

February 18, 2013

Diane M. Steele President University of Saint Mary 4100 S. 4th St. Trafficway Leavenworth, KS 66048-5082

Dear President Steele:

Enclosed is a copy of University of Saint Mary's *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* in response to the Systems Portfolio submitted under our new process guidelines. You will note that while the format of the report is similar, it is structured differently than earlier Appraisal Reports. We hope you are pleased with the changes. We are also sending your institution's Accreditation Liaison a copy.

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

We ask that you formally acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Your response will become part of your institution's permanent HLC file. Please email your response to AQIP@hlcommission.org. Sincerely,

Mary L. Green

AQIP Process Administrator

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the Systems Portfolio of

University of Saint Mary Leavenworth, Kansas

February 14, 2013



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SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

In response to the Systems Portfolio of UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY



February 14, 2013

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ELEMENTS OF University of Saint Mary's FEEDBACK REPORT

Welcome to the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. This report provides AQIP's official response to an institution's *Systems Portfolio* by a team of peer reviewers (the Systems Appraisal Team). After the team independently reviews the institution's portfolio, it reaches consensus on essential elements of the institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by AQIP Category, and any significant issues related to accreditation. These are then presented in three sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*: "Strategic Challenges Analysis," "AQIP Category Feedback," and "Accreditation Issues Analysis." These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating institutional performance, surfacing critical issues or accreditation concerns, and assessing institutional performance. Ahead of these three areas, the team provides a "Reflective Introduction" followed closely by an "Executive Summary." The appraisal concludes with commentary on the overall quality of the report and advice on using the report. Each of these areas is overviewed below.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team has only the institution's *Systems Portfolio* to guide its analysis of the institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently the team's report may omit important strengths, particularly if the institution were too modest to stress them or if discussion or documentation of these areas in the *Systems Portfolio* were presented minimally. Similarly the team may point out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving wide-spread institutional attention. Indeed it is possible that some areas recommended for potential improvement have since become strengths rather than opportunities through the institution's ongoing efforts. Recall that the overarching goal of the Systems Appraisal Team is to provide an institution with the best possible advice for ongoing improvement.

The various sections of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report can be described as follows:

Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary: In this first section of the System's Appraisal Feedback Report, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: 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 each AQIP Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

Strategic Challenges Analysis: Strategic challenges are those most closely related to an institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Teams formulate judgments related to strategic challenges and accreditation issues (discussed below) through careful analysis of the Organizational Overview included in the institution's Systems Portfolio and through the team's own feedback provided for each AQIP Category. These collected findings offer a framework for future improvement of processes and systems.

AQIP Category Feedback: The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report addresses each AQIP Category by identifying (and also coding) 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. Through comments, which are keyed to the institution's Systems Portfolio, the team offers brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by AQIP Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is often considered the heart of the Feedback Report.

Accreditation Issues Analysis: Accreditation issues are areas where an institution may have not yet provided sufficient evidence that it meets the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. It is also possible that the evidence provided suggests to the team that the institution may have difficulties, whether at present or in the future, in satisfying the *Criteria*. As with strategic challenges, teams formulate judgments related to accreditation issues through close analysis of the entire Systems Portfolio with particular attention given to the evidence that the institution provides for satisfying the various HLC Core Components of the *Criteria*. For purposes of consistency, AQIP instructs appraisal teams to identify any accreditation issue as a strategic challenge as well.

Quality of Report & Its Use: As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the organization by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative that the *Portfolio* be fully

developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

The following consensus statement from the System Appraisal Team's review of the institution's *Systems Portfolio Overview* and its introductions to the nine AQIP Categories. The purpose of this section is simply to highlight the team's broad understanding of the institution, its mission, and the constituents that is serves.

Overall Team Consensus Reflection Statement

University of Saint Mary (USM) is a small, private, non-profit, Catholic, co-educational university sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). The University serves 1200 traditional undergraduate residential and commuter students, post-baccalaureate accelerated BSN and Doctorate in PT students, and non-traditional adult learners on three sites as well as online across the U.S. The character of USM comes from the SCL who see education as "serving others at the fullest points of their needs." The mission states that USM "educates students of diverse backgrounds to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well-being of global society." The 2011 Strategic Plan is built on three commitments: develop healthcare as a niche for the University; improve retention and graduation rates; and improve facilities and technology.

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

USM demonstrates effective, systematic approaches that are responsive to the basic
requirements of the Criteria for Accreditation, but some areas and units are in the early stages
of deploying these processes. There was no evidence that the data collected were analyzed and
the results used for program improvement.

Also, although USM detects and address differences in students' learning styles through Faculty Institutes, department in-service, professional development workshops and conferences, it is unclear whether these avenues are available to adjuncts and part-time faculty

that teach in various programs at the institution. It is also unclear how faculty members detect and address differences in student's learning styles. As the number of adjuncts increase, focusing attention on their professional development needs might generate value-added instruction for the institution.

USM has created a culture of infrastructure where faculty, staff and administrators work together to identify areas of need. This is due in part to the OGI model, in which strategic initiatives are aligned with goals. This model has helped faculty and staff identify areas for improvement with regard to student and program goals. These efforts position the University to move to more substantive and meaningful assessment as well as to analysis that is predictive. As these processes mature, the comparative, trend data that are being collected will be useful in understanding ways to improve student learning.

- USM demonstrates early stages of developing and implementing approaches to the basic requirements of the Criteria for Accomplishing other Distinctive Objectives. USM has created a comprehensive service learning program that aligns with its mission and helps to imbed the University's values across the community. USM has identified the need for a systematic approach to collecting data on the service learning outcomes. It is recognized by USM that the focus on service is difficult to quantify. By standardizing outcomes, goals, and meaningful data sources across the institution, USM could quantify and, therefore demonstrate, the effectiveness of the focus on service.
- USM demonstrates early stages of developing and implementing approaches to the basic
 requirements of the criteria for understanding students' and stakeholders' needs. Deployment
 of approaches to measurement, assessment, and improvement is lagging and inhibiting
 progress. Opportunities exist for obtaining and reporting results for student engagement in
 spiritually enhancing experiences and service, particularly to improve connections between
 students and USM's mission and the distinctive objective of service.
- USM demonstrates early stages of developing and implementing approaches to the basic
 requirements of the Criteria for valuing people. USM has made progress in this category
 through the hiring of a Director of Human Resources. The Director of HR is ensuring that
 consistent employee reviews are conducted yearly using the SMART method. A new
 emergency alert system was launched in August 2011 that incorporated text messaging and
 email. The creation of Action Projects also demonstrates that USM is focusing on this area for

improvement.

However, it is unclear that USM's processes for valuing people are effective. Providing results that demonstrate the effectiveness of the AQIP Action Project to improve employee compensation and benefit programs will enable USM's senior leaders to make fact-based decisions to improve the University's ability to hire, retain, and reward its workforce in ways that demonstrate a commitment to valuing people.

- USM has made improvements in the area of leading and communicating. With the improvements that have been made, USM now has an opportunity to achieve the next level of maturity in the implementation of this Category. It may choose to include all stakeholders in the strategic planning process and in the evaluation of the mission and values of the institution. There is an opportunity to share evidence that demonstrates leadership effectiveness or satisfaction levels among stakeholders. Involvement of more stakeholders in creative ways through varied communication, particularly about the mission may move USM towards excellence in both leadership and communication.
- USM continues to improve its processes for supporting institutional operations. The institution has identified the administrative support service needs of faculty, staff and administrators. The Administrative Council (AC), Board of Trustees (BOT), faculty and staff are involved in planning and implementation of the strategic plan. The AC meets regularly to discuss major projects and resource issues for the University. USM is working on identifying metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of its support systems. Opportunities exist to analyze retention and graduation rates for continued improvement.
- The University has become more conscious of the significance of data and the importance of analyzing results and developing plans and targets based on analysis. The institution has hired an institutional researcher which should position it better to present and use data more effectively. The institution might consider how it can present sample data in the Results and Improvement sections of the Portfolio so that its use is more clearly understood.
- USM demonstrates early stages of developing and implementing approaches to the basic requirements of the Criteria for planning continuous improvement. Two steps in USM's OGI model—action and implementation (AI), and ongoing evaluation (OGE)—comprise the University's processes for developing, implementing, tracking, and evaluating action plans. Results for effective processes and improvements to approaches for strategic planning and

performance improvement show opportunities to improve identification of relevant measures and comparisons to enhance organizational learning through the use of meaningful data. The lack of performance projections and targets for measures related to planning continuous improvement might reflect the absence of a vision statement that describes the University's focus for the future and expectations of high performance. Missing results for measures that demonstrate performance improvement reflect USM's beginning level of maturity in refining processes based upon cycles of organizational and personal learning. USM's OGI model, its commitment to its mission, and work on developing key data and targets demonstrate the University's emerging processes to create a systematic planning process for continuous improvement.

