

# **Reaffirmation of Accreditation Recommendation**

**for**

## **Western Technical College Lacrosse, WI**

**of the 2007-2008  
Academic Quality Improvement Program  
Review Panel on Reaffirmation**

**The Higher Learning Commission  
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools**

**January 16, 2008**

**AQIP Review Panel on Reaffirmation (lead reviewers)**

\* Robert Callaway, Dean, Social Sciences and Human Services, Lorain County Community College, Elyria, OH 44035

\* William Tammone, Vice President for Academic Services, Montcalm Community College, Sidney, MI 48885

# AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

## Contents

### I. Context and Nature of the Review

- A. Review, Purpose, Process, and Materials
- B. Organizational Context
- C. Organizational Scope and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)
- D. Notification of Quality Checkup visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment
- E. Compliance with Federal Requirements
- F. Evidence of the Organization's Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

### II. Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

### III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

- A. Comments and counsel on AQIP Action Projects
- B. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Categories
- C. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations and the institution's quality program or infrastructure
- D. Overall comments and counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP

## **I. Context and Nature of the Review**

### **A. Review, Purpose, Process, and Materials**

AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation reviews are scheduled seven years in advance, when an institution joins the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) or when an institution already participating in AQIP is reaffirmed via the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation process

In conducting the reviews, the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation review panel examines the following materials for each institution:

- Current Commission History file of institutional actions
- Current Commission Statement of Affiliation Status
- Current official Commission Organizational Profile
- Annual Updates of year's Action Projects
- Application to join AQIP
- AQIP Review Panel Report(s) on Institutional Status Change Requests
- Focused visit report(s) and action letter(s)
- Institutional websites
- Key correspondence between the institution and the Commission
- Last Comprehensive PEAQ Evaluation team report, institutional response, and Commission action letter
- Quality Checkup report(s)
- Summary of Action Projects attempted
- Summary Update of institutional activity and dynamics since the last Quality Checkup, provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Systems Appraisal Feedback Report(s)
- Systems Portfolio Index(es) (to compliance with Criteria for Accreditation)
- Systems Portfolio(s), including update provided by the institution on September 1 of the review year
- Any other major reports or documents that are part of the institution's permanent Commission files

Two lead panelists from the AQIP Reaffirmation of Accreditation draft a recommendation that is reviewed and approved by the entire panel before it is forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council

### **B. Organizational Context**

Western Technical College (Western) was first accredited by the Commission in 1972, having been admitted to Candidacy for Accreditation in 1970. The institution was admitted into AQIP on September 21, 2000. It participated in Strategy Forums in November 2000, and September 2004. Since admission into AQIP, the institution has officially declared and attempted eight individual Action Projects, and has provided AQIP with Annual Updates of ongoing projects and received Annual Update Feedback Reports on these. Western provided its first Systems Portfolio for review in December 2003, and received a Systems Appraisal Feedback Report on February 3, 2004. Western's latest Systems Portfolio is dated November 2007. At the present

time, the institution is still awaiting feedback on this updated Portfolio. AQIP conducted a Quality Checkup visit to Western from April 19 to April 21, 2006, and provided a report of the findings of the visiting team on June 19, 2006.

### **C. Organizational Scope and Structure (including extended physical or distance education operations)**

Western Technical College was established in 1912 as the La Crosse Vocational School. Since then it has evolved into a comprehensive, publicly-supported, two-year college that is part of the Wisconsin Technical College System. It is located in La Crosse, WI, a city with a population of approximately 52,000, which is also home to a branch of the University of Wisconsin and Viterbo University. Western's offerings include 40 associate of applied science degree programs, 19 technical diploma programs, and 4 certificates. The college also provides customized training and technical assistance to area employers, apprenticeship training, noncredit adult occupational courses, and noncredit adult avocational (personal enrichment) classes. According to the Organizational Profile posted on the Higher Learning Commission website, in fall 2006, Western had 1801 full-time credit students, 2995 part-time credit students, and 4702 noncredit students. In addition to its main campus in La Crosse, Western has extended campuses in Black River Falls, Independence, Mauston, Sparta, Tomah, and Viroqua. The college's service district encompasses 4,736 square miles and includes all or part of 11 counties in western Wisconsin. The organization has approval to offer two associate of applied science (AAS) degrees over the internet: An AAS in Health Information Technology, and an AAS in Supervisory Management.

