

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY

February 16, 2009



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY

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

Category 1 – Helping Students Learn: USM demonstrates appreciation for the value of defining and improving processes and collecting and utilizing data. However, while USM offers creative interdisciplinary courses, 25 majors, undergraduate and graduate education, and online programming, it focuses primarily on selected data and a limited number of programs in its discussion of helping students learn. Also, the faculty appears to be primarily responsible for developing and/or implementing teaching-learning initiatives and their assessment, an undoubtedly heavy burden on a relatively small number of people (approximately 50 full-time faculty members, 28 with terminal degrees and 28 tenured). USM's quality culture is clearly developing in the area of student learning. Efforts toward enhancing and expanding this culture are underway, but there are significant opportunities for improvement and for follow through to ensure that processes are functioning and USM's ambitious agenda is being fully implemented, e.g., increasing engagement of and collaboration with adjunct faculty and maximizing the usefulness of the co-curricular transcript.

Category 2 - Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives: USM has clearly begun to align their distinctive objective of service, which distinguishes them from other institutions, with faculty and staff roles and has begun to assess and review objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts necessary to continuously improve these areas.

Category 3 – Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs: While several measures are used to understand student and stakeholder needs, USM would benefit from incorporating formal processes, measures, and analyses in order to identify opportunities to address the needs of a wider variety of stakeholders.

Category 4 – Valuing People: The University is in the beginning stages of its efforts to survey and better serve clients, particularly students and their parents. USM also recognizes the role of employees in serving clients and monitors and rewards the provision of good service. However, USM appears to collect relatively little information in employee satisfaction and recommendations, which would further evidence valuing those faculty, staff, and administrators

who serve clients. It is also unclear how USM communicates to adjunct faculty – in particular that they are valued. USM is addressing employee concerns relative to pay and acknowledges a concern regarding demonstration of respect. This respect presumably includes respect for and among those who work for the University, along with its clients.

Category 5 – Leading and Communicating: USM appears to use traditional structures for leadership and to rely heavily on informal mechanisms for communicating. The structures seem relatively complex for an institution with roughly 50 faculty members. The reliance on informal communication, on the other hand, seems reasonable in an institution where employees are likely to know one another well and communicate frequently. While anecdotal data indicate strength in some areas, efforts to improve these areas, using continuous quality improvement principles, will move the University toward a culture of quality.

Category 6 – Supporting Institutional Operations: Efforts to develop processes to measure and improve institutional operations are beginning, although details and comparative data are limited. As USM continues on its quality journey, the office of institutional research will be able to select instruments, and design, collect, and organize data in centralized locations which will provide useful information across the university.

Category 7 – Measuring Effectiveness: Much of what USM does in terms of measuring effectiveness is common practice in higher education and USM itself recognizes areas where improvement is needed, particularly to “close the feedback loop.” Nevertheless, USM appears to have a collaborative and integrated approach to determining what needs to be measured to support its mission and goals and how those measures relate to the operation of the institution. USM might consider using the assessment process model to help determine if the goals of individual departments and units align with the institutional goals.

Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement: Planning continuous improvement is developing at USM as the institution’s planning processes, strategies, and action plans are helping them achieve their mission and vision. USM has a significant opportunity to measure itself against peers or aspirant institutions, in order to provide itself with a clear picture of performance. Through the coordination and alignment of strategies, measures, projections, and analyses, the University will continuously improve in this category.

Category 9 – Building Collaborative Relationships: USM has made commendable efforts to build collaborative relationships as it is developing its culture of quality. They may want to

consider sharing their mission, vision, and strategies with the larger community so that all stakeholders may analyze how relationships align with and contribute to the accomplishment of the University mission and support the goals of external stakeholders. Such strategic relationships often provide much needed support for institutions. Further, it may enable USM to identify needs and opportunities for new relationships as well as to continuously improve this area.

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

ELEMENTS OF University Of St. Mary'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 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 it 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 reflecting 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.

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 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 University of St. Mary 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 University of St. Mary 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 University of St. Mary will discuss these strategic issues, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified:

- USM has identified a need for closer supervision of adjunct faculty, which will aid in ensuring consistency in the delivery of courses, especially those courses included in the core curriculum. Close collaboration with adjunct faculty can also facilitate institution-wide reporting of all assessment data and allow for comprehensive analysis of student learning outcomes and informed decision making.
- USM could benefit from using additional direct and indirect measures of success in achieving student learning objectives and could enhance its processes for follow-up based on data generated. Similarly, more comparisons with other programs and institutions could lead to more informed decision making. This could perhaps include a more targeted selection of national benchmark data for programs and further comparisons with peer and aspirant institutions. Review of additional benchmark data would allow USM to determine whether patterns identified within the institution result from internal factors or wider trends and could help USM better target opportunities to enhance student learning.
- The team reviewing USM's documents felt that the issue of 3P3 ("It is not clear how USM has ensured that it has a critical mass of students and the stable enrollments needed to support envisioned new programs in Nursing and Physical Therapy, particularly at the doctoral level") rose to the level of a strategic issue.
- While USM focuses on preserving and passing along mission, vision and values, it provides limited evidence of preparing for leadership succession, which will be important for continuity of mission, vision, and values.

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 University Of St. Mary and 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 USM 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students and maintains multiple educational

sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.

- O1e In 1998, USM received North Central Association approval for a distance education degree program in the Master of Arts in Teaching, and in 2007 was allowed to offer additional distance education programs with “no prior commission approval for distance education degrees.”
- O2a USM’s educational offerings include a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and accelerated masters level graduate programs designed for the non-traditional student, many of whom are working professionals. All programs are offered through 10 academic departments, which are overseen by the VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O2b In addition to North Central accreditation, USM’s specialty programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), and state approved programs in nursing through the Kansas Board of Nursing and in education through the Kansas State Department of Education.
- O2c Population demographics include an enrollment of approximately 850 students per year: 22% are from states other than Kansas and Missouri; 85% receive needs based financial aid; 49% of its students attend the Leavenworth Campus; 85% of the students attending the LVN campus are full time (85%); 84% of the students attending the extended sites are part time students; 69% of the incoming freshman are first generation college students; 45% of the graduate students are enrolled in distance education.
- O3a USM offers specialized professional undergraduate and/or graduate programs in teacher education and professional development programs, business administration with several tracks, counseling psychology, nursing, criminology, healthcare information management (under development), and biology/chemistry.
- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and

- Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.
- O6a USM has a 200-acre campus with many original buildings (1870); there are 11 major academic buildings, many which require constant maintenance and upgrading. Most of the University has been upgraded from desks to tables to accommodate laptops. The Overland Park campus shares facilities with St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
- O7a USM operates in a highly competitive environment: over forty various institutions of higher education are represented in the greater Kansas City area. USM's competitors include 17 two-year colleges, three other Catholic colleges/universities, and two other private religious-based universities, and Kansas Regents Universities, and the University of Phoenix online.
- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: develop feeder connections through high schools; increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; build its liberal arts foundation; create partnerships with allied health; and foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.
- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.
- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates

for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

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.

