


3-15-2013

## Systems Appraisal Feedback Report (2013)

AQIP Program, Higher Learning Commission

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March 15, 2013

John E. Christensen, Chancellor  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
6001 Dodge Street  
Omaha, NE 68182-0001

Dear Dr. Christensen:

As you are aware, the University of Nebraska at Omaha is a long-time participant in the Higher Learning Commission's *Academic Quality Improvement Program* (AQIP). We at the Commission appreciate your institution's participation in AQIP, and we hope that the program has met your institution's quality improvement needs in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

It is with an eye toward the future that I write to you today. As you know, your institution submitted its Systems Portfolio in November 2012 (per our established schedule), and it did so as part of our Systems Appraisal pilot project. Since last fall, the appraisal process has unfolded with a team of peer reviewers identifying your institution's "strengths" and "opportunities" in relation to the nine AQIP categories. Consistent with past appraisals, we think you will find the team's comments instructive.

Less clear, perhaps, will be the team's feedback in relation to the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and core components. Although appraisal teams have been asked for many years to consider the criteria and core components by means of a cross-walk, the rigor of this portion of the team's review increased last fall as part of our pilot. This increased scrutiny came about with the implementation of the new criteria, along with a new AQIP requirement that appraisal teams indicate whether the criteria and each core component are:

- "strong, clear, and well-presented";
- "adequate but could be improved"; or
- "unclear or incomplete."

In the spirit of the Systems Appraisal process, we chose these phrases deliberately to enable a proactive review of the criteria and core components so that any concerns can be corrected prior to reaffirmation of accreditation. We consider these an effective early warning system.

Please note, however, that at the point of reaffirmation, the terminology will shift to be consistent across all HLC Pathways (AQIP, Open, and Standard). At reaffirmation, teams will determine whether the criteria and core components are: "met," "met with concerns," or "not met." A finding of "not met" at the time of reaffirmation will result in a sanction recommendation, no matter the institution's pathway. In light of this significant change in Commission policy, we consider the early warning system described above—a system that

is embedded within the portfolio and appraisal processes—important to the ongoing success of AQIP institutions.

With that distinction stated, and in light of the Systems Appraisal Team Report for your institution, an additional requirement is now necessary. In instances where the appraisal team has indicated that a core component is either “adequate but could be improved” or “unclear or incomplete,” we are requiring that your institution address these items in its response to the Systems Appraisal Team Report. Please do so within 30 days and please limit your response to 10 pages. In addition, we are requiring that the institution address these same items a second time in its Quality Program Summary Report—a document that is prepared in preparation for the Quality Checkup. We require that you address these items in your Summary Report because that document will be of central importance to the Checkup Visit team when it prepares to visit your campus. We want the team to be able to assist your institution effectively, and this will be made possible by reviewing your initial institutional response prepared now and your eventual Summary Report when it is prepared later. Your completed Quality Summary Report should be limited to 20 pages.

In stating this requirement, we recognize that your institution may have already additional evidence that didn’t make it into the Systems Portfolio or that relevant evidence may have been touched upon but not featured due to space constraints. Whatever the circumstance, our aim is to assist your institution by means of this early warning system and to capitalize upon the expertise of peer reviewers during the Quality Checkup a few years from now. Please know that your institution’s accredited status is not affected by this follow-up. There is nothing in this current review process that requires Commission follow-up through any decision-making body. Again, the aim is to address proactively any gaps or issues so that they do not present problems later.

We also recognize that this new approach toward reviewing the criteria, as piloted, may not have been communicated as clearly as we may have wished. Thus your suggestions for improvement are critical as we look to revise this process in the coming months. Our aim is to carry forward the historical continuous quality improvement focus of the Systems Portfolio and to provide a robust Systems Appraisal report that contributes to your institution’s quality processes and also provides a means by which any compliance concerns can be remedied prior to reaffirmation. I urge you and your team to review your report carefully and then to contact your staff liaison (copied below) with questions or concerns. I also urge you to share your suggestions. There will be many such opportunities at the upcoming Annual Conference and AQIP Colloquium. Of course, a simple telephone call is also welcome any time.

Thank you again for your participation in AQIP and for your thoughtful guidance as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Eric V. Martin, D.A.  
Vice President for Accreditation Relations

cc: Dr. Neal W. Topp, ALO  
Dr. Jeff Rosen, VP Accred. Relations

# **SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT**

**in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA**

**February 25, 2013**



**Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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## ELEMENTS OF the University of Nebraska at Omaha's FEEDBACK REPORT

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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 was 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 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.

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## **REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA**

The following consensus statement is 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 reflective introduction is to highlight the team’s broad understanding of the institution, its mission, and the constituents that it serves.

*UNO’s identity as an institution and its approach to education and engagement is rooted in its location in the urban center of Omaha. It has an overwhelmingly (88%) local student body of approximately 15,000, about 70% of whom are full-time students.*

*UNO is evolving from a commuter-only campus to residential campus and is also placing an increased emphasis on community engagement at all levels, scholarly research, internal innovation, and attracting external funding.*

*UNO’s planning is driven by the goal of 20/20—20,000 students by 2020. Recently classified as Doctoral/Research University, priority areas for development include Doctoral/Graduate Research; Early Childhood/Child Welfare; Global Engagement; STEM Initiatives; and Sustainability.*

*UNO’s self-assessment of its overall quality culture maturity is that it is a strong, vibrant, integrated culture of assessment and continuous improvement.*

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight University of Nebraska at Omaha achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

### **Category 1**

- Faculty members maintain primary responsibility for curriculum design, development and evaluation.
- UNO recently implemented a campus-wide assessment system and program-review procedures.



- Recently UNO revamped its General Education curriculum. Graduates in 2011 performed above expectations on the CLA assessment.
- UNO uses multiple measures to evaluate its teaching effectiveness, such as analysis of its NSSE data, coordination of assessment activities through its university-wide Assessment Committee, and through development and implementation of its AQIP Action Projects.
- A taskforce has been put in place to improve student academic advising.

### **Category 2**

- UNO lists non-instructional areas as a basis for establishing Other Distinctive Objectives, that include: athletics, alumni, research, service learning, economic development, and community engagement.
- While decentralized in many of its operations, UNO requires all unit objectives to align with the UNO Strategic Plan.
- UNO Strategic Plan coordinates and aligns all academic and non-academic objectives. The new Office of Institutional Effectiveness gathers and shares information with all stakeholders to assist in this process.
- The institution recognizes the need for improved cross-group communication.

### **Category 3**

- In 2012 UNO established the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) to coordinate institutional effectiveness, decision support services, and accreditation processes.
- The OIE systematically gathers and analyzes data to determine students' and other stakeholders' needs.
- UNO uses a strategic planning process and a 30 member committee to identify and assess stakeholder needs.
- The institution uses graduate surveys and a broad array of other survey instruments and processes to measure student satisfaction.
- A new Performance Information Gateway (PING) is intended to allow stakeholders greater access to campus data.

#### **Category 4**

- UNO identifies development of its faculty, staff, and administration as a core institutional value.
- The university's primary method of valuing human resources is through offering a wide range of professional development resources for staff and faculty.
- UNO's hiring process respects that different areas of the university have different needs and cultures through its position posting process.
- The University recently completed a university-wide staff "customer service" training process.
- The institution recognizes a need to improve its employee benefits package to aid staff recruitment.