### **D. Notification of Quality Checkup visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment**

A Quality Checkup site visit to Western Technical College was conducted in April 2006. In compliance with Commission requirements, the institution notified constituencies and the public of this visit, solicited third party comment to be sent directly to the Commission. The Commission shared all comments received with the institution and the team, and the team discussed both the comments with the institution and reviewed evidence of the institution's compliance with the Commission's notification and third-party comment requirements.

### **E. Compliance with Federal Requirements**

The Quality Checkup team that conducted a site visit to Western Technical College in April 2006 examined evidence provided by the institution of its compliance with the Commission's federal compliance program. The Quality Checkup site visit team concluded that the institution presented satisfactory evidence that it was operating in compliance with federal requirements.

### **F. Evidence of the Organization's Responsiveness to Previous Commission Concerns regarding fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation**

The panel considers the response of the institution to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

## II. Fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation

**Criterion One: Mission and Integrity.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

### 1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

- a. The Western Technical College District Board has adopted a mission, vision, and values, and organizational priorities that clearly and broadly define the institution's purpose. For instance, the Board has developed a vision and mission for the college, which reflects both state and local needs. [SA p. 26]
- b. The college's leadership system appears to integrate the institution's values and expectations into all aspects of the institution's processes and procedures. [SA p. 26]
- c. The institution provided evidence that the Board and senior leaders have adopted a mission, vision, and values to set directions, goals, and organizational priorities. Further, the mission documents a strong commitment to high academic standards. [SP 2007, 5P1]
- d. WTC provided evidence that governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission. For instance, two AQIP action projects have been designed and deployed to address issues related to individual roles within the college and how one's role is aligned with the organizational vision, mission, and values. These action projects are "Employee Success" and "Planning for Continuous Improvement." Both projects are aimed at encouraging communication throughout the college with regard to leadership and the deployment of strategic priorities. Further, the projects provide a more concentrated effort to support middle management. [QCU, p. 3]
- e. The WTC Executive Council is used internally to create and maintain alignment with the mission and vision of the college with Steering Teams providing bi-weekly or monthly progress reports. [SA, p, 26; SP 2007, Fig. 5-3]

### 2. Evidence that one or more Core Components needs organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.

None

### 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's System Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion is met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

**Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

- a. At Western Technical College, planning processes are linked with budgeting processes. This alignment between planning and budgeting helps to insure that the organization has the human and financial resources to carry out its plans and that college resources are expended in such a way that they support the organization's highest priority initiatives. [SA, pp. 5, 7, 31, and 37; SP 2007, 8P1 and 8P6].
- b. Appropriate data and feedback loops are available and used throughout the organization to support continuous improvement. Western uses a fact-based decision making process as the foundation of CQI efforts, and Baldrige-based assessment activities to increase organizational learning. It also uses a centralized data collection and retrieval system to monitor performance. [SA, pp. 20, 22, and 25; SP 2007, 7P1-7P4 and 8P8]
- c. Western's processes for planning and resource allocation are mission-driven. [SA, p. 37; SP 2007, 8C2, 8P1, and 8P2]
- d. The college's planning and budgeting process for faculty and staff is based upon enrollment data, annual quality reviews of instructional programs, and feedback from students, employers, contract agencies, and other stakeholders. [SA, p. 15; SP 2007, 2P3]
- e. The organization uses multiple evaluation processes to provide evidence that its performance meets its expectations for institutional effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. These processes include the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Program/Services Evaluation process, focus groups, and many others. [SA, pp. 19 and 30; SP 2007, 3P1, 3P7, 3R1, 3R3, and 6C2]
- f. The college's planning processes include consideration of emerging factors such as technology and demographic shifts. Taking such factors into consideration should

## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

help the organization prepare for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends. [SA, p.21; SP 2007, 1C3, 4C2, 4C3, 8P1, 8P3, 8P6, and 9P1]

- g. The organization intentionally develops its human resources to meet future changes. The college has offered training, for example, in PeopleSoft, Blackboard, WIDS, Microsoft Office, management, leadership, curriculum development, conflict resolution, consensus decision making, and appreciative inquiry. Ongoing support for professional development should help the organization maintain and strengthen the quality of its programs and services in the future. [SA, p. 21, 22 and 27; SP 2007, 4C4]
  - h. Leadership skills are encouraged and developed in a variety of ways at Western Technical College, both internally and externally. Internally, the organization offers a Leadership Institute and Leadership Workshop. Externally, employees are encouraged to participate in such programs as the La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program, the Wisconsin Leadership Development Institute, and the National Institute of Leadership Development. [SA, pp. 27 and 28; SP 2007, 5P7]
  - i. Training needs are identified at Western by means of a variety of processes, including needs assessments conducted by the Human Resources Department, the PACE Climate Survey, and by an analysis of aggregated Employee Success Plans. [SA, p. 22; SP 2007, 4P5]
  - j. Strategic goals and objectives (focused on Enrollment, Retention, Learning, and Stakeholder Satisfaction) and ongoing reviews of organizational performance drive the planning and budgeting processes at Western Technical College. [SA, pp. 25, 26, and 37; SP 2007, 5P1 and 8P1]
  - k. Planning processes at Western Technical College include faculty and staff as well as administrators. Involving staff from all levels of the organization in the planning process helps to ensure that all levels of planning align with the organization's mission. It also enhances the organization's capacity to fulfill that mission. [SP 2007, 5C1, 5P1, 8P1, 8P3, and 8P4]
- 2. Evidence that one or more Core Components needs organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None

- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's System Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion is met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

**Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

- a. The Quality Checkup Team has confirmed that goals for student learning have been identified at Western Technical College. These goals include course-level goals, program-level goals, and a set of general education learning outcomes common to all associate degree programs. Clearly stating goals for student learning is the essential first step in the effective assessment of student learning. [QCU, p. 3; SA, pp. 5, 7, 8, and 14; SP 2007, 1C1, 1C2, 1P1, and 1P2]
- b. The Quality Checkup Team has verified that the assessment of student learning is taking place at both the course and program level at WTC. According to the Team, assessment practices are well defined and deployed throughout the academic areas of the college. Licensure pass rates and other program-level assessment results are documented in Western's Systems Portfolio. [QCU, p. 3; SA, pp. 10-11; SP 2007, 1P6, 1P11, 1R1, and 1R2]
- c. The organization employs, when appropriate, new technologies that enhance effective learning environments for students. For example, Western has responded to changing stakeholder needs by offering courses via interactive television and the internet. Technology is incorporated into program curricula based on the specific needs of the discipline and upon the advice of program advisory committees. [SA, pp. 8, 11, 18, and 31; SP 2007, O2, O6, 1C3, 1P7, 1R3, 3P3, and 6R1]
- d. The organization supports faculty to keep abreast of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and delivery of instruction. For example, faculty at Western Technical College use Worldwide Instructional Design Software (WIDS) to facilitate the development of course goals, competencies, criteria and learning activities. Faculty can also use WIDS to create course syllabi, lesson plans and assessment rubrics. [SA, p. 9; SP 2007, 1C4, 1P4, 1P6, 1P11, and 4C4]
- e. Faculty use formative assessment measures to gain immediate feedback about teaching effectiveness and student learning. This feedback is used to make mid-course adjustments and improvements. [SA, pp. 9-10; SP 2007, 1P11]



## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

- f. Student readiness for college-level coursework is assessed at the time of admission using COMPASS. Developmental courses are available for students who do not meet minimum proficiency requirements in reading, writing, and math. The college also provides students with advising, counseling, and tutoring services. All of these services demonstrate Western's commitment to student success. [SA, pp. 9-10; SP 2007, 1P2, 1P4, 1P5, 1P9, 1P11, and 3P1]
  - g. Teaching effectiveness is evaluated in numerous ways at Western Technical College, including supervisor, peer, and self evaluation. Students provide feedback through course and instructor evaluations. [SA, pp. 9-10; SP 2007, 1P6]
  - h. The organization integrates into its assessment of student learning the data reported for the purposes of external accountability (graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, transfer rates, etc.). [SA, pp. 10 and 11; SP 2007, 1P11, 1P12, 1P13, and 1R2]
  - i. Qualified faculty determine curricular content and strategies for instruction. Part-time faculty must meet the same certification requirements as full-time faculty. All faculty at Western Technical College meet certification requirements established by the Wisconsin Technical College System Board. [SA, p. 21; SP 2007, 1P1, 1P2, 4C1, and 4P1]
- 2. Evidence that one or more Core Components needs organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**
- a. Western Technical College has identified six Core Abilities or General Student Learning Outcomes common for all students enrolled in its associate degree, technical diploma, and certificate programs. The "Patterns of Knowledge/Skills" associated with these Core Abilities include, for instance, "Demonstrate effective reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills," "Identify and solve problems, applying knowledge in a critical, creative, and ethical manner," etc. Clearly stated goals for student learning help to make effective assessment possible. But, effective assessment typically includes direct measures of student learning (such as objective tests, papers, presentations, and portfolios) as well as indirect measures (such as survey data). [Criterion Three, Core Component 3a]. Thus far, Western has presented little evidence in its Systems Portfolio (or via hyperlinks embedded in the Portfolio) that it is assessing its Core Abilities or General Student Learning Outcomes on a regular basis using direct measures of student learning. Figures 1R1-1 and 1R2-6 in SP 2007 appear to be summaries of indirect measures of student learning only. [SP 2007, 1C1, 1R1, 1R2, and 1I1]
- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's System Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion is met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

**Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discover, and Application of Knowledge.** The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

- a. Programs are reviewed on a five-year rotating cycle at WTC. Regular academic program reviews help to ensure that the college's courses and programs are current and relevant to stakeholder needs. [SA, pp. 10, 11, and 16; SP 2007, 1P8]
- b. The college supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its faculty, staff, and administrators. Key faculty, staff, and administrative training initiatives that the college is currently planning for support the implementation of the strategic plan. They include: Technology in the workplace (Blackboard, Office 2007, Peoplesoft, student email, Voice-over-IP); Curriculum design (WIDS); Customer service training); Lean methodology, process mapping, problem-solving, consensus-based decision-making (collective bargaining teams); Leadership development; Skillsoft; WTCS certification requirements; and Student advising training for faculty. [SP 2007, 4C2 and 4C3]
- c. Employee Success plans identify individual training requested by employees to aid in their individual development and where possible, these requirements are aggregated to provide on campus training to address multiple needs. [SP 2007, 4C4]
- d. Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved breadth of knowledge and skills and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry. For example, each program has identified occupational-specific learning outcomes unique to the individual program and validated by advisory committees. Programmatic outcomes reflect entry level competence in skills and knowledge required by business and industry. [SA, P. 8]
- e. The Board and administration have approved and disseminated statements supporting freedom of inquiry. Policies and procedures that address intellectual freedom, respect for intellectual property, etc. are addressed in the Employee Handbook and the Local 3605 Faculty/NTP Negotiated Agreement; recognition and

## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

support is given to faculty at all levels of teaching; faculty mentors also provide encouragement and guidance. [SA, p.9]