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 University of St, Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students and maintains multiple educational sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.
- O1e In 1998, USM received North Central Association approval for a distance education degree program in the Master of Arts in Teaching, and in 2007 was allowed to offer additional distance education programs with “no prior commission approval for distance education degrees.”
- O2a USM’s educational offerings include a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and accelerated masters level graduate programs designed for the non-traditional student, many of whom are working professionals. All programs are offered through 10 academic departments, which are overseen by the

- VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O2b In addition to North Central accreditation, USM's specialty programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), and state approved programs in nursing through the Kansas Board of Nursing and in education through the Kansas State Department of Education.
- O2c Population demographics include an enrollment of approximately 850 students per year: 22% are from states other than Kansas and Missouri; 85% receive needs based financial aid; 49% of its students attend the Leavenworth Campus; 85% of the students attending the LVN campus are full time (85%); 84% of the students attending the extended sites are part time students; 69% of the incoming freshman are first generation college students; 45% of the graduate students are enrolled in distance education.
- O3a USM offers specialized professional undergraduate and/or graduate programs in teacher education and professional development programs, business administration with several tracks, counseling psychology, nursing, criminology, healthcare information management (under development), and biology/chemistry.
- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.

- O6a USM has a 200-acre campus with many original buildings (1870); there are 11 major academic buildings, many which require constant maintenance and upgrading. Most of the University has been upgraded from desks to tables to accommodate laptops. The Overland Park campus shares facilities with St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
- O8c Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1P1a	S	A Comprehensive Curricular Initiative (CCI) resulted in an ongoing improvement (OGI) model linking initiatives and annual goals to mission.
1P1b	S	Curricular goals and learning outcomes are established jointly by faculty, administration, and trustees of USM. Assessment rubrics are in place, and matrices have been developed for coordinating the activities of the Associate Dean of Assessment, the Assessment Committee, the Academic Resource Center, and the Information Services Director.
1P1c	S	USM takes a strategic and data based approach when designing new programs that balance the diverse needs of students and the emerging needs of educational and global markets.
1P1d	O	USM may benefit from formalizing a process and time frame to revisit/update the work of the Comprehensive Curricular Initiative so that all processes are reviewed on a regular schedule.
1P2a	S	The Academic Leadership Council (ALC), comprised of department chairs and program directors, planned a process for academic program analysis

using Activity Based Costing (ABC). New programs and growth plans must match USM's mission, culture, and markets.

- 1P2b O Biology, Chemistry and Art have implemented growth plans that balance financial stewardship, student needs, curriculum integrity, and job market demands. Now USM has an opportunity to fully implement and continuously improve its processes for review and improvement of all academic programs.
- 1P2c O It is unclear whether institution-wide processes identify potential worthwhile programs for departmental consideration, so that all relevant opportunities are identified and resources are allocated in the interest of the University as a whole, or whether program initiation, design and/or revision are wholly dependent upon departmental initiative.
- 1P3a S Assessments, including ACT scores, COMPASS scores, writing skills assessment, and course grades, guide enrollment and support service planning for both freshmen and transfer students. A current Action Plan focuses on helping students select programs. Faculty advisors, the Academic Resource Center, Student Life, and the counseling center are collaborating in this effort and have reviewed issues and needs of students.
- 1P3b OO It is unclear whether USM has identified any predictors of success for students in the University or in particular programs offered by the University. There may be an opportunity here to improve the manner in which appropriate skill sets are determined.
- 1P4a O Students, especially freshmen and recent transfers, may benefit from more frequent meetings with academic advisors to communicate expectations and discuss learning objectives.
- 1P4b S The Academic Resource Center (ARC) helps students improve in the critical academic areas of reading, writing, and learning, provides tutors to students for a wide range of academic fields, and hosts seminars on "student survival skills."

- 1P5a S Advisors, ARC, the Student Life Career Center, and counseling services work with students to clarify and pursue career goals.
- 1P5b OO USM has noted an increase in the number of students on academic probation and has identified a need to build a more systematic process for ensuring student success. It will be important now to continue efforts to identify reasons for this increase and work on designing effective approaches to address them.
- 1P5c O Although USM is working to improve relationships with and services for commuter students, it has an ongoing opportunity to revise existing efforts and develop and implement initiatives for serving this growing target audience.
- 1P5d S A Student Success Action Project was initiated in 2008 to increase communication, student use of services, and student satisfaction.
- 1P6a O Faculty institutes, departmental in-service days, and professional workshops support development of pedagogical skills, including use of diverse learning strategies that engage multiple learning styles. USM has an opportunity to target these programs to specific student and institutional needs.
- 1P6b S A written mid-term evaluation provides faculty and students with the opportunity to discuss course goals and assess the student/teaching process and make adjustments as needed during the semester.
- 1P6d O Although collaborative teaching is an innovative approach to the enhancement of teaching and learning, monitoring learning outcomes and cost-effectiveness of such initiatives might be worthwhile.
- 1P7a O The same quality assurance processes are applied to each delivery approach, but USM might benefit from exploring some additional assessments specific to unique delivery systems.
- 1P8a S An Ongoing Improvement Model (OGI) used to monitor effectiveness and currency of the curriculum requires faculty and programs to examine

curriculum goals, review evidence on meeting goals, communicate findings, and make improvements based upon evidence. The OGI model is used to examine quantitative and qualitative data in light of professional standards, workforce and societal trends, mission integration, student achievement, and stakeholder satisfaction.

