulfillment of HLC's current Criteria for Accreditation.

Criterion One: Mission: The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

- The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
- The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
- The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

Comment: The Mission, Vision and Value (MVV) statements are clearly articulated on the College website, and are deployed in a number of ways as entailed in Figure 1.2 of the Wisconsin Forward Award (WFA) application. In 2010 the College revisited the MVV statements using a process that included internal and external stakeholder input. The development of the new MVV was suitable to the nature and culture of Western. For instance, focus groups, town halls, and surveys were some of the processes used to shape and disseminate the MVV. The Vision 2020 Strategic Plan was derived in conjunction with the new MVV statements. Through Vision 2020 Western ensures that the MVV guide the institution's operations. Western's academic programs, student support services and enrollment profile are all overseen by the Senior Leadership Team, who ensure these programs are in alignment with the MVV. Western is part of the Wisconsin Technical college System, which has defined the student segments and markets that Western's programs will address in state statute. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 1A.

1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

- The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
- The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic

development, and religious or cultural purpose.

- The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Comment: Western publicly articulates the institutional MVV statements through multiple mechanisms and public documents, including a public website, comprehensive Strategic Plan Brochure, Master Planning documents, and Budget Planning documents. The mission documents were recently updated as part of the development of the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 1B.

1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

- The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
- The institution’s processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Comment: Western addresses its role in a multicultural society through multiple means. It maintains a website dedicated to diversity at the College, which contains links to various processes and activities linked to issues of diversity. The President has a personal statement on diversity, demonstrating institutional commitment. The College has a Diversity Advisory Team, and has published an EEO statement. Western has also created a five-year Diversity Plan as well as a Diversity Scorecard. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 1C.

1.D. The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

- Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
- The institution’s educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
- The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Comment: The College demonstrates its commitment to the public good through the language of the MVV. The process to update the MVV was one of inclusion, and it relied heavily on external groups, such as advisory committees that represented its external constituencies. The identification of Other Key Stakeholders (Fig. P-5, WFA application) includes regulatory agencies, employers, advisory boards, parents and families of students, and the community at large. As a state institution governed by Wisconsin State Statute, Western ensures that its educational responsibilities take primacy over other concerns, such as generating a financial return for investors. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 1D.

Criterion Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct: The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

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

Comment: Western Technical College documents policies and processes designed to minimize risk to its integrity and to support ethical conduct throughout the organization. These include financial and procurement controls, academic policies, codes of ethics for board, employees, and a student conduct code. In addition, policies on complaints and redress of grievances are in place. Documents are readily available in electronic form, readable, and reflect an ethical “tone at the top” and broad concern for fairness in deployment of an “employee success” policy. As a member of Wisconsin’s Technical College System, the institution employs standardized approaches to audit and reporting. Its system of accounts and auditing procedures is clearly defined. Included in the institution’s extensive documentation is a favorable audit report; indeed, as the Wisconsin Forward Award team noted, “The college reports no ethics violations in the past 18 years, and it meets all regulatory, safety, and legal compliance requirements” (WFA Feedback Report, p.38). On the other hand, that team observed, “The college does not fully deploy its ethics policies and practices to all of its stakeholders, nor does it review these approaches to identify improvements. Full deployment and review of ethics practices may help ensure that ethical behaviors occur in all college and stakeholder interactions” (WFA Feedback Report, p.7). While this statement is not supported by examples and includes no indication of the scope of concern, it identifies an important area for stakeholder focus and continual process improvement that the institution may explore. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 2A.

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

Comment: The institution maintains transparency by means of a comprehensive and well-organized website that provides information on all of its programs, including certificates; a career planning guide and data on job placement; admission requirements and costs; the institution’s budget and award applications; board membership, governance structure and key documents; accreditation relationships and status. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 2B.

2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

- The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
- The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

- The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
- The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Comment: A nine-member District Board is appointed by an Appointment Committee composed of county board chairpersons. By Wisconsin statute the Board consists of two employers, two employees, three additional members, an elected official, and a school district administrator. The Appointment Committee has further adopted a plan that considers demographics, including representation of women and minorities. The District Board has authority to levy property taxes, provide for facilities, contract for instructional services, and appoint a president, who, as chief executive officer is responsible for administration, academic standards, hiring, and management of budget and services. In its statutory responsibilities, in its statement of values, and in its deliberations recorded in minutes provided by the institution, the District Board's sets priorities for the College's sustainability and improvement. In its composition, the Board represents stakeholders. Its public documents encourage constituencies, including those within the institution, to bring forward relevant issues for its consideration. The code governing Board conduct is explicit in requiring members to act in the interests of constituents, to resist undue influence, and to refrain from conflicts of interest. One of the Board's responsibilities, established by statute, is appointment of a president to whom it delegates management responsibilities, including academic oversight. The College documents faculty roles in program design and delivery. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 2C.