#### **Category 5**

- UNO has a comprehensive strategic plan developed by a process that is reviewed annually and revised as needed to respond to changing priorities and institutional needs.
- Faculty, staff, and low-level administrators serve on committees that provide strategic plan advisory for top-level decision makers.
- UNO leadership and decision-making are aligned with NU System strategic plans and key initiatives.
- The information portal system (PING) is being developed to increase communication for decision-making processes.
- UNO recognizes that improvement of its communication processes is an ongoing area of emphasis.

#### **Category 6**

- UNO continues to make improvements in support structures to better meet student and other stakeholder needs.
- Administrative and advisory groups consisting of students, faculty, and staff provide feedback on needed service improvements. A stable centralized decision-making process has been in place for over a decade.

- As part of its integrated approach to assessment, UNO performs an enterprise-wide risk management assessment annually.
- Substantial organizational changes have occurred in the past year, including the new Enrollment, Management and Marketing division subsuming several enrollment-related offices. Noel-Levitz has been employed to assist in development of a strategic marketing plan.

### **Category 7**

- UNO envisions itself as a learning organization and seeks to become more data-driven in goal setting and decision making. The newly formed Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the PING portal are two examples of how the University is moving towards these goals.
- UNO recognizes the importance of continuous improvement processes and emphasizes that as a learning institution, it must continually plan and assess in line with its strategic plan and goals.
- UNO has developed “multiple processes” for measuring effectiveness and making improvements.
- OIE is currently preparing departmental dashboards to centralize and disseminate data on effectiveness.
- Each college has its own strategic plan, aligned with the UNO strategic plan, designed and implemented in collaboration with the Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.
- UNO recognizes the need to become more data-driven in its processes.

### **Category 8**

- The University’s strategic planning process—developed through a collaboration of stakeholders on campus—has helped the campus to focus on moving forward under three overarching goals, which have driven the alignment of programs, processes, priorities, and funding.
- UNO demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement through its assessment processes and data-driven improvement efforts, such as the establishment of its Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Office of Enrollment Management and Marketing.
- Recent reorganization of enrollment and recruitment as well as institutional research suggests a mature and improving organization capable of a major realignment of leadership, vision and processes to achieve a better continuous improvement process.

### **Category 9**

- UNO endeavors to be a “metropolitan university of distinction” and cites its relationships with P-12 schools, local governments and agencies, and local chambers of commerce as examples of reaching out and collaborating with key partners.
- The University is building a stand-alone Community Engagement Center to foster engagement and maintain all community partnerships and services under a single organizational structure.
- UNO is currently developing improved processes to gather data on the needs of graduates and employers to use for campus process improvement.

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## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha 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:

- **Process Documentation:** A necessary element of a continuous improvement approach includes recognition that all work is done through processes, and it is by improving processes that results can be improved. Understanding of how processes work is an essential first step. Very few of the process descriptions provided in the portfolio usefully describe how UNO processes function. This is troubling for an institution not completing its first portfolio. UNO’s office of institutional effectiveness ought to consider where UNO stands in its development of a quality culture and plan actions that might be taken to develop these foundational elements of quality improvement.

- **Results Reporting:** Despite describing a variety of data sources the university uses to measure performance and direct improvements, the systems portfolio reports very few actual pieces of data. Performance results such as student satisfaction, budgetary trends, allocation of resources, and strategic outputs are all vitally important pieces of information left unclear in the descriptions in the systems portfolio. Process capability results are also mostly not reported. Making decisions based on data is a goal of high performance organizations and is a key component in support of continuous improvement. As UNO develops its office of institutional effectiveness, attention can be given to put in place processes to report performance and process results, including analysis of trends and benchmark comparisons.
- **Improvement Methodology:** UNO has begun the process of developing an effective data collection, analysis and distribution system, but still has much work to do in this area. It is unclear whether there is a clear and sound strategy for identifying, first, what data is really relevant to assessing educational and program success, and, second, how that data should be used in planning continuous improvements. It is suggested that there be a very thorough and rigorous analysis internally of how data is collected, recorded, analyzed and used in decision making by the university. Throughout the portfolio descriptions indicate that data are made available to individuals or groups with an implication that somehow this will result in improvement. No description is provided for how this will happen or any improvement methodology used by the institution. Systematic improvement depends on application of methods and tools specific to this purpose, methods such as six sigma, lean, a PDCA cycle or others might be considered. Again, development of the office of institutional effectiveness can include data structure development, evaluation of different improvement methods, adoption of an institutional standard, and development of an implementation program.
- **Resource Priorities:** UNO's "20/20 Project" attempts to increase its student population dramatically, to expand its distance education offerings, and to launch a new community outreach facility and programming. The appraisal team has a concern that growth may compete with improvement in educational processes and outcomes, or at the very least to take priority over it in terms of strategic planning. A careful analysis is needed of whether the 20/20 project is compatible with maintaining educational standards given the resources and structures it needs in place at the university.

- **Leadership Development and Succession Plan:** The absence of a leadership transition plan at the top levels of UNO is a serious organizational deficiency that could threaten the successful operation of the school at any moment. This needs to be addressed promptly. Related to this is the absence of a clear and effective process for identifying and nurturing leaders within the ranks of current employees. Some thought has been given to this, and opportunities do exist, but a more formal and intentional process for selecting and growing leaders within the organization could both improve employee satisfaction and assist in correcting the absence of a leadership transition plan.

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## 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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 1.

*UNO is to be commended for apparent progress made to developing some of its primary academic processes. However, these systems reflect a more traditional design approach than an approach based on quality and practices of continuous improvement. Process descriptions are mostly limited to details of “who” is involved in a process instead of a full description identifying the details of “how” the process works. Process deployment, process measures, and improvement methods are not typically addressed. Data were not presented to show that the processes are embedded, used, or that they make any difference in the way courses and programs are developed and taught. Overall institutional results are very limited and do not provide comparisons over time or benchmarks.*

**1P1, S.** Processes and procedures were recently put in place to assess the alignment of institutional learning outcomes, the general education curriculum, and assessment. In 2010, UNO faculty revised the General Education program to align it with the institutional learning outcome for all graduates. UNO faculty also defined General Education curriculum review criteria, and established a committee and described steps to follow to improve general education implementation in the curriculum. New programs and major revisions of courses and programs are submitted to a university-wide committee by faculty teaching or proposing to teach the courses or programs. It is unclear if there are any processes or reviews required at the departmental or college level before they go forward for university review and approval.

**1P2, S.** UNO faculty set specific program learning objectives following a process coordinated with data from student surveys (departmental, NSSE & UNO senior exit survey and commonly accepted discipline-specific standards and practices and accrediting body requirements). Each program also should have an assessment plan which is shared with the Assessment Committee.

**1P3, O.** There is a systematic approval process for new programs. Levels of review ensure programs are comparable to those offered in other institutions and that there is limited redundancy within the state. However, how faculty design the new programs or any protocols they must follow when developing and proposing a new program are not discussed. It is not clear how this process ensures that a new program facilitates student learning or is competitive with programs offered by other institutions. It is also unclear what process is used to approve a new course when it is not attached to a new program.