- 1P8b O Although faculty participation at learned society meetings is used to monitor and improve curriculum and instruction, the method for determining which faculty participate, the extent of faculty participation, and follow-up processes which would ensure the implementation of best practices are unclear.
- 1P8c O The process by which USM discontinues courses or programs is not clear, which may be important given its competition (0-7) and “potential vulnerabilities” (0-8).
- 1P9a O USM uses widely accepted methodologies for identifying and addressing student needs (attendance, grading, self-identification, support services, study halls for athletes), and faculty needs (faculty surveys, technology support, library support, and professional development opportunities). There may be an opportunity to determine and address learning needs specific to students and faculty at USM using additional, perhaps more innovative, approaches.
- 1P9b O While USM provides opportunities for professional development in faculty members’ content areas, the extent to which it provides support for development of pedagogical or technology-related skills is unclear.
- 1P10a O A University-wide Fall Institute, held in 2003, involved all faculty and professional staff in exploring creative ways to model and advance the learning outcomes within their areas. USM has an opportunity to follow-up on this activity and advance institutionally relevant processes that enrich the learning environment.

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| 1P10b | S | The concept of a co-curricular transcript allows USM the opportunity to be an industry leader in documenting student growth and achievement beyond the classroom. |
| 1P10c | O | USM has an opportunity to further clarify and explain plans to coordinate academic assessment and student life development through use of a co-curricular transcript. |
| 1P11a | S | Student achievement is monitored for accomplishment of goals and information gathered is used to direct the next year's initiatives. |
| 1P11b | OO | Other than generating "professional conversations," mechanisms for determining processes for assessment at the departmental and institutional level are unclear. |
| 1P13a | S | Advisors, the registrar, the VPAA, and program chairs review measures of and trends in student performance including grade point averages (GPAs), common learning objectives in Learning Communities and Idea Seminars, and achievement of Learning Outcomes and capstone experiences to annually establish learning goals. |
| 1P13b | O | In courses that satisfy general requirements, faculty assess ULOs as indicated in their syllabi and collect data on designated outcomes by rating achievement using a standard rubric. These ratings are submitted along with course grades to the Registrar, and the Assessment Committee has an opportunity to monitor and refine the rubric rating process in the future. |
| 1R1a | O | While scores for interconnectedness are relatively stable, it would be worth exploring why there are significant shifts in the rating for writing, and, to a lesser extent, the ratings for global interdependence, change and diversity idea seminar concepts from semester to semester. |
| 1R1b | OO | The Assessment Committee analyzed the results of the ULO pilot data and found that after faculty intervention between semesters, the variation among ratings remained unsatisfactory, and standard deviations revealed too much variance to support a claim that the measures were reliable. |

USM has an opportunity to identify or create and implement valid and reliable processes for assessing common and program specific learning objectives.

- 1R1c OO USM has identified a need for closer supervision of adjunct faculty, which will aid in ensuring consistency in the delivery of the core curriculum and facilitate institution-wide reporting of all assessment data.
- 1R2a OO USM monitors trends in students on probation (the percent of students who “satisfactorily acquired knowledge and skills each semester” or “% GPAs above 2.0”). This percentage varies significantly by delivery method, and data suggests an opportunity for improvement.
- 1R2b O USM’s NCLEX-RN Licensure Exam Pass Rate for the first USM nursing graduating class (2008) was 81%. Although this percentage is commendable and higher than the percent for all candidates taking the exam, comparisons with first-time, U.S. educated RN candidates (85.5% in 2007 and 86.7% in 2008) and first-time U.S. educated RN candidates completing baccalaureate degree programs (86.4% in 2007 and 87.5% in 2008) indicate that there is an opportunity for improvement.
https://www.ncsbn.org/Table_of_Pass_Rates_2007.pdf,
https://www.ncsbn.org/Table_of_Pass_Rates_2008.pdf)
- 1R2c S Education majors take content area exams, and pass rates are relatively high for English, elementary education content, math, biology, chemistry, and history and government.
- 1R2d O “Each program has a tailored approach for monitoring student achievement on program learning outcomes. For example, the director of the graduate education program assessment system analyzes and publicizes on the USM website the results of student achievement on outcomes that are assessed in each course.” Although an individualized approach is beneficial, some additional standardized data might also be informative.

- 1R3 O USM relies heavily on grades as a measure of student learning. Survey results, other reports and documents on helping students learn “are tracked by delivery approach and show a high satisfaction rate,” USM reports that an “emerging pattern indicates students are achieving outcomes,” but no specific information is provided. Without reviewing specific information from direct and indirect measures, USM may be missing an opportunity to fully assess student learning.
- 1R4a OO The NCLEX-RN Licensure Exam Pass Rate for the first USM nursing graduating class (2008) was 81%. This percentage is commendable and higher than the overall national average of 78%. However, because this average includes RN and PN students, students repeating the exam, and internationally educated students, USM might consider adopting pass rates for first-time, U.S. educated candidates who graduated from baccalaureate programs as a benchmark.
(https://www.ncsbn.org/Table_of_Pass_Rates_2007.pdf,
https://www.ncsbn.org/Table_of_Pass_Rates_2008.pdf)
- 1R4b S The 2007 CHEA Award and review by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education indicate that programs are successfully meeting accreditation standards.
- 1R4c O Data comparing USM to other institutions of higher education is limited. More benchmark data would provide more input and feedback for programs.
- 1I1 S USM reports that quantitative and qualitative results are analyzed annually and improvements are implemented and tracked to assess effectiveness.
- 1I1a O Discussion related to improving current processes and systems are positive but general and like much of the information provided in the category, focus is primarily on nursing and probationary students.

- 112a O USM states who is involved in setting targets for improvement but does not define or detail standardized processes, which suggests a potential opportunity for improvement.
- 112b S USM has initiated a Student Success Action Project as a result of its assessment of student results on standardized testing in nursing and as a result of concerns about the reliability of its assessment of student achievement on the University Learning Objectives.

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an "applied liberal arts" institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that

builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.

- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University's sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, "serving others at the fullest points of their needs." "The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society."
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students and maintains multiple educational sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.
- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2P1	O	Through the strategic planning process, USM has identified service as a guiding mandate. With a clearer objective to serve, multiple opportunities will become evident.
2P2	SS	Service learning is embedded in the mission, values, sponsorship, and culture of USM as evidenced by the Service Learning Fair, the Service

Learning Center Newsletter and website, and the expectation set for faculty in the Faculty Guide to Academic Service Learning.