• The University recognizes it needs to continually work to establish a more standardized and systematic process to evaluate the effectiveness of its partnerships and to obtain comparative benchmark data related to its partnerships. It may be helpful for the institution to clearly document how goals for collaborations and partnerships are identified, what those goals are, what data are used to measure success and what changes or improvements were made based upon those specific objectives. The University has an opportunity to fully integrate these processes and systems throughout all levels and departments, ensuring that data is used for continuous improvement. Quantifying the benefits provided by the partners will help USM better understand the value of the relationships.

Note: Strategic challenges and accreditation issues are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the Systems Appraisal Team attempted to identify the broader issues that would seem to present the greatest challenges and opportunities for the institution in the coming years. These areas are ones that the institution should address as it seeks to become the institution it wants to be. From these the institution may discover its immediate priorities as well as shaping strategies for long-term performance improvement. These items may also serve as the basis for future activities and projects that satisfy other AQIP requirements. The team also considered whether any of these challenges put the institution at risk of not meeting the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. That portion of the team's work is presented later in this report.

Knowing that **University of Saint Mary** will discuss these strategic challenges, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified the following:

- Effective Data Use and Reporting: Benefit might be derived from addressing several issues related to data. First, there is a lack of results in the Systems Portfolio that depict any trending, segmentation, and overall performance. For example, a chart or graph that highlights the performance for several years might provide the examiners and key institutional employees and stakeholders with actionable information. Second, collecting, graphing, and using comparative data might provide the institution the ability to measure its performance against similar (or different) types of institutions. When the University does provide such comparative data, it is unclear how it uses this information. Third, in the "Improvement" sections of the Portfolio, it is unclear how data help drive processes toward continuous quality improvement and how data are used to set targets for improvement. Further, USM's discussion of measurement and analysis might more clearly include alignment of key processes and measures with the three commitments of its strategic plan. Aligning key performance measures and indicators with strategic objectives, relevant comparative data, and timeframes for completion may help to ensure that USM's senior leaders are able to make fact-based decisions to ensure the institution's future.
- Assessment of Service Learning: It is clear that service learning and campus ministry are significant to the mission of the institution. However, it is unclear that USM has a systematic approach to achieving consensus within its culture and community with regard to creating processes and assessment for service. Specifically, USM has found it difficult to create processes and assessments for service due to resistance to "measuring [its] efforts to live the gospel" and "reducing [its] service to neighbor in God's name to a rubric," and a reluctance on the part of Campus Ministry to measure outcomes of direct service to the poor. Further, it is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to measure, evaluate, and improve the outcomes of each of its four categories of service (individual faculty/staff/student, campus ministry service, athletic service, and service learning). Performance results are focused on numbers of students and hours of service. Perhaps data that exhibit the value of service to students as part of their learning process would be more instructive, particularly since such service is a significant part of USM's culture and purpose. Similarly, it is unclear that USM uses

systematic processes to help ensure that the University serves its partners in ways that both USM and its partners value. Creating standardized outcomes for service opportunities with external stakeholders can strengthen the impact of these programs. Without systematic approaches to measuring outcomes of activities in each of the four identified categories of service, USM may be limited in its ability to identify and promote service as its distinctive objective, as indicated in the University's mission.

- **Stakeholders' Needs Data:** USM reports no results or comparative data that address processes for understanding student or stakeholder needs. It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to determine the needs, interests, expectations, requirements, and abilities of its various student segments and groups (e.g., traditional, online, full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, first-generation, minority, transfer). Also, USM does not identify key measures to analyze the current and changing needs of these student segments and groups. For example, no measures are provided for support services that align with each of the three commitments of USM's strategic plan: USM's health care programs; supporting students in activities related to improving retention and graduation rates; and supporting students in relation to enhancing facilities and technologies to promote future growth of USM's programs and services. Without measures/indicators for student support services that align with the university's strategic commitments and objectives, USM's senior leaders may be limited in their ability to make information-based decisions related to the University's sustainability. Further, USM may be hampered in its efforts to evaluate and improve its performance or set targets in relation to its mission to educate students of diverse backgrounds to realize their potential, and prepare these students for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well-being of the global society.
- System-wide Processes: Although the OGI model has been in use at USM prior to the last system portfolio, its use in some areas of the University, for example in Athletics and planning for professional development, is limited. Further, in the "Planning for Continuous Improvement" Category, the University describes its Ongoing Evaluation (OGE) model as one of the steps in the OGI model. The University might benefit from clearly delineating key systems and processes and then making transparent the data used at each point in the process and the decisions/actions that resulted. Specifically, University of Saint Mary might enhance

its work by ensuring that all processes of the OGI model are deployed consistently and transparently across the institution instead of in just a few organizational units.

AQIP CATEGORY FEEDBACK

In the following section, the Systems Appraisal Team delineates institutional strengths along with opportunities for improvement within the nine AQIP Categories. As explained above, the symbols used in this section are **SS** for outstanding strength, **S** for strength, **O** for opportunity for improvement, and **OO** for outstanding opportunity for improvement. The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the team members and deserves the institution's 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: This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 1.

The USM culture has grown in alignment by using the Ongoing Improvement (OGI) model which links strategic initiatives and annual goals to mission, research, collaborations, actions, evaluation, and improvement and utilizes a data-based, collaborative decision-making approach. Using this model, USM has adopted and designed three measures to assess student learning. The internal measure assesses student learning in light of objectives set university-wide (ULOs) and correlates directly to the external measure of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The third assessment, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) measures student attitudes and practices about learning. USM

uses systematic processes for designing new academic programming and monitoring the effectiveness of current programming.

1P1-1P2, SS. USM's mission and strategic direction guide the faculty, administrators and the Board of Trustees in determining the common or shared objectives for learning and development. The institution uses the Ongoing Improvement model to link initiatives and the annual goals to the mission. The Applied Liberal Arts curriculum is built on five "Areas of Investigation." The Assessment Committee converted eight University Learning Outcomes into four more manageable objective statements, based on what was learned at a Higher Learning Commission workshop. Faculty, administrators, and the Board of Trustees were involved in adopting the new outcomes.

1P3-1P4, O. SWOT analyses are done prior to the creation of new programs at USM. While the creation of new programs is done strategically with an eye to risks and benefits, there is little evidence that USM is comparing its programs to competitors. In addition, it is unclear what role faculty play in this process, which may be beneficial since faculty interact with students and other external stakeholders on an ongoing basis. Typically, programs are designed to meet career and employer needs. To demonstrate a commitment to strategic planning, USM could further engage key stakeholders in the planning.

1P6, S. USM has created an Academic Resource Center (ARC) for the purpose of aiding incoming students to be better prepared for coursework. An AQIP Action Project was also created to better support and mentor entry-level students.

1P7, O. Academic advisors, along with the Career Center and Campus Counseling, provide guidance through regularly scheduled meetings to assist students in making positive academic and career choices. A Student Success office also has been established to assist students. An opportunity to evaluate the success of the Student Success office exists as well as an opportunity to develop systematic processes to determine the needs, interests, and abilities of its various student segments (e.g., traditional, online, full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, first-generation, minority, transfer). Without a systematic process to determine students' needs, interests, and abilities, it is not apparent how the University effectively aligns student support services with the varying needs of its student population.

1P8, O. USM is implementing processes to assist students so that they are academically successful based upon the institution's recognition of "the relationship between lack of

preparation and lack of success." It is unclear, however, that the institution uses effective processes to assess data related to students' academic preparation in order to determine effective approaches to improving students' academic success. Without systematic approaches to select, collect, analyze, and align data and information about student preparedness with measures and indicators of student success, the institution may be limited in its ability to succeed with initiatives such as the First-Year Experience program and the Early Alert and Intervention System.

1P10, S. USM recognizes and individually addresses issues related to the following subgroups: those with disabilities, athletes, commuters, and military. The Academic Resource Center has a significant role in supporting all students.

1P11, O. USM has adopted and designed three measures to assess student learning. The internal measures (ULOs) assess student learning in light of objectives set university-wide and correlates directly to the external measure of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The third assessment, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), is an indirect measure. As these are new processes, the opportunity exists for analyzing data to make data-based decisions to improve student learning. In addition, USM might implement proactive faculty training to assist faculty in staying abreast of the latest developments in the field of instruction.