**1P4, O.** UNO has partnered with Economic Marketing Specialists, Inc. to implement an online program to assist students in career planning. While this information is made available to students, faculty and administrators, there is not sufficient structure in place to ensure that this

data is readily available and interpretable by all concerned parties and that it is ever used by faculty for curriculum design or redesign. It is unclear if faculty are asked to use labor market data when reviewing their curriculum and how often (other than 7 year program cycle) this might be done. Actual implementation likely varies dramatically from one program to another at the institution.

**1P5, O.** It is not clear what the standard process is to determine preparation required by the faculty when they design the curriculum.

**1P6, S.** Program preparation and requirements are widely available to students through the website, day- long orientation, and advising. The Course Catalog Maintenance System helps UNO manage the development of new courses and revision of continuing courses with descriptions and learning objectives for the review and approval process. However, this system is not visible to the public and to students.

**1P7, O.** The university seems to lack a system to aid students in the selection of a major if they enter undecided. The university recognizes there is a problem and has established a task force and two AQIP projects to review advising, which is commendable. Nevertheless, this remains a serious lacuna in their effort to make sure all students are given proper assistance in determining, planning and accomplishing a chosen degree path. Currently students are advised to take general education courses that will fit any major until they decide upon their major.

**1P8, O.** UNO describes several diversified services intended to address different academic deficiencies. It is not clear that there is a systematic process to assess student skill levels and remediation need that would ensure reliable follow-up and positive resolution. It appears the centers provide support only for students who seek it out and that they each operate independently. The focus is on the assistance provided not the student needing the assistance.

**1P9, O.** UNO provides training for improving instruction, but it is not explained how any of these activities directly help faculty or staff detect or address differences in students' learning styles.

**1P10, O.** The institution's process allows students to self-identify any special needs and provides services for five subgroups of students for whom special support is provided: disabled students, poor first- generation students, undefined underrepresented students, military and veteran students and student-athletes. Why these students and not others have been identified for special services



is not discussed. Listed are three different coordinators for dealing with equal opportunity issues, in addition to several other offices dealing with other subgroups. There does not appear to be an organizational structure or coordination which would integrate and coordinate the work of these multiple offices or ensure the appropriate student subgroup needs are addressed. The institution may find that managing the various regulatory issues may be addressed through a coordinated or centralized approach which was not evident in the portfolio.

**1P11, S.** The university defines, documents, and communicates expectations for effective teaching and learning through its strategic plan, and the bylaws of the Nebraska Board of Regents. Faculty members in each unit decide what effective teaching and learning are but the common general definition is: meet diverse learner needs, use active learning techniques, and support each learner as necessary. It is unclear how the expectations are included in faculty or staff evaluations. Assessment data, exit surveys and a recently adopted course evaluation instrument are instruments currently used for collecting data on teaching and learning but it is unclear how this data is fed back for improvements in the area.

**1P12, O.** UNO uses a number of course delivery formats designed around faculty needs. However, the process does not appear to take into consideration student needs for effective instructional methods or need for reasonable availability of courses to meet degree requirements.

**1P13, O.** Although there are 'processes' designed to review programs every seven years, evidence was not presented to show whether or not these reviews take place and what impact they may have. Some programs, again unidentified either by program or by numbers, also have Advisory Boards. Although reviews are mandated, there is no indication that 'currency' is at issue. Also, there is no indication of how it is known if individual courses are kept up-to-date. Effectiveness measures, other than a peer review team and response to the prior peer review seven years later, are also not discussed.

**1P14, O.** The method for discontinuing courses and programs is very decentralized, being initiated at the departmental level. Although faculty should control the curriculum, it is possible that without any criteria for continuance or discontinuance of courses, that the courses listed for students to take may include out-of-date, low enrollment, and untaught courses. There is an inherent conflict of interest here that often tends to perpetuate unnecessary programs. UNO's process for changing or discontinuing programs references the approval process. No description is provided of how programs changes are managed from a faculty and student perspective. The

impact such changes may have on program participants may be underestimated. A more systematic method of determining which programs continue, explicitly including extra-departmental parties, could reduce potential negative impacts likely with the current process.

**1P15, O.** The institution's description of their process for learning support needs fails to identify steps to gather data to assess unmet needs and to evaluate services provided. Student feedback gathering would be a particularly useful part of this process. Data from course surveys, developmental classes, and assessment also might provide insight into other areas of improvement.

**1P16, O.** UNO has combined Academic and Student Affairs under a single administrator and relies on this structure and the strategic plans to ensure co-curricular goals are aligned with curricular learning objectives. The institution's description of their process to coordinate co-curricular and curricular learning and development objectives does not make clear how faculty and students are engaged in this activity. Nor does it indicate how, or if, co-curricular goals and their alignment are assessed.

**1P17, O.** Annual assessment reports and program reviews every seven years may help with **program** assessment but it does not address whether or not individual students being awarded degrees met the expected learning outcomes. In addition, without a summative assessment of student development compared to what was intended, UNO will have no way to determine progress or direct improvement efforts.

**1P18, O.** The assessment process described does not make clear what steps are followed to establish a conceptual approach to assessment, how measures are selected and designed, how goals are set for learning, and what process steps are followed to improve learning.

**1R1, OO.** Measures identified for assessment touch appear to only touch on general education goals (CLA). NSSE measures student perceptions of their academic experience and is not a direct or indirect measure of learning. Other measures are not described for either the institutional general education outcomes or for any program outcomes.

**1R2, OO.** Although not even listed in the systems portfolio, the UNO website lists the general education requirements and outcomes as of Fall 2012. They can roughly be categorized as: English & writing, mathematics, public speaking, natural and physical sciences, humanities and fine arts, social science and diversity. The only data listed was one question on the CLA exam

(unclear which learning outcome it aligns with) and a vague reference to NSSE results. Although some minimal data has been collected, it is insufficient to assess the general education outcomes articulated. Results from the CLA are not provided in a form that would allow review of categories of respondents, programs, majors, or time frames. NSSE data are not provided and no interpretation of results is given. No institutionally collected data on any general education objectives are even mentioned as existing.

**1R3, OO.** UNO is in the very early stages of collecting comparative, longitudinal assessment data for its programs, and presents a limited interpretation of limited results from only three units. No actual data are provided in support of these conclusions. Most UNO academic programs did not report any data.

**1R4, O.** UNO conducts exit surveys in which students report satisfaction with their education at the university, and that employers are hiring its graduates. However, these sources do not measure the degree to which graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills required by stakeholders. No direct measures are presented. Although the new alumni survey will provide some additional information, the university might benefit from exploring alternative instruments which measure stakeholder satisfaction such as employer surveys as part of its assessment of evidence that students completing programs of study have the necessary knowledge and skills required by its stakeholders.

**1R5, OO.** No performance results presented. The referenced websites, PING and Academic Department Indicators are not accessible without a login. The data is not available to the reviewers and to the public. In addition, only two departments have their information available: Sociology and Communication.

([https://www.unomaha.edu/infogateway/inactive\\_sec/deptlist.php](https://www.unomaha.edu/infogateway/inactive_sec/deptlist.php)).

**1R6, OO.** Benchmark results from other institutions are spotty and incomplete. Insufficient results overall make benchmarking meaningless.