- 2P3 O USM currently uses a questionnaire to determine staff and faculty needs regarding the objectives of service. The recent affiliation with other Kansas City area colleges and universities dedicated to the advancement of service learning holds promise, but at this time it is unclear how the information, resources and training will be used to meet faculty and staff needs. There may be opportunities for the University to collect information about faculty and staff needs related to service in other aspects of their lives including service to USM, service to their professional discipline, and service to other components of their communities.
- 2P4a S Faculty and staff members provide evidence of community, professional, and University service through annual reports, evaluations, applications for rank and tenure, and awards; students provide evidence of service through assignments and surveys.
- 2P4b O Since USM has defined service as a guiding mandate, the institution may be able to increase the impact that service has on its faculty, staff, students and the communities they serve by institutionalizing specific review processes that seek to identify ways to increase service opportunities and the support necessary for follow-through.
- 2P5 O USM may have an opportunity to better document the impact and build upon service learning activities by looking beyond counting services and by assessing the attitudinal, social awareness and other affective impacts on those engaged in service learning.
- 2R1a S Data collected since 2004, when the service learning program was launched, indicate high levels of involvement, and “higher positive civic attitudes” with increased participation independent of the students’ background characteristics.
- 2R1b O The SLO, opened in October 2004, will be an excellent way to measure and track fulfillment of service; initial data indicate a decline in service hours.

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| 2R2 | SS | Comparison with national organizations resulted in USM receiving a Presidential Honor Roll Recognition as part of Campus Compact's 20 th Anniversary celebration. |
| 2R3 | SS | Service learning has strengthened commitment to mission, enhanced the curriculum, benefited teaching and learning, curriculum, course design and teaching styles, and improved community relations. USM received a proclamation of "University of St. Mary Service Learning Week" by the mayor of Leavenworth. |
| 2I1 | S | As part of the responsibilities of a Host Site with the Kansas Campus Compact and AmeriCorps/VISTA, USM submits reports of service twice a year. These reports include goals, activities, outputs, and targets. Reporting required by USM's participation in Campus Compact and AmeriCorps/VISTA Project is used to evaluate, identify areas for improvement, and develop recommendations submitted to Faculty Senate, University Assembly, and Administrative Council. |
| 2I2a | O | Through analysis of the results of the Service Learning Project, USM has identified the need for a systematic approach for collecting information and to better focus the objectives of service activities through the four goals. USM has chosen to focus on poverty to better mobilize the USM community and should establish objectives in keeping with that focus. |
| 2I2b | S | USM is providing faculty support for coordination of training, orientations, and reflection activities, ongoing evaluation of service project, and programs to increase awareness of service learning as pedagogy/philosophy. |
| 2I2c | S | USM is developing a clearinghouse for volunteer needs, enhancing communication and coordination with community partners, improving its records, better utilizing its advisory board, and increasing public awareness of its program. |

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University's sponsors and accordingly defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”

- O1e USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional-aged students and maintains multiple educational sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission, and Overland Park.
- O2a USM's educational offerings includes a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and accelerated masters level graduate programs designed for the non-traditional student, many of whom are working professionals. All programs are offered through 10 academic departments which are overseen by the VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O2c Population demographics include an enrollment of approximately 850 students per year: 22% are from states other than Kansas and Missouri; 85% receive needs based financial aid; 49% of its students attend the Leavenworth Campus; 85% of the students attending the LVN campus are full time (85%); 84% of the students attending the extended sites are part time students; 69% of the incoming freshman are first generation college students; 45% of the graduate students are enrolled in distance education.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.
- O7a USM operates in a highly competitive environment: over forty various institutions of higher education are represented in the greater Kansas City area. USM's competitors include 17 two-year colleges, three other Catholic colleges/universities, and two other private religious-based universities, and Kansas Regents Universities, and the University of Phoenix online.
- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: to develop feeder connections through high schools; to increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; to continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; to build its liberal arts foundation; to create partnerships with allied health; and

to foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.

- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.
- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
3P1a	S	USM has identified five groups of internal and five groups of external stakeholders and collects data for planning purposes regarding these stakeholders. Annual academic and the five-year program reviews reflect student and alumni satisfaction. Three programs receive outside accreditation and review, and, for these, input from parents and students is sought.
3P1b	O	The processes for analyzing data and for administrative review are not clear. By clearly articulating these processes, USM will fulfill an opportunity to select its own most appropriate courses of action.
3P1c	O	The processes for building relationships with evening-adult and online students are not clear and appear limited.
3P2	S	USM provides many opportunities to build and maintain relationships with students. Potential students are identified early, and relationships continue throughout students' academic careers through a variety of

means, including USM's Strategic Action Plan, its AQIP action projects, and its freshman orientation program. Small classes contribute as well to this effort, although it is hoped that small classes are not so pervasive as to deprive USM of economies of scale.

- 3P3 O It is not clear how USM ensures that it has a critical mass of students and the stable enrollments needed to support envisioned new programs in Nursing and Physical Therapy, particularly at the doctoral level.
- 3P4a S USM has identified the ways in which it builds relationships with students.
- 3P4b O The ways in which USM builds relationships with stakeholders who are neither current nor prospective students are unspecified.
- 3P4c O It seems reasonable, given the emphasis on service learning, to consider the community as a major stakeholder.
- 3P5a S USM analyzes demographics and trends, along with institutional experience, to recruit students with a "good fit" with the University.
- 3P5b O It is not clear how the university defines "good fit," nor is it clear whether and how USM is cultivating new stakeholder groups.
- 3P O USM determines satisfaction rates through surveys of students and other stakeholder groups. However, much of the information used to determine stakeholder satisfaction seems to come from personal interactions. A well developed process with benchmarks, timelines, and targets for improvement will assist the University in identifying and responding to stakeholder needs.
- 3R1-2 O Although USM has in place procedures to respond to student complaints, it is clear that results of student surveys show opportunities for improvement, especially in food selection, intramural opportunities, weekend activities, use of activity fees, parking, billing policies, and residence hall staffing.

- 3R3-4b O USM may profit from satisfaction data which is more widely based, both in terms of the number of participants and the variety of stakeholder categories.
- 3R5a S Student satisfaction data are nationally normed and are a matter of continued refinement. Students consistently rated USM above the national norms.
- 3R5b O USM recognizes the need to upgrade the collection of alumni, donor, and sponsor satisfaction data.
- 3R5c O USM's descriptions of its assessment tools and other data sources are not clear.
- 3I1-2a O USM recognizes the need for enhanced data collection and analysis in order to better meet the needs of its students and the needs of other stakeholders, and in order to achieve its own OGI goals.
- 3I1-2b O With respect to setting and communicating targets for improvement, the only areas discussed are student life and admissions. Addressing the needs of other stakeholders would be beneficial.