2.D. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Comment: The College states, "Western creates and maintains a climate that celebrates intellectual freedom, inquiry, reflection, respect for intellectual property, and respect for differing and diverse opinions by recognizing and supporting faculty at all levels of teaching." While the College provides evidence it has actively sought to create such a climate, and that it offers faculty support and recognition, how that climate is engendered by explicit guarantees of freedom of expression in teaching and learning is not documented in Western's response. However, given documentation of the institution's mission, values, and systems for teaching and learning, the College's tangential response to Core Component 2.D does not rise to an issue of accreditation. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 2D.

2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
- Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

- The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Comment: The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly. The College's response focuses principally upon standards for institutional research and data management, as well as access to information for decision-making, and documents oversight by the Research and Technology Team (RTT). Ethical standards for students in applying knowledge are provided in policies on conduct, and the College further supplies policies on intellectual property. The College may benefit, however, from a more explicit statement that defines knowledge more broadly, includes guidelines for the ethical conduct of research, and documents support systems for student research. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 2E.

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support: The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

- Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
- The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
- The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Comment: The mission of the College is established by state statute. The institution offers a broad range of non-credit educational opportunities and certificates in addition to its credit/degree programs (87% of those enrolled). It provides detailed information on purposes, design, and classification of programs, presenting evidence that degree programs are clearly defined and appropriate to higher education. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 3A.

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

- The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
- The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
- Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing,

and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

- The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
- The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution’s mission.

Comment: Western Technical College’s general education program includes a range of academic disciplines: communication, mathematics, physical sciences, biological sciences, health sciences and social sciences. In addition, having identified seven “core abilities,” including critical thinking and the transfer of theory to practical application, the faculty maps these to both occupational and general studies, where they are taught and assessed, demonstrating an integrated learning system. This provides evidence that intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs through general education. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 3B.

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

- The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
- All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
- Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
- The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
- Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
- Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Comment: The institution supplies a profile of its faculty and staff. Its planning and budgeting include processes for assessing program mix and staffing needs. Faculty are required to have certification in areas appropriate to their disciplines. A recent review of job descriptions yielded revisions focused on effectiveness, and a success model of performance related to institutional goals is used in employee evaluations. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 3C.

3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

- The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
- The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
- The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
- The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution’s offerings).
- The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Comment: Western Technical College supports its academic mission with a comprehensive array of services, including advising, counseling, academic and language skills improvement, career placement and planning, writing assistance, and programs targeted to the adult learner. These are designed to meet the needs of the populations Western serves. They are clearly presented and easily accessed on the College’s website. The institution provides support to both students and faculty in employing learning technology. Western’s commitment to quality integration is illustrated by its descriptions of the Student Learning System and Student Support System, which include key performance measures. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 3D.

3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

- Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
- The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students’ educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Comment: Western Technical College provides ample evidence that its co-curricular programs are suited to the mission and contribute to the educational experience of the students. Western offers a variety of co-curricular programs that are aligned with its mission, offering students opportunity to participate in clubs related to programs, student government, service learning, and peer tutoring. It also supports student development through athletics. Claims the institution makes about its co-curricular programs, publicly available on its website, are well-integrated with its mission objectives and supported by budget allocations. The College measures results through student satisfaction surveys. In areas related to professional development, it conducts graduate and employer surveys. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 3E.

Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement: The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning

environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

- The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
- The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.
- The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
- The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
- The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
- The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps, Americorps).

Comment: There is ample demonstration of the College’s efforts to collect data supporting program evaluation through the Quality Review Process (QRP) which includes labor market trends, student learning outcomes, course completion, retention and graduation indicators, and job placement statistics. It also uses the measures of a scorecard and deans’ dashboards. Thus, it has excellent models for measuring effectiveness. Western is to be commended for establishing a data library within its research department’s internal website and using a systematic process of providing internal requests for data. Noteworthy is the College’s Quality Review Process (QRP) which provides a comprehensive framework for an internal comparative analysis of all instructional programs, It includes program-level scorecard data (Figures 4-3 and 4-4, WFA Application), allowing identification of opportunities for improvement, conducting root cause analysis with focus on solutions, and analysis of results. Improvement plans are revisited regularly. Additionally, Western developed a set of program mix analysis process in 2009 “which allows the College to forecast workforce needs” (*Strength*, 5.1, WFA Feedback Report). The process allows indicators such as market demand, cost, and potential community value to be evaluated. Because this is consistent practice, the QRP is accepted by employers and by the college community as a key component for program improvement. Both the Quality Review Process and program mix analysis provide research angles to predict labor force needs. The WFA Feedback Report documents that the College “actively promote[s] the importance of maintaining the values of the organization and a legal and ethical environment” (WFA Feedback Report, p.5). It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 4A.