**1I1, S.** UNO has implemented major improvements to the General Education, assessment, and program review processes, and is continuing to address improvements in advising. Having the capacity and focusing resources to successfully address these vitally important processes demonstrates that the university is continuing to mature in areas of continuous improvement.

**1I2, O.** UNO's culture and infrastructure for continuous improvement is in an early stage of development.

**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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 2.

*The University of Nebraska-Omaha never explicitly defines what they consider their non-instructional / other distinctive objectives. Because of this they do not systematically address how they are measuring each. The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska established the following goals: access and affordability, quality academic programs, workforce and economic development, research growth, engagement with the state and accountability. Implicitly, through what is discussed, it appears that the other distinctive objectives of UNO are: athletics, service learning, alumni affairs, research, and community engagement. However, results are only discussed in terms of community engagement / service learning. No data from these measures is presented and so systematic assessment, benchmarking, and improvement are not possible. Overall, UNO is at a very early stage of quality systems development in Category 2.*

**2P1, O.** Key non-instructional units are identified in UNO's strategic plan and direct operational responsibility. However, non-instructional objectives and goals are not clearly identified and therefore their design and operation are unclear.

**2P2, S.** The institution's other distinctive objectives emerge through its strategic planning process influenced by wide local constituent involvement and by alignment with the University of Nebraska System planning goals.

**2P3, O.** Although strategic planning goals are communicated to the UNO community frequently and by a number of different media, it is not clear if and how other distinctive objectives are communicated as a part of this process and disseminated throughout the campus. The university might benefit from exploring more opportunities for ongoing conversations with stakeholders beyond publishing on the web.

**2P4, O.** UNO utilizes its shared governance system, Staff Advisory Committee, and Academic Planning Council to plan, assess, and review the units charged with overseeing non-instructional

objectives. However, it is not clear how or if non-instructional objectives are assessed and reviewed outside the strategic planning process.

**2P5-2P6, S.** Faculty and staff needs are determined and incorporated primarily through the Staff Advisory Council and the Faculty Senate and the involvement of these groups in the planning process that evaluated other distinctive objectives. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness coordinates surveys that solicit feedback on objectives and processes and disseminates results throughout the organization.

**2R1, OO.** UNO reports that it gathers many pieces of information related to non-instructional objectives, but only service learning data is cited. The university will benefit from expanding its analysis of available data related to this area, and investigate other quality indicators of performance.

**2R2, O.** Although the success of the SLA is commendable, the university has an opportunity to expand their collection of results in this area to identify further successes and possible opportunities for improvement.

**2R3, OO.** UNO has not presented performance comparison data.

**2R4, OO.** Although UNO reports growth in the number of partnerships, without specific performance data, it is not possible for the institution to quantitatively assess impact of these objectives to strengthen the University.

**2I1, OO.** UNO does not present any examples of recent improvements.

**2I2, OO.** UNO does not appear to have in place specific processes within its infrastructure intended to help select specific process for improvement.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 3.

*It appears UNO is in an early stage of development for the understanding and analysis of student and other stakeholder needs. UNO does not seem to have a well-developed system for identifying: (1) what kind of data they need to understand and serve their stakeholders, (2) how to go about developing instruments to gather that data, or (3) how to coordinate their response to multiple stakeholders internally. Advances have been made with new centralized data collection and distribution but it appears the processes for analyzing and using this data and collecting and using additional data are not yet established as a regular ongoing process*

*At this time UNO is generally not able to describe how its processes work, measures are not in place or do not align with specific processes, and process results are not available. Without these, analysis of results, benchmarking, and systematic process improvement are not yet feasible. From the evidence presented, it appears the collection of data is inconsistent, both in terms of who is collecting it and what kind of data is being collected. A much more systematic approach to data-collection and interpretation is needed.*

**3P1, O.** UNO uses a variety of internal and external instruments to gather data about its students through a number of campus-wide surveys or through student members of planning or review teams. However, it is not clear how the university uses this data to identify changing needs, and how it analyzes and selects a course of action in response to those needs. Developing an understanding at the process level will guide and strengthen improvement efforts.

**3P2, O.** While the University cites numerous campus organizations and co-curricular opportunities for students, it is unclear how the university builds and maintains relationships with its students through the programs mentioned in the systems portfolio. UNO might consider what rituals, traditions, and processes it has in place to build and maintain relationships with its students.

**3P3, O.** There seems to be little systematic attempt to gather, assess and react programmatically to information about the needs of the many diverse stakeholder groups of UNO. There are clearly many connections with the community, parents, employers, etc., but little evidence of a strategy to systematically identify their needs. For instance, there is no mechanism for identifying the needs and concerns of parents after students begin studies. It is also unclear how changing needs are translated into courses of action.

**3P4, O.** UNO meets regularly with the MOEC and with community partners through advisory boards and forums. It is unclear how the university intentionally works to build and maintain

relationships with key stakeholder groups, except for occasional one-way communication. UNO might have an opportunity to better meet the needs of its key stakeholders by analyzing additional means of sustaining and expanding those relationships.

**3P5, O.** The decentralized and ad hoc nature of UNO operations allows creativity on the campus and also provides opportunities for the university to make concrete plans to accomplish the identified goal of enrollment growth. However, the university does not have a formal process for identifying and targeting new student and stakeholder groups. The university should begin to implement processes and procedures regarding targeted offerings and services in order to analyze and evaluate the recommendations of the consultants.

**3P6, O.** UNO has published processes for academic and non-academic complaints. UNO says complaints may be resolved through the Office of Academic and Student Affairs on a case by case basis -- but this 'office' comprises much of the institution. It is unclear how anyone would lodge a complaint, how it is tracked, or that it would have any ramifications beyond the particular case as these are resolved on a 'case-by-case' basis. It appears most registered complaints go through the Ombudsperson office for fair resolution regarding the complaint. There is no indication that any of this complaint data is aggregated or used to identify ongoing issues at the institution or that any feedback on complaints and actions taken are shared with anyone in the UNO community.

**3R1, OO.** UNO does not report having student satisfaction measures that would give feedback on important institutional processes. A measure of overall satisfaction is captured by the NSSE survey but only for a sample of first year and senior students. Classroom surveys are used but whether satisfaction measures are incorporated is not described. There is very little indication given of how, exactly, the information derived from NSSE and other “national and local perception surveys” is made available in a useful format to interested parties.

**3R2, O.** UNO reports positive results for student satisfaction, but has no results for any other stakeholders. Given the volume of data identified in 3R1 as being collected for satisfaction the reporting of only a few questions from the most recent graduation survey was troublesome. UNO provides limited results regarding student satisfaction and little analysis of the results. The results provided are impressive: 95% of graduating students say they would recommend UNO to others. Institutional data over time would be useful in making the case for reported levels of and revealing trends in student satisfaction. Further analysis of the available survey data might be

used to understand what UNO does for its students that lead to such an impressive result.

**3R3, O.** Performance results for relationship building showed the percentage of students returning after the first year, the number of students in clubs, and an increase in Thompson Learning Community courses. Figure 3.1 provides good visual representation of retention, and UNO provides some information on potential areas for improvement. There was no evidence presented about how the students perceive the relationship. Given that the institution collects NSSE data, it was disappointing to not see data over time reflecting the student perception of the relationship or comparative data with other institutions. With the wealth of information UNO collects from its students, it seems that more information could be provided on building relationships with students.