1P16, O. USM co-curricular and curricular goals are aligned with curricular departmental goals. USM has a Vice President of Student Life who joined the University assessment committee to participate in aligning curricular and co-curricular learning experiences and to ensure an integrated, comprehensive system for assessing ULOs. But, beyond service learning and the PBL that offers actual business experience, there are not many examples in which co-curricular development is linked with curriculum. USM has an opportunity to create more opportunities within its programs to align co-curricular and curricular goals.

1P18, O. While there are multiple measures in place to determine student development expectations, such as licensure pass rates and employment levels, there are no consistent assessments of student success in achieving course learning outcomes. Creating standardized rubrics for the ULOs that can be used across the institution may ensure a more valid and reliable assessment of student learning of the four ULOs.

1R1, O. Although the portfolio lists several measures of student learning and development, the University has the opportunity to show how the measures address all of the expected learning

objectives and to demonstrate how the data are tied to strategic planning and budgeting. By having a consistent process in place, USM may use the assessment data to affect curricular and programmatic change.

1R3, O. USM has adopted a number of instruments for assessing learning objectives. However, USM does not provide any data from these assessments, nor does the institution demonstrate how it trends the data and uses such information to develop corrective actions. USM does not provide any indication that the institution sets targets for improved results.

1R4, 1R6, O. The University lists an array of testing efforts. However, it is difficult to determine how the University uses the information because results are not provided in the portfolio. The processes and decision making would be clearer if USM showed trended data and described the ways data are used to make corrective actions and set targets for success.

112, O. This section focuses on target setting, but the University does not demonstrate such planning with appropriate data displayed in meaningful graphs or grids. While data have been provided throughout the Category, more focused analysis might give meaning to the data.

AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives: This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the institution's character, it examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 2.

USM, informed by the missions of the SCL and the gospel, has identified service as its distinctive objective. The University sponsors four categories of service: individual, campus ministry, and athletics—each of which is a form of volunteerism—and service learning which is centered in academics.

2P1, S. USM accomplishes its distinctive objectives through focus on service. Service is embedded in the institution's culture through the collective efforts and activities of the employees, students, the campus ministry, athletic department and service learning as integral to the curriculum. Various departments promote service and engage their students in service

learning. The Coaching staff manages service opportunities and the campus ministry emphasizes the gospel mandate of meeting the needs of others, consistent with the mission of Sisters of Charity. Work is accomplished through stable, well-designed processes that benefit the institution, constituents and the community.

- **2P2, O.** It is unclear how USM assesses the impact of the Campus Ministry or Athletic Program Ministry. Specifically, it is not apparent that USM uses systematic processes for assessing and interpreting the outcomes for service. Creating standardized outcomes for service opportunities with external stakeholders may strengthen the impact of these programs.
- **2P4, OO.** The OGI model, in use at USM prior to the last system portfolio to link strategic initiatives and annual goals to mission, research, collaborations, actions, evaluation, and improvement, it has only been utilized in one year to assess service learning. The Campus Ministry assesses and reviews each service activity using the model and "after action" meetings. Athletics has yet to develop a clear process for collecting and analyzing its data. Since one of the institution's priorities is service, it is unclear how the University assesses the effectiveness of the services it provides which might enable the institution to communicate its distinctive accomplishments to both the internal and external stakeholders.
- **2P5, O.** USM depends on their faculty who teach service learning courses to communicate their needs directly to the coordinator. Campus Ministry and the Department of Athletics communicate their needs to Vice President of Student Life. There are opportunities to be systematic in this process by conducting surveys, analyzing the data and the results to make informed decision regarding faculty and staff needs relative to the objectives and operations.
- **2R1, O.** USM provides limited evidence to demonstrate that service objectives were accomplished. This presents opportunities for identifying specific outputs across all variants of service and for creating rubrics for evaluating satisfaction and personal development comments. The University might also find it useful to examine the SSI and NSSE for questions that apply to service activities and to research the work done by AACU through the Liberal Education America's Promise (LEAP) initiative on assessing civic engagement.
- **2R2-2R3, OO.** USM has the opportunity to quantify how the "commitment to service" helps students in developing an enhanced sense of social responsibility and to expand the processes for these categories of service for systemically collecting information, assessment data, and data that measure the effects of service on retention, success, and satisfaction.

2I1-2I2, O. USM is engaging in more evaluation of how well service is achieving its goals, in limited areas of numbers of hours, for example; there remains little indication how the institution uses collected data to create assessment plans for how it establishes targets for growth and improvement measures.

AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs: This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 3.

USM's primary stakeholders are students. Other key internal stakeholders are faculty and staff, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the Board of Trustees, and parents of students. USM classifies external stakeholders as "Collaborative Partners." These include donors, governmental and regulatory bodies, Sisters of Charity Health System, Community Partners, transfer institutions, and the distance-learning partner.

- **3P1, S.** USM is in varying stages of gathering information on evaluating the needs of its students and other stakeholders. Its methods of data acquisition vary according to the targeted student population, the site of instruction or delivery method. The University has just begun using the NSSE survey to evaluate student satisfaction. USM has demonstrated that it is committed to educational improvement through its focus on retention, persistence and overall graduation rates. It uses a variety of methods for understanding student needs, including surveys, dialogue and retention rates.
- **3P2, S.** Through the site directors, faculty, and orientation leaders, USM has an anecdotal understanding of the needs of its new and transfer students. Relationships are built with students early on and are continued through to graduation.
- **3P3 3P4, O.** USM has a process for analyzing the needs of key stakeholder groups such as parents and the sponsors. A formalized process for internal stakeholders, such as faculty and staff, might be developed through a needs assessment and analysis.

- **3P5, S.** USM identifies a variety of means of targeting stakeholder groups with education offerings and services that are based on the University's purpose of educating students to realize their God-given potential and preparing them for value-centered lives and careers to serve global society. Some of the tools used for this process are following national job market trends, obtaining data from Deltak, and collaborating in relationships with various groups.
- **3R1 3R6, OO.** The University has some foundational data for measuring satisfaction and analyzing results of the measures. However, in many cases, the institution is depending on anecdotal evidence. The University has an opportunity to leverage an effective approach to selecting, collecting, and analyzing satisfaction data, and improving processes for increasing student and stakeholder satisfaction. This might be achieved by identifying a department that already uses an effective process that may then be utilized by the organization to leverage that particular approach throughout the institution.
- **3R2 3R3, S.** Satisfaction results for nonacademic services, online students, and residential students are reported as high. Additionally, The Princeton Review ranked USM as a Best Midwestern College. The Maxient System has shown no student dissatisfaction. A high majority of students surveyed report faculty members as being accessible and supportive.
- **3R5, OO.** Based upon results of the 2012 NSSE survey (Link1R2-3: USM NSSE Results), only 33% of first-year students frequently engage in spiritually enhancing experiences such as worship, meditation, and prayer, and only 47% of USM students participate in community service or volunteer work by the time they are seniors. Based upon these NSSE results, evidence shows that USM has opportunities to improve processes for building relationships with students that link students with the institution's distinctive objective of service, as derived from the educational mission of the SCL.
- **312, O.** It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to collect, analyze, and align data and information gathered in town hall meetings and informal exchanges of information with students and stakeholders. Because these town hall meetings and informal exchanges are a primary means of communication with on-campus students, faculty, and staff, the design and deployment of systematic processes for collecting data and information may help to enhance the quality and quantity of relevant, timely, and actionable data related to student satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, the use of social media and Web-based technologies to engage non-traditional, online students and stakeholders may help to ensure that the University

effectively addresses the needs, expectations, and requirements of this population.

AQIP Category 4: Valuing People: This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 4.

USM's mission and core values of community, respect, justice, and excellence inform the workplace environment and provide guidance for how the institution values people. Systematic processes for valuing people were established through two Action Projects: Improving Employee Compensation and Benefits Program, and Developing a Client Service Improvement Plan. The hiring of a human resources director is a key recent action in valuing people. The director will establish comprehensive standardized processes for staff performance appraisals and develop a plan for university-wide professional development training.

- **4P1-4P2, S.** The University of Saint Mary hires faculty who are appropriately credentialed at all levels and for delivery of classes on ground and online. USM uses a well-defined industry-common hiring process, often including national searches. USM has hired a Director of Human Resources who provides support for the search process and who is standardizing job descriptions and ensuring that job descriptions exist for each position.
- **4P3, O.** It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to recruit, hire, place, and retain members of its workforce. Specifically, it is not apparent that USM's recruiting protocols help to ensure that its workforce represents the diversity of its student and stakeholder community. Approaches to recruiting, hiring, placing, and retaining a diverse workforce may help to ensure that USM is able to fulfill its mission to serve students of diverse backgrounds "at the fullest points of their needs."
- **4P7, O.** It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to help ensure the legal and ethical behaviors of all members of its workforce. In particular, it is unclear how the organization's

senior leaders' actions and the actions of the USM Board of Trustees demonstrate their commitment to legal and ethical behavior and to promoting an environment that requires it. It is not apparent how the USM Mission Council promotes ethical behavior by reinforcing values of community, respect, justice, excellence, and Catholic Social Teachings. Further, it is unclear how members of the USM Board of Trustees evaluate their understanding and implementation of the University's ethical practices and processes.

