1 - Reflective Overview

The first section of the System's Appraisal Feedback Report is the Reflective Overview. Here the team provides summary statements that reflect its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served. This section shows the institution that the team understood the context and priorities of the institution as it completed the review.

In the Reflective Overview, the team considers such factors as:

1. Stage in systems maturity (processes and results).
2. Utilization or deployment of processes.
3. The existence of results, trends and comparative data.
4. The use of results data as feedback.
5. Systematic improvement processes of the activities each AQIP Category covers.

Instructions for Systems Appraisal Team

During this stage of the Systems Appraisal, provide the team's consensus reflective overview statement, which should be based on the independent reflective overviews written by each team member. The consensus overview statement should communicate the team's understanding of the institution, its mission and the constituents it serves. Please see additional directions in the Systems Appraisal procedural document provided by HLC.

Evidence

Overall:

Northern Wyoming Community College District is a multi-campus public institution in northeast Wyoming. The College's mission statement is to "creating student success and making a difference in our communities through educational leadership," and the vision is to help fill the Wyoming skills gap by producing 1,000 graduation awards per year by 2020. The College offers AA, AFA, AS, AAS, ADN degree programs, and certificates of completion. The 5,722 degree and non-degree seeking students are supported by 99 full-time faculty members and 197 full-time administrators and staff. Instruction is delivered face-to-face and online.

NWCCD joined AQIP in 2005 and reports that it has been intentional in addressing the strategic issues identified in the feedback reports and in improving their commitment to a culture of quality and process maturity. The College states that its highest maturity level is in business operations and its lowest maturity level is in academics. The Institutional Overview makes clear that institutional assessment processes are an ongoing strategic challenge; moving from "data gathering" toward "intentional assessment" was specifically identified as a strategic issue by 2012 after the 2008 Feedback Report "identified five strategic issues, four involving measurement."

The College recently reorganized the Division of Academic Affairs and has initiated a year-long manager training initiative. NWCCD faces a financial challenge due to budget constraints resulting from Wyoming's reliance on mineral extraction fees. As a result, the College made a number of administrative layoffs.

NWCCD has identified priorities to build managerial capacity, ensure all employees are engaged and playing an active role on the institutional team. Also prioritized are initiatives to increase capacity to use information to support decision-making. Category One identifies student success as the highest institutional priority. Category Three identifies "to build a healthy and efficient organization that fulfills our goals" as the highest priority. There appears to be some confusion on the priorities.

Category 1:

In this category, Northern Wyoming Community College District defines student success as its highest institutional priority and upholds a goal of 1,000 completions annually by 2020. Efforts to achieve this goal are supported by the College's student success strategy, including reducing enrollments in pre-college math and writing, assessing student learning of core abilities, program outcomes assessment, and evaluating general education requirements.

Goals for general education were determined by faculty (effective communication, critical thinking, and acquiring and applying knowledge), and are reviewed periodically. The College is still developing processes to assess student learning. Northern Wyoming Community College District states that they are reacting in relation to helping students learn but indicate that progress has been made to processes for program learning assessment. The College feels that the new structure in academic affairs, implemented in Fall 2016 and including two new associate vice presidents for academic affairs and six new academic chairs, will assist with moving from reacting to systematic.

Category 2:

NWCCD feels that the College ranges from systematic to aligned in its processes for Category Two. The College articulates goals and measures related to understanding the needs of students in its strategic plan. These goals include developing and implementing a process to measure student learning in co-curricular activities, working with academics to develop a strategic enrollment plan, and improving operating procedures. The College gathers data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). NWCCD identifies its complaint process as strong and has applied learning from the complaints received. Northern Wyoming states that it defines "other stakeholders" as their communities with a focus on economic development. As a means of gathering input from the community, the College analyzes economic and census data. The data assists the College with information to assist in surveys and personal communication.

Category 3:

Northern Wyoming states that its processes for Category Three range from systematic to aligned and results are systematic. Detailed processes are described for hiring practices, reviewing faculty credentials, maintaining personnel files, and developing employees. The College has responded to feedback received through employee surveys and is working towards a healthy work climate. To accomplish this, several processes that affect employees were upgraded. NWCCD has plans to begin a full revision of the employee policy section of the Policy Handbook. Attention has been given to developing managers and improving communication. The College chartered an Action Project to design and implement a supervisor training program. NWCCD acknowledges that it still has work to do to build a healthy and efficient organization that fulfills its goals and states that accomplishing this is its highest priority.

Category 4:

NWCCD identifies Category Four process and results maturity as aligned, and the information provided in the institutional overview support this classification. 4P1 indicates that processes are in place for periodic review of factors related to the institution's mission and values. For example, Trustees are tasked with ongoing review of community feedback regarding missions (4P1.A), communication regarding strategic planning is structured around stakeholder feedback (4P2A.1), and data suggests that employee attitudes reflect an open culture of communication (4R3). The College updated its governance structure as part of an action project and indicates future plans to update its Policy Handbook and improve communication, planning, project management, and measurement.

Category 5:

NWCCD reports systematic maturity in knowledge management. Northern Wyoming Community College District now employs a full-time Director of Institutional Research with the intent to expand capacity and improve data analysis. The College has experienced a reduction in state funding yet maintains positive fund balances. NWCCD has improved the physical infrastructure through capital projects funded by the state, local foundations, and other local resources. The systems portfolio does include specific information that indicates a systematic process for review of operational infrastructures (5P2.A). Section 5P3.A describes a revision to the budget-building process that attempts to allow for more employee participation.

Category 6:

The institution reports that its "overall maturity in terms of becoming a Continuous Quality Improvement culture is systematic, with many processes aligned, but results ranging from reacting to aligned." NWCCD acknowledges that it has experienced challenges with continuous quality improvement and has identified two CQI goals: (a) improve processes and structures for tracking improvement initiatives; and (b) continue to expand CQI language, understanding, and implementation throughout all levels. Employee PACE survey data indicates negative/below benchmark institutional attitudes toward quality improvement. However, the systems portfolio identifies an increase in the three-year average of these responses.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.