**3R4, O.** UNO offers upward trending results for building relationships with employers and K-12 districts. However, no stakeholder satisfaction results are provided. The university has no results for students' parents or Alumni, and could benefit from developing measurements for analyzing these vital relationships.

**3R5, O.** Internship enrollment data are provided reflecting results from multiple years and UNO reports increasing numbers for dual enrollment students and internships. Relationships with other stakeholders are not discussed. There is an opportunity to provide performance results for other key stakeholder relationships. While the University cites the growth in internships, participation does not equal satisfaction. Sharing internship provider evaluation data would be helpful.

**3R6, S.** UNO compares itself to peers on several key performance indicators and is doing well. UNO's results for retention are higher than its ten metropolitan peers, and the university has been on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for the past 7 years. The university might benefit from investigating available survey instruments with peer results that it can use to measure its results for this area.

**3I1, O.** A significant advance has been the intentional collection of and distribution of data. The new OIE and the PING gateway are two improvements for the category of student and stakeholder needs. However, processes beyond 'availability' of data, e.g., analysis of and use of data for decision-making, seem to be slowly developing organically. The university has an opportunity to use these resources to their potential to collect more in depth data and analyze it to help understand the needs of its students and stakeholders more fully.



**3I2, O.** Attention has been given to try to move the culture of the organization toward one of greater inclusion of various stakeholders in decision making and one that values continuous improvement. There are processes and procedures in place that allows for decision-making and input through committees and strategic planning processes. However, the description provided does not indicate how these directly help with selection of specific process to improve in the arena of understanding student and other stakeholder needs.

**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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 4.

*The majority of process descriptions in this category reflect that UNO has a clear understanding of its employment related processes, perhaps accounting for improved process descriptions, and is diligent in the administration of these functions. However, it is also evident that UNO is not yet making the connection between process understanding, analyzing measures of process results, and using that information to drive continuous improvement. Results and improvement in this category are weak. The institution might benefit from a comprehensive examination of its retention policies and practices. Additionally, succession and growth planning might be integrated into strategic planning so that institutional priorities and funding are clear to administrative units as they make their plans. UNO would benefit from a careful analysis of its processes and systems in relation to its peer institutions.*

**4P1, O.** UNO allows search committees or supervisors to establish specific credentials, skills and values for open positions and, HR monitors the staff position descriptions. The policies and procedures for determining whether search committees or supervisors establish credentials are not clear. Processes by which appropriate credentials are established are not delineated.

**4P2, S.** The hiring of faculty and administrators appropriately brings in voices from all campus constituents, not just those of the department or program in which the hire will work. A process is

in place for HR to screen for minimum qualifications -- including background checks and reference checks before the applications are released to the selection committees and supervisors who make the final hiring decisions. These extra screenings before the applications arrive at the hiring manager's desk likely streamline the time to hire -- but, depending on the number of applications received, this could be extremely time consuming and could actually delay the hiring process.

**4P3, S.** UNO follows general practices in recruitment, including local, regional, and national advertising as appropriate, and has established policies and procedures in place for recruiting. UNO relies upon its compensation programs for employee retention, as well as encouraging open communication from its employees. The university might consider additional retention processes, such as employee recognition programs, employee advancement, etc.

**4P4, O.** The university identifies its processes for orienting new faculty to the organization's history, mission, and values. Current processes for staff and administrative employees are focused on employment-related policies and procedures. However, all employees would benefit from an introduction to institutional history, mission, and values.

**4P5, O.** Although UNO is working to develop an institution-wide Enrollment Management and Marketing Plan, it is unclear what processes are currently in place for succession planning. Considering the university's 20/20 mandate, UNO might benefit from both succession planning and centralized growth planning. The university might also benefit from studying how changes in instructional technology and other trends in higher education (e.g., the increased reliance on adjuncts) might affect this hiring plan and help ensure academic standards.

**4P6, S.** Work process design is carried out by a representative governance structure that ensures participation by the various employee groups of the University. The effectiveness of the UNO customer relations process, both internal and external customers, was the topic of a 2011-12 action project.

**4P7, S.** UNO has internal policies and procedures, including an IRB, to set out to identify the ethical behaviors the institution expects in addition to standard ethical procedures expected in each field. Ethics in research is 'ensured' through approval from the IRB prior to research. UNO has very detailed and clearly stated codes of professional ethics and fiscal responsibilities by which employees are bound, including conflict of interest policies and an IRB. While the enforcement of such policies is always the key to their success (and the hardest element of an

organization to measure), the existence of such policies on paper in such detail is both appropriate and to be praised. There is an opportunity to document how the institution ensures other ethical behaviors are followed.

**4P8, O.** UNO units provide professional development opportunities through the Center for Faculty Development, HR, Information Services and the library. Each unit is charged with collecting and analyzing satisfaction and needs data, and this data is supplemented with employee surveys. However, it is unclear how these needs are aligned with short- and long-term strategic plans, and how it strengthens its instructional and non-instructional programs and services. UNO might explore integrating these surveys with the annual performance evaluation process and using this system to set goals and evaluate results.

**4P9, O.** UNO identifies five different areas of support for faculty and staff. However, all training and professional development services offered seem to depend on employees recognizing their training needs and initiating it. It is also unclear how pervasive ongoing development occurs at UNO or if it is an embedded part of its culture. Finally, there was no discussion on reinforcement of the training.

**4P10, O.** UNO has clearly established policies and procedures for employee evaluation, and employee evaluations are mapped to measure performance against eight competencies consistent with the university's mission and values. However, it is not clear how evaluation systems are aligned with objectives for instructional and non-instructional programs and services.

**4P11, S.** Strategic Planning Awards are used to recognize units that exemplify a commitment to institutional goals. Service learning partner awards are given to individual faculty or staff. The Bravo process promotes peer recognitions. However, it is unclear how staff members are rewarded -- except for the reference to external rewards and compensation.

**4P12, S.** UNO uses both formal and informal processes such as surveys and shared governance to determine key issues related to employee motivation. Administrative practices are in place to respond to information that is received. Overall motivation is analyzed via institution-wide faculty and staff surveys and focus groups. Individual assessment may be done informally by supervisors but formally only through exit interviews when employees leave.

**4P13, S.** The university has counseling, health, safety, and security systems in place. However, it does not appear that a formal mechanism for evaluating faculty and staff satisfaction exists.

**4R1, O.** UNO reports that they conduct a number of surveys, but no information is provided to identify the specific measures that are collected and analysis regularly for the purpose of assessing their effort to value people. There is an opportunity to focus on specific measures so that employees are mindful of where they stand, know what the historical trend has been, and aware of improvement efforts.

**4R2, O.** UNO has begun taking multiple measures to analyze performance results in valuing people. One point in time set of data from these sources is not sufficient to analyze comparisons with historical trends or comparison institutions. Further analysis of results related to employee satisfaction and trend data would provide a more thorough review of the institution's efforts in this area.

**4R3, O.** There is no clear evidence presented that indicates productivity and effectiveness other than reclassification of the institution. No measures were presented and no numbers presented for the few examples of professional development that were discussed. No data on scholarship productivity is provided.

**4R4, OO.** No comparative information is provided on processes related to valuing people. A comprehensive analysis of peer institution data might provide insight into UNO's successes and areas for improvement.