- **4R2, O.** It is unclear that USM's processes for valuing people are effective. Specifically, results are not provided that demonstrate the effectiveness of the AQIP Action Project to improve employee compensation and benefit programs (launched 2/14/2007 and completed in 2010) on reducing turnover and increasing workforce satisfaction. Results are not provided that demonstrate the effectiveness of faculty promotion and tenure processes and the impact of adjusting compensation to improve USM's competitiveness in the marketplace for hiring faculty and staff. Without such data, USM's senior leaders may be limited in their ability to make fact-based decisions to improve the University's ability to hire, retain, and reward its workforce in ways that demonstrate a commitment to valuing people.
- **4R3, OO.** USM mentions several surveys for evaluating satisfaction as well as describing several other measures such as participation data. Here is an opportunity to show trend data and demonstrate improvement by comparing the latest measures with measures over time. This also is an opportunity to describe targets for future events or satisfaction. Also, while the number of participants in an event offers a starting point for measuring success, the University has the opportunity to conduct event evaluation surveys completed by attendees.
- **412, O.** USM noted it strives for improvement in a number of areas. The University has the opportunity to monitor progress through meaningful comparisons with peer institutions. This may enable the University to set targets in service satisfaction, attendance, training, and employee satisfaction.

AQIP Category 5: Leading and Communicating: This category addresses how the institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide planning, decision-making, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction-setting, use of data,

analysis of results, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for **University of Saint Mary** for Category 5.

The University maintains strong communication across all units that centers around the Strategic Plan, mission, and values, while staying focused on student learning. USM involves representatives from all campus constituencies through cross-functional teams, task forces, and committees for informed decision-making.

- **5P1a, S.** The University ensures that the practices of its leadership system at all institutional levels are aligned by focusing on the mission, core values, and the implementation and assessment of the Strategic Plan. USM also ensures leadership through the ongoing improvement (OGI) process. The mission is reviewed on a regular basis and despite many changes at the institution, the mission has been constant. As a foundational document, the mission is prominently displayed and consistently promulgated.
- **5P1b, O.** USM provides a comprehensive list of entities that it includes in the channels of communication and oversight by a list of accreditation bodies. USM has the opportunity to expand this list by including all stakeholders, including community partners or allies. Such a list might also be enhanced by inclusion of the Alumni organization. Including external stakeholders in the review of the mission and values may help USM ensure it is truly serving the needs of the community.
- **5P2, S.** The strategic planning process provides USM the opportunity to set direction in alignment with the mission, vision, and commitment to high performance. The ongoing improvement model guides the institution in this process. The broad-based faculty, staff and administrative involvement likely encouraged better decisions and strengthened the team's activities and initiatives. This culture of involvement drew on the expertise and practical experience of those people closest to the situation which aligned with the AQIP principles of high performing organizations.
- **5P3, O.** It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to articulate its mission and values publically to key partners, suppliers, and stakeholders. For example, it is not evident how USM articulates its mission and values to parents of students, collaborative partners (e.g., donors and contributors), governmental and regulatory bodies (e.g., HLC, USDE, CHEA, KSDE, NCATE, IACBE, CAHIIM, KSBN, CCNE, CAPTE, BSRB KPTA), transfer

institutions, and Deltak. Without systematic processes to communicate its mission and values to key partners, suppliers, and stakeholders, USM may be limited in its ability to ensure that these stakeholders understand, support, and sustain the university's purpose and values.

- **5P5, S.** USM decisions are guided by the mission and the strategic plan using the OGI model. Problems are analyzed and solutions discovered at the level where activities are implemented. Cross-functional teams are used and academic governance utilizes the decision-making process that originates in various committees. An example is the cross-functional task force developed to understand the effect of the new session start calendar. By being systemic in its decision that is guided by the mission and core values using the OGI framework, the institution ensures that its decision-making follows a logical and best practices approach.
- **5P9, O.** The Institution offers tuition remission for employees, and budgets are available for a variety of professional development opportunities. It is unclear how the process for accessing development funds is communicated to stakeholders. For example, it is not evident how members of the workforce access professional development funds made available by the Administrative Council, nor is it evident how members of the workforce engage in USM's strategic planning process and the design, implementation, and analysis of AQIP action projects and outcomes. Systematic processes for engaging all stakeholders in the University's leadership system may help to ensure effective succession planning and sustainability.
- **5R1, O.** Several methods are listed as evidence of collecting and analyzing performance measures, including AQIP Strategy Forums and faculty/staff cultural surveys. How these are analyzed as measures of leading and communicating is unclear. For example, no results are provided:
 - o for measures/indicators of faculty and staff compliance with contractual obligations and upholding USM's standards for legal and ethical behavior;
 - that indicate students' understanding and compliance with the code of conduct described in the Student Handbook;
 - o that indicate new employees' understanding and compliance with the mission, values, and regulations described in faculty/staff handbooks, nor are results provided that indicate the understanding and compliance of members of the Board of Trustees with USM's mission, values and strategic plan;

 that indicate outcomes of faculty and student recognition and reward (e.g., Sullivan Award, Ancilla Award, Caritas award).

Results that demonstrate the effectiveness of such leadership processes might help senior leaders make fact-based decisions about opportunities for improvement to leadership and communication processes.

5R2, O. USM provides anecdotal indicators that are positive, but there is an opportunity to develop formal processes for measuring effectiveness in leading and communicating. By gathering and analyzing data on key performance measures, USM might improve its processes as well as benchmark against other institutions, thus enabling a more complete understanding of its degree of success.

511 – **512**, **O.** USM has access to the NSSE and the SSI that may provide the institution with metrics that measure student engagement and satisfaction with leadership. There are questions, especially in the SSI, which provide insight into students' perception of and satisfaction with administration. A national benchmarked survey of campus climate or employee engagement might also provide useful data. USM has an opportunity to delve into the data provided by these tools to create data-driven practices that may inform processes for improving leadership and communication.

AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations: This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 6.

Institutional operations are supported by offices focused on student support services, administrative support offices (such as, but not limited to, the business office), and administrative support.

6P1, S. USM has established processes for identifying the support service needs of students and key stakeholder groups. Prominent among them are testing/tutoring assistance, CARE program, BOT evaluations, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth inputs and various surveys.

Using various means to identify the support service needs of students enables the institution to be responsive to the changing needs and conditions that lead to transformation to a higher level of effectiveness.

- **6P2, S.** USM utilizes methods for identifying administrative support service needs. Faculty and staff are involved in various levels of discussion regarding the strategic planning and other budget processes. USM benchmarks various data points with like institutions, and the AC meets regularly to discuss major projects and resource issues for the University.
- **6P2, O.** It is unclear how USM determines the administrative support service needs of its faculty, staff, and administrators. Specifically, it is unclear that USM segments its workforce to identify the needs, expectations, and requirements of its various groups and segments (e.g., education levels, key elements of engagement in accomplishing USM's mission and vision). It is also unclear how USM's leaders communicate with and engage the entire workforce to encourage frank, two-way communications throughout the organization. Without processes to understand the needs, expectations, and requirements of workforce groups and segments and without processes to encourage effective communication at all levels of the organization, USM may be limited in its ability to engage and develop its workforce to achieve its strategic objectives.
- **6P3, S.** Comprehensive processes are in place for supporting key practices that contribute to safety, including an Emergency Management Team, an Emergency Management Plan, an Emergency Response Guide, security plan, and coordination with area public safety agencies.
- **6P4, S.** USM uses an approach to performance improvement to help ensure that key student, administrative, and organizational support service processes address the strategic plan commitment "to take steps to improve retention and graduation rates by improving academic success." Specifically, the cross-functional Process Improvement Team—incorporating Lean Thinking—coordinates efforts that impact multiple departments.
- **6R1, S.** USM collects and analyzes various measures of student support services. Administrative and institutional support services analyzed include budget, financial reports, audit reports, new hires orientation survey, tuition remission, faculty development funds, employee exit surveys and work orders.
- **6R2, O.** USM has focused on a number of important metrics. For example, measures and indicators are provided that show outcomes for supporting students enrolled in USM's health

care programs; for supporting students in activities related to improving retention and graduation rates; as well as those that show outcomes for supporting students in relation to enhancing facilities and technologies to promote future growth of USM's programs and services. USM shares retention information comparing four-year graduation rates from 2006, 2007, and 2008. The data show graduation rates lower than the 2006 rates in 2008 after nearly doubling in 2007. The institution has the opportunity to determine possible explanations for these changes and to develop action plans to address them.