- f. WTC's academic and student support programs contribute to the development of student skills and attitudes fundamental to responsible use of knowledge. For example, student needs relative to learning support are determined through the registration process, the advising process, developmental courses, tutoring experiences, and one-on-one engagement with faculty members and peer tutors. Also, faculty needs relative to learning support are identified through various surveys on training needs, and technology needs. Learning support areas are involved in the student learning and development process by providing services that address support needs. [SA, p. 10]
  - g. Co-curricular development goals are aligned with curricular learning objectives through student clubs and service learning opportunities tied to programs, as well as through student government activities, and other student-led activities. [SA. p. 10]
- 2. Evidence that one or more Core Components needs organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None

- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's System Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.**

None

- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

### **Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion is met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

**Criterion Five: Engagement and Service.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

#### **1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

- a. The college responds to the needs of external constituencies by providing a variety of programs and services. This includes continuing education and customized

## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

training as well as credit courses and associate degree programs. [SA, pp. 5, 14, and 16; SP 2007, O3, 1C3, 1I2, 2C1, 2C3, 2R1, 3C2, 3P7, 3R4, 9P4, and 9R1]

- b. Collaborative ventures exist with other higher learning organizations and education sectors. Examples include WTC's alternative education partnership with area high schools and transfer articulation agreements with the University of Wisconsin System. Such partnerships help to increase access to higher education and remove obstacles to progression through the state's educational system. [SA, pp. 5, 15, 16, 17, and 39; SP 2007, 2C1, 9C1, 9P1, 9P4, and 9R1]
  - c. The college participates in partnerships focused on shared educational, economic, and social goals. Examples include the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, an alliance among five partners: Western Wisconsin Technical College, University of Wisconsin—La Crosse, Viterbo University, Franciscan Skemp Healthcare/Mayo Health System, and Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. Among other things, this alliance fosters regional economic development and strengthens medical health science education. [SA, pp. 5 and 39; SP 2007, 9P1]
  - d. The organization practices periodic environmental scanning and market research as part of its strategic planning process. This helps to give the organization a better understanding of the changing needs of its stakeholders and communities as it develop plans to address those needs. [SP 2007, 3P5, 4P5, 5C1, 8P1, 8P8, 8R2, and 8I2]
  - e. WTC enjoys strong community support, as evidenced by two successful building referendums receiving more than 60% community support. [SA, pp. 6, 8, 15 and 30; SP 2007, p. O6]
  - f. Intended learning outcomes for occupational programs at Western Technical College are reviewed and validated by advisory committees from business and industry. [SA, p. 9; SP 2007, 1C1, 1C2, and 1P1]
  - g. Co-curricular development goals are aligned with curricular learning objectives through student clubs, service learning opportunities, student government activities, and other student-led activities. [SA, p. 10; SP 2007, 1P10, 2C1, 2I2, 3C2, 9P1, and 9R1]
  - h. The college's structures and processes enable effective connections with its community. Such connections are essential for any organization committed to understanding and meeting the needs of the community it serves. [SA, pp. 5, 8, 15, 18, 27, 39 and 41; SP 2007, O4, 2P1, 3C2, 3P3, 4P2, 5C3, 9C1, 9C2, 9P1, 9R1, and 9R2]
- 2. Evidence that one or more Core Components needs organizational attention, but no specific Commission monitoring or reporting.**

None

- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require institutional attention and that actions taken and improvements achieved be described in the institution's System Portfolio before its next scheduled Systems Appraisal, to permit Commission follow-up.**

None

- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up via declaration of a specific Action Project(s) and the submission of Annual Updates.**

None

### **Recommendation of the Team**

The Criterion is met, and no Commission follow-up recommended.

## **III. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)**

### **A. Comments and counsel on AQIP Action Projects**

In September 2000, WTC was selected as one of thirteen charter Higher Learning Commission institution's to participate in an alternative accreditation process called AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project). WTC has developed, worked on, and completed eight AQIP action projects since its acceptance into AQIP. Some of the action projects included the following: enhancing employees satisfaction and success; student learning—do they learn?; enrollment—do we get them?; and planning continuous improvement—developing and implementing five-year strategic plan.