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University's sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, "serving others at the fullest points of their needs." "The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society."
- O2a USM's educational offerings include a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and accelerated masters level graduate programs designed for the non-traditional student, many of whom are working professionals. All programs are offered through 10 academic departments which are overseen by the VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O3a USM offers specialized professional undergraduate and/or graduate programs in teacher education and professional development programs, business administration with several tracks, counseling psychology, nursing, criminology, healthcare information management (under development), and biology/chemistry.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.
- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support

improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.

- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as University of St. Mary'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>
4P1-2a	S	USM has established hiring practices that help both candidates and USM to identify candidates who will fit in with the university. USM recruits nationally, orients new hires, and is in compliance with relevant hiring laws.
4P1-2b	O	USM may benefit by overseeing search committees, by developing a rubric for job descriptions, and by investigating the high rate of turnover in certain areas.
4P3a	S	USM has a highly collaborative governance structure that includes monthly University Assemblies. Staff members are encouraged to inform themselves about the wider concerns of the University, and to cross-train for positions related to their own.
4P3b	O	It is not clear whether there are processes in addition to cross training and University Assemblies that empower organizational contributions. It is also not clear how the University facilitates ethical training to promote and ensure ethical behavior.
4P4a	S	USM encourages participation in professional organizations as a means of professional growth. Similarly faculty funding, tuition exchange programs, and tuition remission for faculty members encourage faculty to

- upgrade their skills, such as helping nursing faculty to upgrade to the doctoral level.
- 4P4c O It is unclear whether the “grown our own” approach extends beyond the nursing field, nor exactly how professional development needs are determined. Extending the “grow our own” approach beyond the nursing program may strengthen the academic preparation of promising members of the USM community.
- 4P5 O Faculty members have annually-updated personal development plans, and both faculty and staff are provided opportunities and funding for upgrading their skills. However, specifying the process would assure that attention has been given to equitable allocation of professional development funds.
- 4P6 S Performance evaluation is a regular expectation for both tenured and non-tenured faculty members. Personnel reviews perform a similar role for staff members. The personnel evaluation system allows employees to communicate regularly with supervisors and to align their goals with those of the institution.
- 4P7a O USM has a balanced and public recognition and rewards system, which is coordinated with categories 1 and 2 and which shows commitment to valuing people. Clearly articulating and implementing the processes whereby this occurs may help the University to meet employee needs and increase administrative effectiveness.
- 4P7b O USM has identified employee recruitment and retention as areas for improvement and has an AQIP action project on improving compensation and benefits. It will be important for USM to evaluate whether the new recognition system accomplishes its intended purposes.
- 4P8 S USM’s Client Service Improvement AQIP Action Project provides data anonymously through a culture audit. USM’s plan for addressing problem areas will likely match particular approaches to specific concerns.

- 4P9 O While USM provides multiple support systems for its employees, it is unclear how, or whether, these systems are being evaluated to determine if they achieve their intended purposes.
- 4P10 O Although USM has developed a culture survey and has compiled crime statistics for the purposes of furthering its valuing of people, it is unclear how the survey materials will be analyzed for the specific purposes of enhancing the valuing of people. It would be appropriate for USM to articulate appropriate methodologies.
- 4R1a S USM is trying to ensure comparable industry standards for employee salaries by upgraded senior faculty salaries and changing the format of its alumni magazine to reflect alumni preferences.
- 4R1b O USM acknowledges, “interactions and encouragements could be improved to model more fully the values of respect and community.” This probably reflects the culture survey results that indicate that staff members feel less valued than do faculty. Other Culture Survey items point to other needed improvements—many items are “neutral” or below.
- 4R2a S USM’s recent successes in valuing people include comprehensive student and faculty orientations; restructuring of the Leavenworth campus and the extended sites recruitment and admission processes; cooperative effort to improve communication and procedures related to extended site student registration and billing; implementation of systematized annual service satisfaction survey; and efforts at improved communication.
- 4R2b O USM may benefit from assessing these changes in light of AQIP principles of continuous improvement.
- 4R3a O While increased enrollment is an indication of at least some form of success, it is not clear that it is an indication of valuing people. The University is encouraged to undertake more focused evaluations of this measure.

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| 4R3b | O | Data suggest student dissatisfaction with access to the course management system for new students at the OPC site and relatively low assessment scores for the MA in Counseling Psychology. |
| 4R4 | S | While incremented pay for senior faculty resulted from comparison data from the Kansas Independent Colleges Association, it would be beneficial to expand data collection to all levels of faculty and staff. |
| 4I1-2 | O | Evaluation procedures are in place for determining training processes through USM's Client Service Improvement Plan. While the USM process is cited as the tool for identifying professional development and training needs, data resulting from that process is not presented nor are clear targets for improvement based upon data. The University might consider making its goals more specific and more widely shared as ways of showing commitment to employees and to valuing people. The paucity of data impeded the portfolio review team's efforts at meaningful feedback. |

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.

- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”

- O8c Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as University of St. Mary’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	USM sets direction in alignment with mission, vision, and values by involving the entire USM community and the BOT in its strategic planning process. A process is in place for implementing new initiatives, including a business plan, market study, marketing plan, 5-year financial outlook, and alignment with mission and strategic plan. The OGI model ensures that the needs and expectations for student learning are central to the decision making process.

- 5P1b O USM is in the early stages of helping all employees and students model University core values. However, it is unclear how leaders set directions in keeping with these values or how the needs of stakeholders are taken into account in setting directions.
- 5P2a O USM leaders reportedly guide the institution in seeking future opportunities and building and sustaining the learning environment through growth plans included in Annual Reports and other strategic planning. This process might benefit from a more formal structure since only three academic programs have formal growth plans.
- 5P3 S A component of USM's ongoing improvement process includes after action assessment, which "resides at the level of which the project is executed" and will be especially beneficial when feedback and improvement processes are institutionalized.
- 5P4 O Information and results are reported to administrators and reviewed by them, but further explanation is needed to explain how USM "provides perspective on the competition and sets appropriate goals."
- 5P5 S The communication process for USM is both vertical through line groups and horizontal through cross communication across the community. Monthly roundtables, composed of cross-campus groups, provide opportunity to enhance communication across campus.
- 5P6 S The leaders communicate the mission and values in multiple ways and multiple media.
- 5P7a O USM might benefit from more formal plans and processes for leadership development of faculty, staff, administrators, and students.
- 5P7b S University-wide involvement in strategic planning, budget commitments, offering tuition remission for employees seeking undergraduate or graduate degrees, funds for professional development, and AQIP Action Projects creates opportunities for development of leadership skills.