- **6R3, S.** USM's financial condition has improved resulting in a decrease in the operating budget deficit of prior years. The endowment has experienced growth at the end of fiscal year 2012. Tuition remission for employees and graduate assistants totaled \$275,070.00 in 2011-2012.
- **6R5, O.** USM compares its performance to the KICA, CIS, and HLC ratios to the stated desired range for three primary ratios. However, the results of the comparison as related to supporting institutional operations were not provided in this category. Analyzing the results might provide the USM insight into where the University might focus its improvement efforts.
- **611, S.** USM has taken steps recently to improve the support of operations, such as hiring the Director of HR and creating the Process Improvement Team. Several improvements are noted, including but not limited to, an Action Project to assess the role of the Academic Resource Center (ARC), resulting in significant improvements in ARC and programs for improving student services. Key improvement areas are communicated at the BOT meetings.

AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness: This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 7.

USM has improved the alignment of its processes with the mission, Strategic Plan, and the Ongoing Improvement (OGI) model. Two key committees, the Assessment Committee and the Process Improvement Committee, monitor and assess academic and non-academic processes with increased regularity, and an institutional researcher was hired to centralize data collection and sharing.

- **7P1, S.** The institutions selection, management, and distribution of data and performance information are driven by its mission and are fostered by the Strategic Plan, University Learning Outcomes, and Ongoing Improvement model (OGI). The OGI process is data-based and a collaborative decision-making approach.
- **7P2, S.** USM has developed a systematic plan for the assessment of data from campus-wide initiatives and indicators, including financial, academic and student support, recruitment, retention and graduation rates.
- **7P3, O.** USM uses a variety of means to determine needs of departments and units and indicates the need for transparency in this area. However, an opportunity exists for standardized course evaluations across departments.
- **7P4, S.** USM analyzes data for various departments of the institution, with the Assessment Committee and the Process Improvement Committee active in assessing the ULO's and administrative processes, respectively. Analyzed data are shared through shared drives on Jenzabar, eSpire and at monthly University assembly meetings. The hiring of an institutional researcher shows evidence of forward thinking designed to enhance data-driven decisions, planning, students' learning and academic success.
- **7P5, S.** Various sources are used by USM for comparative data and information, including benchmark standards set by state and national accrediting bodies, the CLA, and NSSE, and data from KICA, CIC, and Noel-Levitz. Additional support for this process is provided by recognition of outside organizations such as NAIA Champions of Character, Academic All Americans, Princeton Review, and CHEA.
- **7P6, S.** In response to feedback from the previous portfolio review, the institution reduced eight university learning outcomes to four by involving all faculty members in the process. The Assessment Committee re-designed a matrix for measurement of student achievement. Additionally, an institutional researcher was hired to increase alignment of goals with programs and services.

- **7R1, S.** In order to improve processes to measure and report performances and effectiveness, USM instituted IT satisfaction surveys in addition to hiring an institutional researcher to increase the amount and types of data provided to various constituents.
- **7R1, O.** It is unclear what measures are used to assess the performance and effectiveness of the University system for information and knowledge management. The results of satisfaction surveys are not provided. Also unclear is what metrics are used to measure the effectiveness of the data management committees. The University has an opportunity to provide specific data that show changes in data management effectiveness over time.
- **7R2, S.** USM has created a strategic plan that aligns with improvement initiatives. In addition, evidence has been built around four areas of USM's mission and goals, including student learning, operations, collaborative partnerships and strategic initiatives. USM's utilization of AQIP Action Plans to improve effectiveness will result in strengthening its processes.
- **7R3, O.** USM compares well with peer institutions on measures of effectiveness with national norms of student performance. Results for nursing licensure rate and standardized testing scores are above those for like institutions. The use of broader benchmarking may contribute to a better understanding of how USM can improve its processes and student learning.
- **711, 712, O.** The development of the PIC may assist USM's internal communication and efforts at reviewing systems. As data are collected from the CLA and NSSE, USM might also have a better understanding of how to improve student learning and satisfaction. Developing a systematic process for evaluating the four new learning outcomes across the institution might provide USM with the ability to effectively understand student learning trends and ways to improve student learning.
- AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement: This category examines the institution's planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping to achieve the institution's mission and vision. It examines coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 8.

USM's Strategic Plan is the cornerstone for the organization's continuous improvement planning.

USM has been responsive in its strategic planning process through a regular cycle of Strategic Plan

updates and the use of criteria to inform its selection of initiatives and Action Projects that "ensure

alignment with the USM goals, values, and priorities."

- **8P1, S.** USM's Board of Trustees adopted the University's initial comprehensive Strategic Plan (SP) in 2006. The goal of USM's strategic planning process was to bring stability to the University over the five years from 2006 to 2011. The strategic plan provided for the collection of data in key areas and the analysis of information for decision-making processes. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), which includes various representatives of the institution, uses data-based processes to monitor, track, and evaluate implementation of the strategic plan. The diverse composition of the SPC leverages the expertise and practical experience of key individuals to help ensure implementation of improvements that meet the needs of students and stakeholders.
- **8P2, SS.** The development of the strategic plan follows the steps illustrated in the OGI model (Figure 8-1); specifically, the University gathered information, performed an environmental scan, and undertook a SWOT analysis. The SPC used Internal Collaborative Processes, engaging faculty and staff. In the step of action and implementation, the SPC made two key decisions: to narrow the institution's focus by identifying its academic niche (long-term strategy), and to address the institution's critical issue of limited resources (short-term strategy).
- **8P4, S.** USM developed and completed two AQIP Action Projects launched in 2006 and 2007, respectively, to coordinate and align planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans. Through these action projects, the University developed a "closed loop OGI model highlighting input by internal and external stakeholders, a focus on programs and initiatives, a systematic process for assessing progress, and an analysis of data to make informed decisions."
- **8P5, OO.** It is unclear the USM's OGI model includes systematic processes to set performance measures and targets that align with the University's three strategic planning commitments (e.g., to continue developing programs in health care as a niche for USM, to take steps to improve retention and graduation rates by improving academic success, and to improve and enhance facilities and technology to prepare for future campus growth). Without

such processes, the University may be limited in its ability to demonstrate continuous progress in achieving the commitments of its Strategic Plan.

- **8P6, S.** Allocation of fiscal and human resources is a significant part of all USM action plans. Resource needs are identified during the actions-and-implementation (AI) stage of the OGI process. The University has processes in place if a plan requires additional funding. A strategic planning and return-on-investment approach is used to determine priorities and allocations.
- **8P7, S.** Risk management plans that address multiple areas of the institution are systematic, integrated with USM's mission and objectives, and reflect planning for continuous improvement. Starting with the legal and regulatory environment, the institution examines the risk involving organizational responsibility, claims management, contract review, licensure, and accreditation. Additionally, USM examines strategic issues related to the financial resources of the institution to eliminate or minimize risk. USM also reviews security operations for the welfare of students, faculty, and staff, including the public, in general. Technology and associated risk factors are considered.
- **8R2, O.** Results are missing for performance measures that indicate USM's progress in addressing its focus on financial stability, which the University identifies as a key short-term strategy. Without such measures, USM's senior leaders may be limited in their ability to plan strategically and effectively to help ensure the University's sustainability. In addition, results that demonstrate the effectiveness of USM's processes to plan for continuous improvement are missing. Without this evaluation, USM may find it difficult to evaluate and improve planning processes and effectiveness. Further, performance measures and results are missing for USM's criteria for success in accomplishing organizational strategies and action plans. Without such measures, USM may be limited in its ability to drive effective improvement processes and practices.
- **8R4, O.** USM does not identify a rationale for its use of comparative data from CIC, Key Indicators Tool reports, the KICA Benchmark Summary, and HLC. Without systematic processes for identifying key comparative data and information (cf. 7P5), it is unclear that these comparisons provide effective opportunities for USM to learn from comparisons and apply this learning to processes for strategic planning and continuous improvement. Analyses of key comparative data may help the institution to set performance targets and stretch targets

in these areas.

812, **S.** Key stakeholders participated in USM's strategic planning process and shared lessons learned in AQIP Action Projects. Evidence shows continuous improvement is increasingly embedded in USM's culture and infrastructure.

AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships: This category 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. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for University of Saint Mary for Category 9.