**4I1, S.** UNO has focused recent improvements—including an Action Project—on professional development, hiring, and customer service initiatives.

**4I2, O.** The university states in the portfolio that its policies and processes are grounded in valuing people. However, UNO has not demonstrated that an infrastructure exists that can function to analyze process data and use that information to identify improvement targets.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 5.

*Although UNO is a large, decentralized campus, it is committed to a shared governance model for decision-making and accommodates wide stakeholder involvement. However, it does not appear to have results for measuring effectiveness in Leading and Communicating. While there are clear administrative structures for gathering information about mission success, it is less clear these structures are well thought-through or fully understood and accepted by all constituents within the school. No performance measures are gathered for communicating processes, nor are the measures gathered are not used to assess process capability or for improvement efforts. Additionally, with no formal succession plan and no proposal to develop one, the university may not be making the best use of its resources.*

**5P1, O.** As one of four campuses in the University of Nebraska system, UNO is subject to the strategic framework as outlined by the system governing board. In addition the mission and strategic framework of the system, UNO engages in its own strategic planning process, with an annual meeting with representatives from the community, faculty, staff, students, and administration to review progress on the strategic plan to plan changes for the future. It is unclear how the mission and values are defined and reviewed, or by whom.

**5P2, S.** All campus initiatives are expected to be aligned with the Strategic Plan objectives. Alignment is reinforced by establishment of and regular monitoring of a set of performance indicators for each campus. Ultimately the Board of Regents of the NU system monitors performance to supervise operations with authority to control and direct all expenditures.

**5P3, O.** The Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of representatives from a variety of constituency groups, suggesting an organization that actively seeks input from many sources. However, a mechanism for the Strategic Planning Committee to actively seek input from other new sources would improve the feedback and information the committee has available. Likewise, reliance on student voices to address the needs of all current and future students is inadequate. Students often don't recognize their own needs much less the needs of all current and future students. The collection of and use of institutional data would likely have a more direct impact on future student success than student surveys.

**5P4, O.** Construction of new facilities and renovation of existing facilities shows a commitment to the infrastructure of the university. No process is described for how leaders guide the organization in seeking future opportunities while enhancing a strong focus on students and learning. Specific outcomes and objectives related to future opportunities, especially those focused on students and learning, would provide a more thorough exploration of how leaders

guide institutional decision-making in this area.

**5P5, S.** UNO has a governance structure consisting of standing committees and groups at all levels charged with operations oversight and making various management decisions. Additionally UNO employs a wide variety of campus-wide committees in advisory capacities. These groups are typically staffed by faculty, staff, administrators, student, and community partners as needed. However, it is unclear how tasks are delegated to teams, task forces, and committees in the decision-making process, which is critical to mission accomplishment.

**5P6, O.** UNO's Office of Institutional Effectiveness collects and provides access to data which units may use to assess their performance. This has been enhanced recently with the UNO Performance Information Gateway (PING) making more data widely available across campus. While this discussion makes it clear that data is now available there is no indication that the use of the data is anything beyond voluntary and at the discretion of the unit. Moreover, how it uses the data is not made clear. An opportunity may exist to review how data are actually used by employees and also whether the data elements being gathered are the right ones, and whether different data might be needed.

**5P7, S.** The university utilizes electronic media and its shared governance structure for communicating information and decisions across the institution, and recognizes the ongoing need to continually work to improve this important process.

**5P8, S.** Public posting of the strategic planning documents coupled with the required incorporation of individual goals that align with the institutional goals in annual evaluations ensures all become aware of and work toward the institutional goals.

**5P9, S.** The institution conducts several initiatives intended to encourage leadership abilities among faculty, staff, and administrators. Examples of these are the Leadership Institute, Center for Faculty Development programming, the administrative fellowship program, and Leadership Omaha.

**5P10, OO.** UNO would benefit from a clear leadership succession plan that delineates appropriate training and credentials for interim positions, hiring plans, and professional development that allow for smooth transitions and strong interim leadership. The absence of succession planning has affected UNO's performance and accomplishment of its goals by the self-study's own admission.

**5R1, O.** UNO follows standard practice in measuring leading and communicating, including annual administrative evaluations, HERI faculty surveys, and local staff surveys. However, there is a difference between surveys and performance measures. Direct measures of success, such as meeting quality indicators, specific questions asked to determine satisfaction with leadership and the communication at the university, etc. would provide additional evaluative and formative information regarding leading and communicating.

**5R2, O.** Results and interpretations for only two faculty measures are provided. Trends are not given. Staff and administrator results are not given. There is an opportunity to utilize the measures named in 5R1 to assess employee perceptions of the institution's leadership and communication processes, and to use this information for systematic process improvement.

**5R3, O.** Some comparative data would provide a larger context for understanding leading and communicating at UNO.

**5I1, O.** The university acknowledges only incremental improvements in this area, although they believe the newly formed Enrollment Management and Marketing Office will improve both leading and communicating. The PING system represents a significant contribution to shared information and communication processes at the university. However, there is little evidence of a systematic and comprehensive process being in place. For instance, mention of improvements in social media and cell phone technology were made without explanation.

**5I2, O.** There is little evidence of the development of a culture and infrastructure to help select process to improve in leading and communicating, despite the need for improvement. 1 out of 7 faculty (14.4%) felt themselves to be at odds with administration and almost half (44.8%) felt they were not sufficiently involved in campus decision making. This indicates systematic problems in the attempt to involve faculty in decision making at UNO. More information is needed to discover the causes of this disconnect between faculty and administration.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 6.

*Descriptions provided by the institution in this category generally reflect operational features that would be typical of similar institutions in higher education, but indications that UNO is making progress in its quality journey are missing. While it is clear that UNO has strong processes and procedures in place for assessing and implementing change regarding campus security, process descriptions in most other areas lack specifics that would indicate an awareness of how process understanding is a foundation concept of continuous improvement. UNO has made changes to student support services, including the library and activities, to meet student need. What are not apparent from the systems portfolio are performance measures or process analysis. Reference to specific data and processes, except for safety, is generally vague and without much substance. This not only makes it hard for the reviewers to review the processes and results but it would also make it difficult internally to determine if changes need to be made or if processes need to be continued. Additional data is needed to understand how administrative support services have changed in relation to feedback or stakeholder needs. Overall, the evidence provided for this category does not support that the institution is developing a culture and infrastructure for continuous improvement.*

**6P1, O.** UNO conducts annual student surveys about students' experiences and disseminates this information within the organization. Informal collection methods are used to gather support needs from alumni. Other key stakeholders are not mentioned. No description is given for a process that would systematically use information to improve support services. An opportunity exists to develop a more structured process that can be deployed for all key stakeholders.

**6P2, S.** Faculty, staff and administrator support is identified through shared governance, unit reporting, and budget requests. This information is supplemented with regular faculty and staff surveys.

**6P3, SS.** UNO utilizes several comprehensive processes that contribute to everyone's physical safety and security. Processes are comprehensive in coverage, widely and fully deployed, include regular assessment of effectiveness, and clear accountability for functioning and improvement.

**6P4, O.** UNO describes its organizational structure and identifies positions that have responsibility to manage key student, administrative, and organizational support services processes. No process is described for how this managing is done.