- 5P8a S USM has committed resources to allow the hiring of a director of mission to help educate and focus the USM community.
- 5P8b O While USM focuses on preserving and passing along mission, vision and values, it provides limited evidence of preparing for leadership succession, which will be important for continuity of mission, vision, and values.
- 5P9 O USM relies largely on indirect measures of leadership and may benefit by strengthening direct assessment of leadership skills that will provide more actionable, concrete data in terms of developing specific skills.
- 5R1 O The University has made progress on accomplishing strategic planning goals and objectives. As an example, USM cites the fact that in 2005 employees identified internal communications as a chronic concern, but did not do so in 2008. Nevertheless, faculty and staff ratings on culture survey items indicate an opportunity for improvement. The discrepancy between staff and faculty rating on how involved individuals perceive themselves to be may present an opportunity to work with staff to increase their perceived voice and increase job satisfaction and performance.
- 5R2a S Anecdotal indicators imply the University demonstrates excellence in community leadership and engagement. USM has been recognized for academic excellence (Princeton), and as one of America's "Best Value" colleges. It has been recognized for its generous financial assistance and low cost, for promoting student success, and for community service.
- 5R2b O While anecdotal indicators are positive, there is an opportunity to develop formal processes for measuring effectiveness in leading and communicating. USM provides little by way of benchmark comparisons to other institutions.
- 5I1 O USM provides an example of one improvement of communications in eSpire, but does not address the current process and system for leading and communicating.

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| 5I2a | S | USM sets improvement targets based on its strategic plan. Current targets center on increasing enrollment and retention, offerings, fundraising, and efficiencies, and building a “brand niche” for its health care education. |
| 5I2b | O | While USM identifies targets for improvement, it is not clear the targets are a result of continuous quality improvement processes and principles. |

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 University of St. Mary 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

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| O1a | The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870. |
| O1b | USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that |

builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.

- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University's sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, "serving others at the fullest points of their needs." "The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society."
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students and maintains multiple educational sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.
- O1e In 1998, USM received North Central Association approval for a distance education degree program in the Master of Arts in Teaching, and in 2007 was allowed to offer additional distance education programs with "no prior commission approval for distance education degrees."
- O2a USM's educational offerings include a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and masters level graduate programs designed for the working non-traditional professional. USM offers all programs are offered through 10 academic departments which are overseen by the VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O2c Population demographics include an enrollment of approximately 850 students per year: 22% are from states other than Kansas and Missouri; 85% receive needs based financial aid; 49% of its students attend the Leavenworth Campus; 85% of the students attending the LVN campus are full time (85%); 84% of the students attending the extended sites are part time students; 69% of the incoming freshman are first generation college students; 45% of the graduate students are enrolled in distance education.
- O3a USM offers specialized professional undergraduate and/or graduate programs in teacher education and professional development programs, business administration with several

tracks, counseling psychology, nursing, criminology, healthcare information management (under development), and biology/chemistry.

- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.
- O6a USM has a 200-acre campus with many original buildings (1870); there are 11 major academic buildings, many which require constant maintenance and upgrading. Most of the University has been upgraded from desks to tables to accommodate laptops. The Overland Park campus shares facilities with St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
- O7a USM operates in a highly competitive environment: over forty various institutions of higher education are represented in the greater Kansas City area. USM's competitors include 17 two-year colleges, three other Catholic colleges/universities, and two other private religious-based universities, and Kansas Regents Universities, and the University of Phoenix online.
- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: develop feeder connections through high schools; increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; build its liberal arts foundation; create partnerships with allied health; and foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.
- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support

improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.

- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as University of St. Mary'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	O	Clearly established policies and procedures to help faculty and staff identify support service needs of students will likely lead to improved satisfaction and institutional function.
6P2a	S	A process for identifying administrative support service is in place: BOT, AC, and members of faculty and staff are involved in the strategic planning process and in the implementation of the strategic plan; department directors can request special needs funding; accrediting agencies provide guidance; accreditors evaluate support services.
6P2b	O	USM may benefit from a more fully developed process to identify the needs of external stakeholders, such as community residents or alumni involved in advisory boards which may better meet the needs of this broad range of stakeholders.
6P4a	O	The University monitors results and reports to gain information on the effectiveness of processes and may be able to increase the effectiveness of these actions by systematizing these action steps toward continuous improvement.

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| 6P4b | S | Principles of continuous improvement have clearly been used across time as shown by improvements of orientation which have occurred annually for several years. |
| 6P5a | O | USM may benefit by distinguishing between direct and indirect measures of processes and implementing direct measures whenever possible to provide more actionable results. |
| 6P5b | S | USM collects and analyzes several measures related to student and administrative support processes and continues to develop additional measures, particularly in the area of student support services. |
| 6R1a | S | The institution's ERMS provides quality continuous data that allows immediate action to improve outcomes. |
| 6R1b | S | The impact of support processes is measured in terms of progress toward meeting enrollment, retention, service learning goals, and safety. Results in all these areas improved between 2006 and 2008. |
| 6R1c | O | While USM has noted that a change in processes has led to an increase in full-time resident students, improved direct measures of processes may allow for a better understanding of what component in the process has resulted in the specific desired outcome. |
| 6R1d | O | An opportunity exists to design processes and instruments to measure and analyze the need for and effectiveness of support services. |
| 6R2 | S | Auditing of the finances of USM demonstrates an increasing endowment, a balanced budget, and positive cash flow. The University has initiated construction of a new residence hall and completed a \$4.5 million bond issue for that effort. |
| 6R3a | S | The Kansas Independent College Association and the Council of Independent Colleges provide benchmarking information for USM, as do their own longitudinal studies. |
| 6R3b | O | USM reports with whom the institution is compared, but does not give the results of the comparison. |

- 6R3c O Comparisons with the Kansas Independent College Association (KICA) and the Council of Independent Colleges and trends in institutional data are used to evaluate goals and establish priorities for improvement. However, other benchmark data and data from peer and aspirant institutions might provide useful insights.
- 6I1 S USM identifies processes in need of improvement by monitoring various reports; user groups or committees and administrators determine the priority of making improvements; and resources are provided to achieve desired goals. While this approach appears appropriate, additional detail would illustrate how USM improves current processes and systems.
- 6I2a S USM has a process for establishing targets in areas where improvements are needed. Examples are: improvement priorities are determined by their impact on University operations-Strategic Plan, AQIP Action Projects and enrollment.
- 6I2b O While specific targets for improvement are identified, it is not clear that these targets are a result of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes.