USM's Catholic and SCL foundation shapes processes for building collaborative relationships that are grounded in integrity and practiced in mutual respect. USM's measures the value of building and maintaining collaborative relationships according to the benefits of the relationship for USM's students and potential community partners.

- **9P1, S.** USM has documented processes for engaging in partnership with educational institutional and other feeder organizations for its students. Developing and servicing these relationships help in assuring continued inflow of students to the institution. The use of social media to develop relationships with potential students and educational institutions indicates the current trends in how students conduct their college searches.
- **9P2, S.** USM maintains relationships with educational institutions and employers in light of its mission and Strategic Plan. These relationships include school districts in the Kansas City area for teacher placement as well as placement of graduates and healthcare employers and clinical sites. In addition, USM has professionals from Nursing, Education, and Health Information Management serving on advisory boards for the career programs.
- **9P3, S.** USM recognizes the importance of relationships with the military because Leavenworth is the home of both USM and Fort Leavenworth. Deltak is one vendor that markets the online courses and reports to the Director of Online Programs. This arrangement demonstrates that USM creates relationships that benefit the students and the institution, and

that it also manages those relationships effectively. USM further cultivates positive relationships with organizations and institutions that provide internships, practica and clinicals as well as service learning opportunities for its students.

- **9P4, O**. While the institution maintains relationships with organizations that supply materials and services to the institution, it is unclear how USM maintain relationships with key suppliers related to textbooks and dining services. These organizations play critical roles in meeting service needs of institutions.
- **9P5, S.** USM provides high priority in building and maintaining relationships while demonstrating its integrity in upholding educational standards with various professional and regulatory agencies in order to achieve the institutional strategic initiatives and mission. The institution participates in various organizations within the community it serves. The effort of USM in building the diverse relationships may enable the institution to continue on a progressive path of improving the overall efficiency and quality of education.
- **9P6, O.** It is unclear that USM uses systematic processes to help ensure that the University serves its partners in ways that both USM and its partners value. Specifically, USM identifies tensions in creating processes and assessments for service due to resistance to "measuring our efforts to live the gospel" and "reducing our service to neighbor in God's name to a rubric." Without systematic processes to help ensure that partnership relationships meet the needs of those involved, USM may be limited in its ability to develop and sustain effective partnerships to fulfill its mission and achieve strategic objectives.
- **9R1, OO.** While measures vary based on the nature of the relationship, there is an opportunity for the institution to develop more direct measures. Direct measures will likely enable USM the opportunity to assess the extent to which the goals of both the institution and its partnering organizations are met. Results are missing for key measures and indicators of USM's performance in building collaborative relationships. Specifically, no results are provided for USM's performance in its priority goal to build relationships with individuals and organizations in the health care sector in support of USM's strategic planning commitment to continue developing programs in health care as a niche for USM (commitment #1). Selecting, collecting, analyzing, and aligning key measures and indicators for performance in building effective relationships may help to ensure USM's ability to achieve strategic objectives and maintain sustainability.

9R3, O. No comparison data are provided that compares the performance results of other higher education institutions and organizations outside of higher education to USM. Developing systematic documentation of comparative results for the many dimensions of USM's community relationships and partnerships remains an important opportunity for the University.

9I1-9I2, O. USM has built comprehensive processes for measuring effectiveness in the area of alumni development. This work might provide USM with a meaningful way to highlight its maturation in the area of quality improvement and data use for applying these processes to other aspects of partnership. Providing specific data in this area may afford USM a better understanding of how they are making information-based decisions and improving their relationships.

ACCREDITATION ISSUES UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation* (and the HLC Core Components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and HLC Core Components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

NO ACCREDITATION ISSUES NOTED BY THE TEAM.

Criterion 1	HLC Core Component					
	1A	1B	1C	1D		
Number of Reviewer Comments	5	5	6	5		
Strong, clear, and well-presented	X		X			
Adequate, but could be improved		X		X		
Unclear or incomplete						
Criterion 2	HLC Core Component					
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E	
Number of Reviewer Comments	3	4	4	2	10	
Strong, clear, and well-presented		X	X		X	
Adequate, but could be improved	X			X		
Unclear or incomplete						
Critorian 2	HLC Core Component					

	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E	
Number of Reviewer Comments	2	6	6	13	2	
Strong, clear, and well-presented	X	X	X			
Adequate, but could be improved				X	X	
Criterion 4	HLC Core Component					
	4A	4B	4C			
Number of Reviewer Comments	6	2	8			
Strong, clear, and well-presented						
Adequate, but could be improved	X	X	X			
Unclear or incomplete						
Criterion 5	HLC Core Component					
	5A	5B	5C	5D		
Number of Reviewer Comments	6	6	3	7		
Strong, clear, and well-presented						
Adequate, but could be improved	X	X				
Unclear or incomplete			X	X		
Unclear or incomplete						
Critorian 4	HLC Core Component					
Criterion 4	4A	4B	4C			
Number of Reviewer Comments	6	2	8			
Strong, clear, and well-presented						
Adequate, but could be improved	X	X	X			
Unclear or incomplete						
Criterion 5	HLC Core Component					
	5A	5B	5C	5D		
Number of Reviewer Comments	6	6	3	7		
Strong, clear, and well-presented						
Adequate, but could be improved	X	X				
Unclear or incomplete			X	X		

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

- **5P1.** The mission statement, developed with the University's sponsors, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, has remained intact since the founding of the institution.
- **5P1.** USM reinforces the mission and core values through faculty/staff and new student orientation, University days (all faculty & staff come together as a group), and through the Mission Council, whose objective is to keep the mission front and center on campus and to sponsor activities that aid the University in internalizing core values and making them Operational.
- **5P2.** USM ensures that the practices of its leadership system at all levels are aligned by focusing on the mission, core values, and the implementation and assessment of the Strategic Plan. The mission and values serve as the guiding structure from which the Strategic Plan flows.

- **5P2.** USM also ensures leadership system alignment through the ongoing improvement (OGI) process, the structure of the Strategic Plan, clear governance and staff reporting structures, policies and procedures, annual reports, eSpire (USM's learning management system), a newly revamped website, the Marketing bulletin board and large television monitor inside the main entrance in Mead Hall, the university catalog, handbooks, and the Global Studies Institute Starr Report.
- **5P2.** The mission statement is prominently and proudly displayed in all of the institution's printed and online materials.

HLC Core Component 1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

- **5P2.** Faculty and staff are involved in the review of the mission and the strategic initiatives.
- **5P3.** The Mission Council helps make the mission clear and up to date.
- **5P8.** USM's mission, vision and values are disseminated to the internal constituents and to the public through the website.
- **5P8.** Handbooks and policy manuals articulate the mission of the institution.
- **5P8.** The mission and core values are displayed in the main hallway, noted in the catalog and available on the website.

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

- 1P4. The mission of USM is to educate "students of diverse backgrounds to realize their Godgiven potential and prepare them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the wellbeing of our global society."
- 1P4. USM takes its distinct character from the mission of the Sisters of Charity and its Vincentian charisma, which holds as one of the great acts of charity, "serving others at the fullest points of their needs" without regard to race, color, creed, ethnicity or any other factors that commonly divide humankind.
- 1P4. The mission is realized through USM's curriculum and co-curricular activities which seek not only to provide students with an understanding of human diversity but also with the desire to serve mankind in all of its diversity, most notably and successfully through its Cultural Studies course requirements and its highly regarded and extensive service and service learning programs.

- 1P10. USM supports the Americans with Disabilities Act and makes reasonable accommodations
 for students with disabilities. The University has processes in place to assist students with special
 needs.
- **1P10.** The Academic Resource Center (ARC) actively provides support to all students and faculty with the primary goal of aiding students of all abilities in becoming effective learners.
- 1P10. The Athletic Department has implemented programs that work directly to improve studentathlete success and retention. These programs include: Culture of Athletics, Improving Academic Success of Athletes, and Development of Leadership.

HLC Core Component 1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

- **3P3.** The institution's sponsor, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, influences the culture of USM in service with focus on great acts of charity to the students and the society.
- **3P3.** Parents' and new students' orientations are held and participants are surveyed to assess the effectiveness of the events.
- **3P3.** In order to meet the health care needs of the region, USM developed programs in Nursing, Health Information Management and Physical Therapy.
- **3P5.** USM has many relationships with community organizations, including school districts, employers, and clinical partners, through which USM builds opportunities for students and ensures all parties can benefit.
- **3P5.** USM uses some methods to determine new student and stakeholder groups to target in developing programs, services, and diversifying modes of instructional delivery. For example, USM engages future employers of USM students through advisory councils and students' internship placements, follows national and local trends in job markets, and collaborates with its online partner Deltak to analyze national research that informs decisions about creating new degrees and altering curricula to meet the needs of students.