**6P5, O.** Although the university posts information about reaching its support offices, it is unclear how UNO documents its processes in order to encourage knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment. The university has an opportunity to explore this documentation to ensure continuity and to identify possible areas for continuous improvement.

**6R1, S.** UNO participates in both national and local surveys of support service processes.

**6R2, OO.** Although the university collects a large number of data points, specific numbers are not reported. UNO has an outstanding opportunity to analyze and prioritize the results to seek out areas for improvement. Specific results related to student support services would provide an appropriate context for understanding UNO's performance.

**6R3, O.** Performance results for financial health and enrolment growth, not administrative support service processes was provided. Updates and improvements in several areas are referenced but no data is presented on when the changes occurred, how they were received, any performance enhancements, etc. No performance results data was presented for support services.

**6R4, S.** UNO evaluates results in both its committee and supervisory structures to implement change and respond to concerns related to organizational support areas. UNO provides only a couple of examples of how such data has been used: library and student services.

**6R5, O.** Results beyond expenditures, such as results on pertinent portions of the NSSE or HERI surveys, would provide a broader set of data for institutional comparison beyond the IPEDS financial information.

**6I1, S.** UNO has made changes in response to data related to support operations, including the formation of the Office of Enrollment Management and Marketing and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

**6I2, O.** Specific examples of continuing improvement would provide a context for understanding UNO's improvement efforts.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 7.

*UNO has invested in the PING portal and the strategic planning system and appears to have begun processes focused on improving effectiveness. It is also putting into place systems to allow widespread access to the data for decision-making. Systems to safeguard information and to provide access are established and follow standard practice in higher education. Most of these new systems and the institutional effectiveness office are recent additions to the institution. Regular use of data for planning and assessment has not yet been embedded as standardized processes. As these systems continue to develop and be utilized, the university will have trend data to use to identify opportunities for additional improvements. The closing comments in the Results section, namely, that the information collection processes at UNO are undergoing rapid change, and that UNO is a "late-comer" to this task, is well-substantiated in this section of the Portfolio. Much work needs to be done at every level of data collection, from the conception of what data needs to be collected all the way to the effective dissemination and application of this data to mission accomplishment. This should indeed "remain a high priority," since failure to accomplish this task quickly and effectively will hobble long-term strategies for improvement.*

**7P1, S.** Personnel-related information is selected and mandated by the University of Nebraska System. Distribution and management of data and performance information is provided through the PING portal system and multiple other avenues to access data. A centralized assessment committee has been established to encourage and review unit assessment plans and reports. The university has an opportunity to focus on a communication plan, or even a system of regular reporting, of that information to important constituencies. It is unclear if the university provides regular reporting of data.

**7P2, O.** Decentralized administrative structures aligned with university colleges select and utilize data and information. The student assessment process is centralized in structure. Data reporting for academic purposes shows a clear line of communication through deans. The support and student information reporting systems do not appear to follow an equally well-developed process for dissemination. Other university departments have data and information access but no description is provided for how these units select, manage, and distributes data and information to

support planning and improvement efforts. For assessment and continuous improvement processes, UNO may wish to consider what data and performance information would be important to all stakeholders and share the information broadly for comparative analysis and institutional planning purposes.

**7P3, O.** Although UNO appears to have large repositories of data, it acknowledges no process or system is in place to help determine the needs of its departments and units. Department and unit needs for data and information are driven by system-wide criteria, accreditation requirements, or more recently by the formalizing of some AQIP processes. UNO is currently developing its infrastructure for data collection. Still to be developed is analysis and use of the data and ensuring the needed data is collected. As this structure develops, UNO can identify the data needed to measure institutional effectiveness and assess reaching its own performance goals. As expectations for continuous improvement are developed and reinforced through better documentation of processes, determination of process performance through metrics can become the impetus for providing more useful institutional data and information.

**7P4, S.** KPIs determined by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents drive the collection of data at the organizational level. This data is disseminated through administrators, reports, and annual events, including Strategic Planning meetings. Data is further shared with department and program level personnel.

**7P5, S.** Much of UNO's comparison data are mandated by the requirements of the Nebraska system Board of Regents. UNO has also determined a list of 10 peer institutions for comparison on six criteria. Additionally, UNO participates in comparison models with other urban and metropolitan campuses with the same Carnegie classification utilizing publicly available data elements.

**7P6, S.** The colleges, departments, and units have individual strategic plans which align with the UNO Strategic Plan. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee monitors and ensures the alignment of unit and campus analysis of data and information. The strategic planning process does not in and of itself ensure department and unit analysis of data unless the process requires a set of common measurable and reportable outcomes and requires reporting of the information, which is not clearly identified as part of the process.

**7P7, S.** The university's IS department utilizes industry established best practices and feedback from an advisory committee to ensure the performance of its systems and processes. UNO has the

expected redundancy and security, as well as university policy, in place to ensure access, timeliness, accuracy, reliability and security of its information systems. UNO might also benefit by surveying its users directly to solicit additional feedback and ideas for improvement.

**7R1, O.** UNO indicates potential sources of information but does not describe any measures of performance and effectiveness of its information and knowledge systems. It is unclear how the performance and effectiveness of the system for information is assessed.

**7R2, OO.** The university interprets this question in a fashion very different from its wording. The question prompts the respondent to provide measures of the general methods of measuring effectiveness at the university. Low dissatisfaction with a system does not necessarily mean that the systems for measuring effectiveness are effective. It is also unclear whether the high satisfaction rate claimed by the UCLA HERI Faculty survey refers to satisfaction with the “mechanics” of data collection (e.g., ease of use) or to the substantive value of the data collected (i.e., is this telling me something valuable). UNO might consider, describe, and analyze what evidence it has that it measures its effectiveness in accomplishing its mission and goals beyond just satisfaction surveys.

**7R3, O.** The university provides no comparative data despite listing a number of measures the Nebraska Board of Regents requires the university to collect on student retention, salaries, tuition, and other significant markers of effectiveness. The institution indicates that they are working to cure this shortcoming.

**7I1, S.** UNO cites the new PING portal and the restructuring of the assessment process as examples of improvements in its information and knowledge systems.

**7I2, O.** The university reports that the use of the PING system helps select processes to improve and targets to set for performance improvements. The absence of data in the report would seem to indicate that there are still opportunities to build upon for continuous improvement. There is little indication that a culture has been developed to support selecting specific processes in this category for improvement.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 8.

*The fact that the UNO culture values continuous improvement is very positive. Descriptions in this portfolio provide evidence that UNO has just begun its continuous improvement journey and having employees who are open to its adoption will be very helpful. UNO recognizes it needs to make structural changes to support development of a continuous improvement system and so has created the new Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). This office can provide needed expertise in using quality methods and become the driving force behind creating a culture that not only embraces quality as a concept but can also bring it into everyday practice.*

*UNO is clearly committed to growing its enrollments, distance education offerings and network of relationships with external partners in the Omaha community. However, the Portfolio does not reveal how carefully these growth goals have been aligned with the educational tasks of the university. UNO is encouraged to look beyond raw numbers in growth, since continuous improvement is not synonymous with continuous growth.*

*UNO has been building an inclusive Strategic Planning process for fifteen years, and has succeeded in setting short-term goals. UNO purports to have systems in place to collect and analyze data. However, after fifteen years of strategic planning, few results are presented and no trend or comparative data is included. The university has developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for its Strategic Plan, but the results of those KPIs are noticeably absent.*

**8P1, S.** UNO has a robust strategic planning process and a committee structure that engages many members of the academic community in planning and decision-making. A clearer statement (and internal comprehension) of the processes that assimilate and direct these diverse committees would further strengthen UNO's ability to plan continuous improvement.