4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

- The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
- The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
- The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Comment: Western uses admission-to-placement assessments to monitor student educational improvement and achievement. Its 4-way approach of (1) entrance, (2) on-going (formative), (3) exit (summative), and (4) confirmative (job placement) assessments provide a holistic view of student progress and success. Entrance assessments of in-coming students in reading, writing, and math skills are used for placing students in appropriate courses. Equally important is the final confirmative assessment measure which indicates graduates’ success. However, the College should consider offering some explanation of the downward trending numbers in Fig 7-32 (Application) relating to Employer-Follow-Up–Satisfaction in some categories in 2006 and 2007 relative to previous years indicated. Moreover, the Fig.7-33 Employer Follow-Up data stops with 2007. Clearly it is to Western’s advantage to bring this data up to date. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 4B.

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

- The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
- The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
- The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
- The institution’s processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Comment: Western’s academic and student support programs are systematic and continue to

evolve. The college plans to enhance its recruitment and retention efforts by developing an image as the “college of first choice” in its region by optimizing educational program-mix, responding with program flexibility to match community needs, expanding programs from a two-to three-term academic year, and continuing to build education and career pathways for under-prepared students. The College is vocationally job focused and does due diligence research to predict regional labor force needs. It has incorporated a systematic approach to continuous quality improvement that will enhance its educational performance. By focusing on effectively managing its processes and resources, it positions itself to make improvements based on quality results. Figure 70 – Western Climate Survey Spring 2011 indicates that student success has the highest score of eight items in this Values Index (WFA Application). It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 4C.

Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness: The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

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

- The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
- The institution’s resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
- The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution’s organization, resources, and opportunities.
- The institution’s staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
- The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Comment: Western has identified as a strategic goal the ability to maximize financial stability. The resource allocation process is described in the WFA Application. The College has processes in place for budgeting and monitoring expense. Two tools are used to project and plan for future programs: the program mix analysis process and the optimal program capacity worksheet. The College demonstrates that it has the resource base to maintain operations in that it has increased its undesignated fund balance from 13.4% of operating expenses in 2009 to 16.1% of operating expenses in 2011. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 5A.

5.B. The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

- The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal

constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.

- The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Comment: Western seeks to understand student, alumni, employer, and its general community through a broad array of activities including hosting community events, regular group meetings, community service, and participation in professional organizations. It has, as indicated earlier, implemented several relationship management tools to support its vision to be the “college of first choice.” These tools are summarized in Figure 3-8 (WFA Application). As part of its relationship-building, marketing, and branding efforts, the College conducted community perception surveys in 2005 and 2009 and participated in the WTCS parent perception survey in 2007 and 2010. Information gleaned from these surveys and other listening measures such as focus groups helps to shape the College’s current brand of its “Essential Experience.” For example, when the College learned of concerns about community involvement and communication outside of La Crosse County (main campus location), it developed a marketing plan and a series of action plans that promote Western as “Your Community, Your College.” It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 5B.

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

- The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
- The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
- The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
- The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
- Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Comment: The College has several processes that are designed to support the strategic planning process. The environmental scanning process, program mix analysis process [6.2.b(3)], and the QRP [6.2.b(3)] all focus on Western’s core business (education), and its core customers (credit students). Western uses several partner relationship management tools (Fig. 3-8, WFA), including current social media, media marketing, collaboration with high school technical preparation and recruitment, flexible degree models (2+2 and 1+1 degrees) (fig 7-46, WFA), online catalog, College web site, marketing for business and industry services, collaborative

marketing with 15 other WTCS institutions, program advisory committees, and employee involvement in community (Fig. 1-6). Thus, the institution engages, serves, and communicates with key stakeholders in a variety of ways. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 5C.

5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

- The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
- The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Comment: The WFA Application presents thoughtful and perceptive discussion of Learning and Process Outcomes. The College uses a variety of comparative and competitive data to benchmark against fifteen other post-secondary institutions in Wisconsin with similar missions, visions, values, student demographics, and resources. The College collects quantitative and qualitative feedback from collaborative partners by soliciting information about the quality of its services and graduates it provides to them. For example, Western uses the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Figure 7-31) which measures key systems and processes identified in Figures 6-2 and 6-3 about Student Learning System and Student Support System). Figure 7-31 also shows that in 2010 Western scored at or above the national mean for student centeredness, instructional effectiveness, responsiveness to diverse populations, academic advising, and concern for the individual and campus climate. The Graduate Follow-Up Survey (Figure 7-32) administered six months after graduation measures graduate satisfaction and job placement. The Employer Follow-Up Survey (Figure 7-33) measures employer satisfaction with graduates' basic and technical skills indicating notable levels of satisfaction with the education received at Western and the skills of the graduates (job knowledge, reading, writing, math, computer, listening, and speaking). The College is clearly aware of the importance of developing relationships with a variety of internal and external constituencies. Advisory boards, engagement in various community activities, and providing opportunities to hear feedback from stakeholders such as the Wisconsin Forward Award are just a few examples demonstrating the institution's commitment and success to engage and serve its constituents. It is the opinion of this team that Western Technical College meets Core Component 5D.