In addition, Western developed two additional action projects to address feedback on its systems portfolio. These two action projects have been designed and deployed to address issues related to individual roles within the college and how one's role is aligned with the organizational vision, mission, and values. These are "Employee Success" and "Planning for Continuous Improvement."

The college has provide evidence that the action projects are appropriate for the institution, developed based on feedback, and completed in a timely manner. Further, the college appears to have involved a wide range of employees and stakeholders in these projects based on the information in the 2006 Quality Checkup report.

### **B. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Categories**

Below are some of the comments on the nine AQIP categories that the AQIP Systems Appraisal team provided to summarize their findings [SA, 2003].

#### **Category 1 and 2:**

## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

- Growing, emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place.
- Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution.
- Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas.
- Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in several areas.
- Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly

### **Category 3, 4, and 5**

- Practical, sturdy processes that generally achieve their fundamental goals are in place.
- Successful approaches and processes are sometimes adopted and used throughout the institution.
- Mid-term (two-four years or more) data on performance results exist in most areas.
- Shorter trends (under five years) of improving levels of performance are evident in some areas.
- Information collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes is used systematically in a few significant areas.
- Feedback from processes is gathered and used systematically to set performance targets and drive improvement in a few significant areas.
- There is a record of significant improvements resulting from systematic multi-year (two – 10 year) improvement processes.

### **Category 6, 7, 8, and 9:**

- Growing, emergent processes that typically achieve many of their goals have been put in place.
- Successful approaches and processes are occasionally adopted and used throughout the institution.
- Occasional short-term (under two years) data on performance results exist in most areas.
- Evidence exists of recent (within last two years) of improving levels of performance in several areas.
- Information is collected on performance of outstanding organizations with similar processes but used irregularly
- Feedback is periodically used to set performance targets in a few areas.
- A record of significant improvements, occurring periodically, is the result of specific initiatives

### **C. Comments and counsel on the AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations and the institution's quality program or infrastructure**

- The college has demonstrated a commitment to the quality journey, program, and infrastructure. For example, WTC began its quality journey in 1987 by implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) concepts. By 1997, Western had progressed to the Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence, and in 2000 continued with the implementation of the Higher Learning Commissions AQIP continuous

## AQIP Reaffirmation Recommendation

improvement model for accreditation. This commitment highlights the AQIP principles of involvement, people, agility, and planning. [Quality Highlight Report, p.1]

- Western has provided evidence that their quality programs and infrastructure has resulted in improvements. For instance, The Wisconsin Technical College System (state system) developed a Quality Review Process to evaluate educational programs in Wisconsin. The college used this new state process as an opportunity to revitalize an existing college process that was similar to the one developed by the state system. [Quality Highlight Report, p.2]
- The college identified service-learning as one strategy that Western can use to enhance the quality and increase the variety of learning opportunities and environments. In 2006, 26 faculty members incorporated service learning into 31 courses. These efforts resulted in over 557 students partnered with 46 local agencies with these students providing over 14,300 hours of service to the community. This effort reflects the AQIP principles of a learning-centered environment, collaboration, and focus. [Quality Highlight Report, p.1]

### D. Overall comments and counsel about the organization's commitment to continuous quality improvement and its participation in AQIP

Western's commitment to continuous quality improvement as a leadership model is apparent in the organization's response to the Systems Portfolio Feedback Report. All four strategic issues and 24 of 54 opportunities for improvement have been studied and some type of corrective action/intervention has been implemented and documented for each. [QCU, p. 7]

The college's desire to be honest in its representation of itself to the public is indicated in a name change that better describes the college's mission and a new brand, *The Essential Experience*, that defines its promise of service. The latter is supported by a student remarks such as, "They care about us," and "We have many opportunities for our leadership development." [QCU, p. 7]

Throughout the organization there is enthusiasm for the continuous quality improvement processes that are being used to move toward the goals set by the college. A "culture of quality" acts as a continuous thread throughout the fabric of Western Technical College. [QCU, p. ]