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

• 4P7. Rooted in its founding and sponsoring organization, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, ethics

shows in the Employee and Faculty Handbook as well as in new policies on Business Conduct and Whistleblower policies. The mission council promotes ethics at USM.

- **4P7.** Additional policies related to Research with Human Subjects meet NSF and NIH standards.
- **4P7.** USM demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of procedures to help ensure the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by all faculty, students, and staff. Procedures for the Vice President for Academic Affairs review of all proposals for research involving human subjects—including consultation with internal and external experts—demonstrate the early stages of a systematic process for institutional review of human-subject research. Further, emerging approaches to ensuring students' ethical use of information resources demonstrate USM's commitment to reinforcing values of community, respect, justice, excellence, and Catholic Social Teachings in safeguarding academic integrity.

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

- 1P6. USM uses multiple methods to communicate preparation requirements and learning objectives to students, including written materials that describe proficiency and prerequisite courses required, and advising/mentoring for current and prospective students. University publications—such as the Student Handbook, University Catalog, and program materials—are available in print, on the USM website, and on eSpire, the institution's learning management system.
- **1P6.** The Academic Resource Center support students.
- 1P6. Students are provided information through mentoring and advising sessions, during orientations, and in class.
- 1P7. The Employee Handbook provides the expectations and policies regarding USM personnel.

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

• **5P2.** USM's mission and values are defined and reviewed by all members of the university community, including the governance system. This governance system consists of Administrators and a two-tiered Board: a Board of Trustees and a Board of Members composed of the elected

leadership of the University's sponsors, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The sponsors have representatives on the Board to ensure mission and open communication between the two governance bodies.

- **5P2.** The Board of Trustees supports the University in multiple ways including via their expertise in individual areas.
- **5P2.** Every major program and policy is approved by the Board of Trustees but management is entirely the business of administration.
- **5P2.** USM sets direction in alignment with mission, vision, and values by involving the entire USM community and the Board of Trustees in its strategic planning process. The Strategic Plan drives the action and plans at USM and strategic planning is now a permanent process in which stakeholders are involved.

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

- 1P11, 5P1. The USM's mission on the website and in the catalog provides evidence that the institution is committed to freedom of expression and pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.
- **1P11.** The faculty handbook upholds Catholic heritage that supports academic freedom in transmitting knowledge and wisdom in the spirit of liberal education.

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

- 1P6. Orientation for new and transfer students acquaints students with the University expectations.
- 1P11. An Academic Honesty Policy is published in the handbooks for faculty and students and in course syllabi. Processes are in place for reporting, penalizing those who violate the policy and documenting offenses in a centralized office.
- 1P11. Academic honesty is expected of all members of the USM community. It is an essential component of higher education and is necessary for true academic growth. Christian tradition and professional excellence demand that truth be valued in all interactions. Justice requires that all members of the USM community possess the skills and learning that they profess to have.

- 1P11. Academic dishonesty includes, without limitation, any form of cheating whether in or out of the classroom and the presenting of purchased or stolen papers, computer programs, reports, or other written work as one's original work.
- **1P13.** Effective teaching is documented through annual reports, faculty evaluations, program reviews, the tenure process, and the post-tenure review process.
- **4P7.** The University exercises effective oversight and support services to insure the quality and integrity of research and scholarly practice of faculty, staff, and students.
- 4P7. USM promotes academic integrity through its catalog and other campus publications. The
 institution has policies on academic honesty. The Student Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures
 provide detailed information regarding this policy. The department chairs, directors and faculty are
 responsible for the enforcement of responsible behavior in the acquisition and discovery of
 knowledge.
- **4P7.** USM takes its ethical practices direction from its founders and sponsors, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, in its commitment to conducting business with integrity, justness, and in accordance with high ethical standards. Social ethics is engrained in the culture. It is part of the mission and Catholic heritage. Every employee is held accountable for upholding these standards in his or her job performance and every job-related activity.
- **4P7.** USM's ethical standards are outlined in the Employee Handbook. USM recently implemented a new Business Conduct (and Whistleblower) Policy. The University has a detailed policy on academic honesty, which meets the standards of external bodies such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.
- **4P7.** USM students are guided through the ethical use of information resources by the faculty and "outreach librarian," who visits classes with instruction on research methods, as well as faculty members including in their syllabi the university policy and, taking the time to explain, the University's academic honesty policy.

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

• 1P6. USM states that it demonstrates its understanding of the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society by taking its distinct character from the mission of the Sisters of Charity and its Vincentian charisma, which upholds "serving others at the fullest points of their needs"

without regard to race, color, creed, ethnicity, or any other factors that divide society.

1P12. USM states that it evaluates student needs through surveys of students and staff and
assessments of student performance, and then modifies course delivery systems to meet those
needs.

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

- **1P1.** USM's general education is appropriate to its mission, values, philosophy of education, program offerings, and degree levels.
- **1P1.** USM's general education is based on widely held learning outcomes and an Applied Liberal Arts Curriculum. The Applied Liberal Arts curriculum identifies Areas of Investigation (AI) which articulate USM's Learning Goals for the 21st Century.
- 1P1. Service learning courses and Idea Seminars which are required for all students give a global perspective to the liberal arts education.
- 1P1. Faculty members are also encouraged to stay up to date on the latest teaching techniques and are provided resources and/or time to pursue scholarly activity.
- **1P1.** The General Education component of USM's undergraduate education is predicated on four learning outcomes, which the institution believes every college-educated person should possess and that are continually assessed, internally and externally, to assure both quality and consistency.
- 1P1. Students are required to take at least one Cultural Studies course, which includes cultural discussions of variations and similarities among diverse societies.

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

- **4P2.** USM indicates it has sufficient faculty to carry out classroom and non-classroom roles, including oversight of curriculum and student performance.
- **4P2.** USM identifies specific credentials, skills, and values required for faculty, staff, and administrators in approved job descriptions. Credentials and skills are identified specific to each position, such as degrees, scholarship, and teaching ability for faculty. It ensures that accreditation faculty requirements are met and that programs have the number of faculty required for program

instruction. Most faculty and professional staff positions have industry-established required credentials.

- **4P2.** USM hires in conformity with Title VII, the American with Disabilities Act, the Kansas Act against Discrimination, and other federal and state employment-related statutes applicable to the University.
- **4P10.** Faculty members are formally evaluated by the department chair and the Vice President for Academic Affairs at appropriate time points based on whether they are tenured or non-tenured.
- 4P10. Currently each department has its own process for evaluating staff.
- **4P10.** USM employs a well-defined, industry-common hiring process, usually including national searches, wherein minimum criteria are set and adhered to. Once hired, non-tenured faculty are evaluated formally every year by their department chairs and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and once they have tenure they undergo a formal post-tenure review every five years.

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

- 1P4. USM meets the expectations of all of their programs that require specialized accreditation, which helps them assure to their students that their programs prepare them well for the professions they seek upon graduation.
- 1P4. The USM catalog has a section on "Transfer Guidelines" that addresses how the university
 decides whether transfer courses are accepted. In addition, the University catalog contains
 "Admission Guidelines" for traditional, transfer, international, home-schooled, high school and
 senior students.
- 1P4, 1P5, 1P13. USM is careful to stipulate and review all course prerequisites, as well as the rigor of their courses and expectations for student learning, including their dual credit courses.
- 1P7. The ARC, Career Center, and Campus Counseling are in place to serve as a resource for student's interests and abilities throughout their studies.
- 1P7, 1P15. A CARE Team, Student Success Office, Campus Counseling, and Academic Resource Center are all involved in monitoring students to improve opportunities for success.
- 1P7, 1P15. USM provides various support services for student learning and effective teaching. Student support services include academic advising, ARC, Career Center, library service,

technology support and tutoring assistance. The institution created a student success office to address student success and satisfaction and improve student awareness and use of support services.

- 1P15. The credentials held by faculty meet or exceed commonly expected faculty credentials.
- 1P15. USM provides support for continued faculty professional development.
- 1P15. Faculty are also encouraged to stay up to date on the latest teaching techniques and are provided resources and/or time to pursue scholarly activity.
- 1P15. Technological support is provided to both faculty and students by the Information Services department.
- 1P15. The goal of USM's Student Success initiative is to connect students with a team of "well-trained faculty and student services advisors" to provide "optimum academic and career advising." Such services include effective use of Jenzabar advising tools.
- 1P17, 1P18. The Ongoing Improvement model (OGI) is used throughout the University for its
 annual reports, program reviews, and new program development. Faculty and chairs conducting
 program reviews examine data regarding workforce and societal trends to make necessary changes
 to courses and programs. Licensure programs mandate a specific level of performance to earn
 licensure.
- 1P18. USM maintains a practice of regular program reviews, through its annual program reports submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and more extensively through its five-year program reviews.