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students. USM maintains multiple educational sites; adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students take courses in sites in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.
- O2a USM’s educational offerings include a liberal arts program, pre-professional and professional programs in 25 majors, and masters level graduate programs designed for the working non-traditional professional. USM offers all programs are offered through 10 academic departments, which are overseen by the VPAA; A VP for Extended Sites has administrative oversight for the graduate and undergraduate programs at those sites.
- O2b In addition to North Central accreditation, USM’s specialty programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the International Assembly

- for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), and state approved programs in nursing through the Kansas Board of Nursing and in education through the Kansas State Department of Education.
- O2c Population demographics include an enrollment of approximately 850 students per year; 78% of the student body is drawn from the Kansas and Missouri areas, 22% are from other states, 85% receive needs based financial aid, 57% are female, 43% are male. 49% of its students on the main campus; the majority of the students attending the LVN campus are full time (85%). The majority of students attending the extended sites are part time students (84%). 69% of the incoming freshman are first generation college students; 45% of the graduate students are enrolled in distance education; 28% of the students live on campus.
- O3a USM offers specialized professional undergraduate and/or graduate programs in teacher education and professional development programs, business administration with several tracks, counseling psychology, nursing, criminology, healthcare information management (under development), and biology/chemistry.
- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.
- O5a Faculty and staff demographics are: 145 total employees; 34% are full time faculty, 71% are in professional positions (60 staff, 44 faculty), 61% are female, 39% are male, and 7.6% are minority; 57% of the 49 full-time faculty hold a terminal degree; 57% are tenured.
- O6a USM has a 200-acre campus with many original buildings (1870); there are 11 major academic buildings, many which require constant maintenance and upgrading. Most of

the University has been upgraded from desks to tables to accommodate laptops. The Overland Park campus shares facilities with St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

- O7a USM operates in a highly competitive environment: over forty various institutions of higher education are represented in the greater Kansas City area. USM's competitors include 17 two-year colleges, three other Catholic colleges/universities, and two other private religious-based universities, and Kansas Regents Universities, and the University of Phoenix online.
- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: develop feeder connections through high schools; increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; build its liberal arts foundation; create partnerships with allied health; and foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.
- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.
- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as University of St. Mary'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>
7P1a	S	A process is in place that selects relevant data and manages the information for student learning, overall institutional objective strategies and improvement efforts for student assessment, teaching effectiveness,

faculty evaluations, annual reports and program reviews. Results are analyzed and used in the OGI phase of Ongoing Evaluation.

- 7P1b S The Assessment Committee, in collaboration with the faculty, constructed a Learning Framework Matrix that identifies data points for assessing learning outcomes, and faculty developed and use a rubric to generate student ratings for service learning.
- 7P2a S The AQIP Action Project for Data-based Decision Making examined current collections of information and needs using AQIP criteria, focusing on defining key indicators, streamlining processes for collecting and storing relevant data, and establishing reporting processes that allow access to information.
- 7P2b O Data collection and analysis appear to be done departmentally with little consistency across campus; open communication of data collection and analysis processes may lead to improved operations and development of a quality culture.
- 7P3a S USM collects a variety of data and compares results with similar data gathered from KICA, CIC, and peer institutions, and uses the results for completing longitudinal studies, for reporting to national bodies, and for improvement purposes.
- 7P3b S In setting priorities, USM tracks data over time and compares performance on key competitive indicators.
- 7P6 S The use of local experts as “module experts” helps to increase communication, decrease inter-unit conflict, and ensure data integrity within the institution.
- 7P7 S The Information Systems work order database, feedback from various users and the Assessment Committee identify processes needing improvement.
- 7R1 O USM may benefit from ongoing assessment of the institution’s systems for measuring effectiveness by continually seeking input from users to

- see if the processes are meeting their needs as well as the institution's needs.
- 7R2a S USM compares favorably with institutions of higher learning in education, nursing and business and was one of five institutions to receive the 2007 CHEA Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning, and received recognition by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.
- 7R2b O While the University reports positive results of benchmarking with peer institutions, comparison data is not provided.
- 7I1 S USM's On Going Improvement model provides a methodology for monitoring and improving its information systems. This consistent approach appears to ensure that issues are recognized and addressed.
- 7I2a O USM recognizes the need for a coordinating system for ongoing improvement projects so that the system of measurements becomes more relevant for the establishment of targets.
- 7I2b O As recommended by the Assessment Committee and USM's AQIP team, there is an opportunity to close the loop so there can be more effective planning of next steps in setting targets for improvement.

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1a The University of Saint Mary (USM) is a private, not-for-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The original campus of the university is located in Leavenworth on land first settled by the SCLs in 1870.
- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”
- O6a USM has a 200-acre campus with many original buildings (1870); there are 11 major academic buildings, many which require constant maintenance and upgrading. Most of the University has been upgraded from desks to tables to accommodate laptops. The Overland Park campus shares facilities with St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
- O7a USM operates in a highly competitive environment: over forty various institutions of higher education are represented in the greater Kansas City area. USM’s competitors include 17 two-year colleges, three other Catholic colleges/universities, and two other private religious-based universities, and Kansas Regents Universities, and the University of Phoenix online.

- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: develop feeder connections through high schools; increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; build its liberal arts foundation; create partnerships with allied health; and foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.
- O8b 61% of the USM community support the initiative to develop feeder connections through high schools; 56% believe name recognition needs to be increased; 54% support improving the appearance of USM's facilities. Continued support for the distance learning and extended site growth was also shown.
- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as University of St. Mary'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	USM's OnGoing Improvement model, which includes internal and external stakeholders, and relies on data collection, strategic planning, and vision statements, guides its initiatives.
8P2	S	Information gathering and a SWOT analysis led to key issues, including identification of institutional collaborations, and confirmed the current goals as appropriate to USM's development and to its maintaining stability.
8P3	S	USM's clear and explicit, seven-step process to develop action plans and revise goals, has led to the implementation of strategic initiatives.
8P4a	S	The Data-based Decision Making Action Project provides focus for USM as the institution continues its AQIP journey.

- 8P4b S The Jenzabar EX system has opened communications, defined the decision-making processes, and has enabled USM to systematize data reporting, identify indicators for institutional effectiveness, revise report tools and establish procedures in three primary areas which may be transferable to other initiatives.
- 8P4c S AQIP action projects leading to the fulfillment of its goals were based on the discussions of the institution as a whole, concerning the recommendations of its own subcommittees. The development of procedures for decision making derived from this effort and provided guidance outside it, specifically in “learning outcomes assessment, fiscal stability, and distance learning.” (p. 8-5)
- 8P4d O The diagram evidently intended to represent this process, Fig. 8-3, is not very helpful.
- 8P5a SS The cyclical OGI model is embedded in processes across decision-making systems and is effective in generating new action projects by the accomplishment of current ones.
- 8P5b S USM provides a clear process for disseminating strategic initiatives and action plans that includes a feedback loop through analysis.
- 8P6a S A balanced approach to resources is used, recognizing that a balance of fiscal needs and other objectives must be maintained.
- 8P7a S The use of professional development reports empowers individuals to control their professional growth while meeting institutional needs.
- 8P7b S Professional development is continually budgeted to ensure ongoing needs are met.
- 8P8 O The widespread use of the OGI model presents an opportunity for assessment of the model to identify what components work particularly well in this environment, and what steps may be taken to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the model.

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| 8R1, 8R2 | O | USM provides evidence of progress reports but does not have a formal process to measure the effectiveness of the plan against peers and aspirant peer institutions. Without such data, USM is in a position of isolation and cannot know if it is achieving success. |
| 8R2 | S | Clear goals for performance improvement are provided. |
| 8R3a | O | USM recognizes that certain performance indicators can be enhanced providing an opportunity for development within the institution. |
| 8R3b | S | USM's projections compare favorably with other higher education institutions. |
| 8R4 | S | USM has conducted internal Culture Surveys to confirm that the institution is supportive of the current action projects. |
| 8I1 | O | USM has structures in place to examine and improve its improvement processes, but does not yet have data to document improvement. |
| 8I2 | S | USM has systems in place to regularly report on the fulfillment of action plans and on its own critiques of the improvement process. |

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 University of St. Mary 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

- O1b USM views itself as an “applied liberal arts” institution whose educational philosophy to deliver active and experiential learning is aligned with their curricular directions that provide and include: (1) concrete and practical Applied Liberal Arts; (2) interdisciplinary, team-taught Freshman Learning Communities; (3) a Global Studies Institute; (4) a Service-Learning Program; (5) an online learning program; and (6) a Strategic Plan that builds on partnerships in allied health, especially the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Healthcare System.
- O1c USM takes its distinct character from the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Vincentian charism of the University’s sponsors and defines education as an act of charity, “serving others at the fullest points of their needs.” “The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse background to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.”
- O1d USM serves varying populations, including residential and commuter students and traditional as well as non-traditional aged students and maintains multiple educational sites for adult and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students to take courses in Kansas City, Shawnee Mission and Overland Park.
- O2b In addition to North Central accreditation, USM’s specialty programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), and state approved programs in nursing through the Kansas Board of Nursing and in education through the Kansas State Department of Education.
- O4a Collaborations and partnerships which are in place locally, regionally and nationally include: connections with SAKAE Institute (Japan and China, Marketing and Recruitment); Cristo-Rey (SCL-sponsored high school for underrepresented youth); Kaufmann Foundation (Partnership for USM summer Latino Academy); Mathematics, Engineering, Technology and Science Consortium (USM Latino Academy); Articulation Agreements with Area Community Colleges; Leavenworth and St. Thomas Aquinas High Schools Dual Enrollment Programs; Service Learning/AmeriCorps/ VISTA/Campus Compact.

- O8a Potential opportunities USM has identified are: develop feeder connections through high schools; increase name recognition; to undertake initiatives to improve the appearance of USM's facilities; continue to develop a regionally recognized nursing program; build its liberal arts foundation; create partnerships with allied health; and foster financial stewardship to promote and enhance its reputation and academic excellence.
- O8C Potential vulnerabilities USM has identified are: fiscal stability related to market and larger economic fluctuations; facility upkeep; enrollment management; market mandates for services; and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract new faculty as benchmarked to the Kansas Council of Independent Colleges salaries.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
9P1a	SS	USM engages in an annual review of partnerships, and has clearly identified collaborations in which it is engaged, and has prioritized those stakeholders, in terms of their consistency with USM's strategic plan, and, where relevant, USM's student learning objectives.
9P1b	S	USM recognizes that personal contact is crucial to enrollment growth, and has established a good presence in the community. Relationships with other institutions are created and nurtured in a variety of different ways.
9P2	S	USM uses data and measures to assure that the needs of the partnerships are fulfilled by conducting market and environmental scans, by adherence to the details of all arrangements, and by monitoring its own ethical behaviors.
9P3	S	USM's Mission Council plans specific interventions and activities to bring together individuals across all units to break down silos and to keep the USM community focused on mission.

- 9P4 O There may be an opportunity for more direct measures of external relationships and for ensuring that partner institutions' goals are met.
- 9R1a S Fundraising results are examined for amounts, number of donors, participation in events, and the number of volunteers. Data indicates a modestly growing participation in internships, practica, field experiences, and service learning, and a healthy relationship with feeder institutions.
- 9R1b S In keeping with its mission, USM seems to have collected significant data on its alumni and their interaction with the university through internships, service learning, practica, and field experience.
- 9R2 O Establishing a method of collecting and tracking comparative data in this area is a current project.
- 9I1 O USM is able to document partnership activities but not yet able to assess their quality in a systematic or uniform matter.
- 9I2 S In their quarterly reports, USM vice-presidents document current information concerning the status of all enterprises, including the satisfactory or unsatisfactory nature of current collaborative partnerships.