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

- 1P16. USM fulfills the claims it makes regarding its educational enrichment. The institution provides a list (link 1P16: Student Organizations) of eleven active clubs that are diverse and whose purposes are aligned with the university's curricular goals. The institution offers cultural events that involve the campus community. The faculty and staff ensure that these co-curricular developmental goals are aligned with the curricular.
- **1P16.** The educational mission of the SCLs, to serve others at the fullest points of their needs, drives the alignment of USM's co-curricular development and curricular learning objectives.

Several departmental organizations engage in scholarship and service, and the institution's commitment to service-learning reflects processes to integrate learning outcomes related to the practical application of knowledge to effect positive social change.

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

- 1P4. USM meets or exceeds commonly expected faculty credentials and provides support for continued faculty professional development.
- 1P4. The USM catalog has a section on "Transfer Guidelines" that addresses how the university decides whether transfer courses are accepted. In addition, the university catalog contains "Admission Guidelines" for traditional, transfer, international, home-schooled, high school, and senior students.
- **1P4.** USM is careful to stipulate and review all course prerequisites, as well as the rigor of their courses and expectations for student learning, including their dual credit courses.
- 1P13. The Ongoing Improvement model (OGI) is used throughout the University for its annual reports, program, and new program development. Faculty and chairs conducting program reviews examine data regarding workforce and societal trends to make necessary changes to courses and programs. Licensure programs mandate a specific level of performance to earn licensure.
- 1P13. USM maintains a practice of regular program reviews through reports submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and its five-year program reviews.
- 1P13. USM meets the expectations of all of their programs that require specialized accreditation, which helps them assure to their students that their programs prepare them well for the professions they seek upon graduation.

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

- 1P1.USM states that it uses results from the Collegiate Learning Assessment and the National Survey of Student Engagement as direct and indirect measures of students learning.
- 1P18. USM states that its Learning Framework Matrix aligns University and program requirements with learning outcomes and course assessments.

Comment on evidence provided for *HLC Core Component 4.C. The institution demonstrates a* commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

- **3P1.** USM defines, measures, and sets goals for student persistence.
- **3P1.** USM has been collecting persistence data and reporting data to IPEDS for years, and compares these data to peer institutions in the Kansas Independent Colleges Association (KICA).
- **3P1.** USM's methods of data acquisition vary according to the student population, the site of instruction, or the delivery method.
- **3P1.** The University has recently begun using the NSSE survey.
- **3P1.** USM uses a variety of methods to understand student needs, including surveys, dialogue and retention rates.
- **3P1.** USM's Strategic Plan was separated into three action plans to implement and measure best practices. These are: improving academic success, specifically retention and graduation rates; improving a sense of student belonging; and improving student-athlete success and retention.
- **3P1.** USM established the CARE team and the Office of Student Success to address the issue of retention.
- **3P1.** USM's retention and graduation data are gathered and compiled by the registrar's office. The data are the same data that are submitted for the IPEDS.

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

- **8P6.** The Project Initiation Fund was created to help funnel and prioritize supports.
- 8P6. USM has implemented a Doctorate in Physical Therapy and renovation and conversion of a
 residence hall into a new health science building, demonstrating sufficient fiscal and human
 resources.
- **8P6.** The resource allocation process ensures educational processes are reasonably protected against adverse circumstances.
- **8P6.** Resource planning is implemented via use of the OGI model in a deliberate manner resulting

in well-planned, realistic goals that are consistent with the mission of the institution.

- 8P6. Allocation of fiscal and human resources is a significant part of all USM action plans.

 Resource needs are identified during the action-and-implementation (AI) stage of the OGI process.

 The University has processes in place if a plan requires additional funding. A strategic planning and return-on-investment approach is used to determine priorities and allocations.
- **8R2.** Financial statements indicate USM is in adequate financial position to implement its short and long-term Strategic Plan goals.

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

- **5P1.** Any changes that were made to the Strategic Plan had the input of all affected departments.
- **5P1, 5P5.** USM involves representatives from all campus constituencies through cross-functional teams, task forces, and committees as necessary for informed decision making. In other words, "who needs to be at the table?" All decisions aim to be framed by mission and in response to the Strategic Plan. A component of USM's ongoing improvement process includes an OGI afteraction assessment, which resides at the level at which the project is executed. This is how the University improves its processes.
- **5P5.** USM practices the principle of subsidiary: problems are analyzed and solutions discovered at the level where activities are implemented. The New Student Orientation is an example of how this process leads to ongoing improvement. Better communication through cross-functional input resulted in improving the experience and led to USM's most successful orientation to date in August 2011. Nevertheless, the process of continual improvement is ongoing.
- **5P5**. In USM academic governance, the decision-making process originates in various committees, standing or ad hoc.
- **5P5.** USM demonstrates approaches to making decisions that reflect the early stages of systematic processes. For example, proposed initiatives must have a business plan that includes market research, 5-year projections, and alignment with USM's mission and strategic objectives; the Administrative Council promotes professional development by allocating funding for training; all members of the workforce are trained to model and reinforce the University's core values.

• **5P9**. USM employs policies and procedures that engage its internal constituencies in governance, each according to the areas in which they are best prepared to contribute.

HLC Core Component 5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

- **5P1.** USM ensures that the practices of its leadership system at all levels are aligned by focusing on the mission, core values, and the implementation and assessment of the Strategic Plan. The mission and values serve as the guiding structure from which the Strategic Plan flows.
- **5P1.** USM reinforces the mission and core values through faculty/staff and new student orientation, University days (all faculty & staff come together as a group), and through the Mission Council, whose objective is to keep the mission front and center on campus and to sponsor activities that aid the University in internalizing core values and making them Operational.
- **5P1.** USM also ensures leadership system alignment through the ongoing improvement (OGI) process, the structure of the Strategic Plan, clear governance and staff reporting structures, policies and procedures, annual reports, eSpire (USM's learning management system), a newly revamped website, the Marketing bulletin board and large television monitor inside the main entrance in Mead Hall, university catalog, handbooks, and the Global Studies Institute Starr Report.

HLC Core Component 5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

- 7P1. USM demonstrates an understanding of the usefulness of selecting, managing, and distributing data and performance information to support planning and improvement. Figure 7P-1 provides an illustration of the conceptual framework for aligning data in a "circle of ongoing improvement" that engages key collaborators, suppliers, and partners ("our connections") with USM's products and services ("our learning"), branding ("our identity"), and performance projections ("our future").
- **7P2.** The Administrative Council, consisting of the President and Vice Presidents, with the help of the Institutional Researcher/Data Analyst, is responsible for gathering data in other areas.
- **7P2.** USM indicates areas of improvement from the last portfolio for gathering and analyzing data related to recruitment and in academic and support areas as well as in the area of finances and financial planning.
- **7P4.** The Assessment Committee and the Process Improvement Committee are working to increase the availability of data to key stakeholders, such as faculty and staff.

- **7P4.** The Assessment Committee gathers and analyzes data on academic performance and returns data to faculty on Assessment Day.
- **7P4.** USM held its first Assessment Day in October 2012 in an effort to disseminate assessment information.
- **7P4, 7P5.** USM is using a number of comparative data points, such as NSSE, CHEA, KICA that permit USM to know how it compares in areas of salary, graduation rates, enrollment trends, etc.

QUALITY OF SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO FOR UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY

Because it stands as a reflection of the institution, the *Systems Portfolio* should be complete and coherent, and it should provide an open and honest self-analysis on the strengths and challenges facing the organization. In this section, the Systems Appraisal Team provides constructive feedback to the institution on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

The review team found the highlighting of the HLC Core Component evidence sections very helpful. It focused the team's attention on what the institution saw as key information in documenting the University's meeting of the Criteria for Accreditation. The team also appreciated the threading of the University's mission through all Categories of the Portfolio. The familiarity with mission this engendered helped reviewers integrate the mission into their perspectives on processes, results, and improvements.

The team missed the use of graphs and charts as tools for helping communicate the impact of the data. For many readers, these visual aids make trends, results, targets, and comparisons more transparent and easier to understand. They also contribute to the understanding of decisions that are made as a result of the data.

The team recommends that in future Portfolios the University follow the AQIP System Portfolio style guidelines, especially for headers, footers and page numbering. The individual page numbering system the University used for each Category made it difficult to navigate the document as a single entity.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

AQIP reminds institutions that the Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for institutional improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of this report may include: 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.

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 in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.