**8P2, O.** Formally, the UNO Strategic Plan and the annual planning process set short- and long-term goals for the university. However, no description of a process is provided to identify how UNO selects among different possible short- and long-term strategies. For example, it is unclear what data and process was used to set the 20/20 enrollment goal (a major growth target) beyond the vision of the President. Likewise, the building of new structures to house and educate this growing student body is not synonymous with well-thought-out, long-term planning. Addressing the serious question about how short- and long-term strategies are set should be a main priority of

UNO in the coming years.

**8P3, O.** The Strategic Planning committee ensures all proposed action plans map to the institution's strategies, but the university does not share the process for submitting action plans, references to alignment with the strategic plan that are necessary in a submission, or who is eligible to submit an action plan. UNO might also consider what action plans beyond the strategic planning processes might support the institution moving forward.

**8P4, O.** The Strategic Planning process is intentionally inclusive and ensures alignment across the university. Additionally, annual employee reviews and compensation policies are designed so employees understand how their performance aligns with the Strategic and action plans. However, reliance on the relationships that should exist between committees or on the expectation that everyone will do their job as their position description indicates does not constitute a process. The Portfolio should provide evidence the processes exist to ensure that coordination and alignment are in fact occurring, not just that they should occur. Likewise, it should clarify what committees and other bodies are empowered to make proposals for improvements and the process by which this would occur.

**8P5, S.** The University historically has maintained a reactive process in defining objectives, selecting measures, and setting targets for its strategies and action plans. At present, UNO does not describe clear processes to define objectives, select measures, and set performance targets. The establishment of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, while very recent, is a good sign that resources are being devoted to the collection and analysis of information vital to the accomplishment of mission and goals. Given the general and indeterminate direction to such data collection provided by the NU System, the decisions made by this office will be extremely important for the future success of UNO.

**8P6, S.** Academic and administrative units at UNO utilize long-term planning, and the university created a Strategic Budget Advisory Committee in 2012 to connect short- and long-term planning. UNO has been challenged to prioritize its spending due to flat resource allocations from the state. Some description on how the budget subcommittee of the strategic planning committee uses the strategic planning process to allocate funds would be helpful in understanding the context of current resources and future needs.

**8P7, O.** UNO has a well-established process of identifying and prioritizing risks to manage, and utilizes internal (including the UNO Internal Audit Department) and external resources to review

and prioritize risks the university may be facing. However, the institution does not describe how risk is assessed in its planning process, especially economic risk (as opposed to risks to information systems or personal safety). Rather, the university engages in ad-hoc risk management rather than institutional-level analysis as it attempts to do with strategic planning initiatives.

**8P8, O.** UNO provides professional development opportunities for faculty, staff and administrators, but it does not describe how these activities are systematically aligned with organizational strategies and action plans. For example, the institution states elsewhere in the Portfolio that it intends to grow enrollments in distance education courses, but there isn't an indication that specific faculty development activities have been enhanced in support of this planned initiative.

**8R1, O.** UNO states that it uses results of its KPIs and feedback from internal and external stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of its planning processes. However, it reports no data in this answer. Providing examples of the relevant data collected would substantiate this claim.

**8R2, OO:** Physical infrastructure, data management, and distance education expansion all are results that were planned for and achieved. However, constructing new buildings and increasing the number of on-line courses is not a sufficient benchmark for measuring performance results in accomplishing organizational strategies and action plans. These are themselves intermediate steps for accomplishing the ultimate goal of the University, namely, providing quality and affordable education to the community. No mention is made of student academics in this section. Furthermore, data regarding the success of KPIs and feedback from stakeholders is also missing.

**8R3, O.** UNO reports an incomplete set of targets or goals for the next 1-3 years. Community engagement is only one part of the university's plan and therefore should not serve as the only representation of forward planning. The Portfolio needs to make clear how its action plans relate to the educational goals of the university (as opposed to its growth and outreach goals). As with the 20/20 project, it is not clear how the planned growth enhances the educational mission of the school.

**8R4, O.** UNO compares well in US News and World Report rankings and has been on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll since 2010. However, it is not clear how these results are direct indicators for Planning Continuous Improvement. In addition, U.S News and World Report rankings are not universally accepted as a good comparative measure,

especially in light of the select group of peer institutions chosen by the Nebraska Board of Regents. The university should present data that compares the institution to its peers on similar issues, not the magazine's more subjective methodology.

**8R5, O.** The University presents physical plant changes as the sole example of institutional improvement, foregoing information on student learning, satisfaction, retention, and placement. No evidence is provided to support that UNO's process for planning continuous improvement is effective.

**8I1, S.** Recent changes in Planning Continuous Improvement include the major reorganization of data collection and analysis with the formation of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the formation of the Office of Enrollment Management and Marketing. The Noel-Levitz survey should also provide a more systematic view of the university's process and strategy.

**8I2, S.** UNO's culture values continuous improvement, which is a positive factor that will help it to develop systematic improvement methods. Annual strategic planning with input from much of the campus has allowed UNO to set targets for Planning Continuous Improvement.

***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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Category 9.

*UNO's attempts to build collaborative relationships with external stakeholders throughout the metropolitan Omaha community are admirable and sizeable. The university has developed a number of robust strategic partnerships with multiple external stakeholders and seeks to expand internal collaboration as well. UNO has identified the groups with which it works in various partnerships. UNO values its collaborative relationships as is evident in its mission and value statements. The university has strong partnerships with K-12 and local employers, and reports increasing participation as documentation of success. The university might benefit from further analyzing these trends. For example, is the increase due to strong performance, or population growth? The answer to that question will help determine trends and factors which may be important to meeting the 20,000 by 2020 initiative.*



*However, the report generally does not provide real and substantive data demonstrating success or providing a basis for planning improvements. The university might consider ways in which it can expand these opportunities and introduce other initiatives to encourage university-wide collaboration. Furthermore, UNO has an opportunity to analyze its relationships beyond numerical participation to assess the quality of its relationships.*

**9P1, S.** The university has established strong ties with area P-12 schools and oversees them with the MOEC. UNO is very mindful that it has a strategic goal to enhance its community involvement. Partnerships with organizations from which it receives students are evaluated, selected and developed with furthering this goal as the main criteria. Partnerships are reviewed annually before renewing commitments. Furthermore, its partnership with the Building Brighter Futures program certainly indicates seriousness about its efforts to serve underserved populations in the Omaha community.

**9P2, S.** The university lists primary collaborative partners and the UCOE maintains communication with and surveys dozens of local employers. Discussions are held with employers during the program review process.

**9P3, S.** UNO engages organizations to provide services for its students or the institution using a selection bid process. Relationships are reviewed periodically and continued based on need and a performance review. The university also regularly surveys or conducts focus groups with a variety of strategic partners

**9P4, S.** For products UNO utilizes a bidding process and shares vendor catalogs with UNO units.

**9P5, O.** The institution builds relationships with education associations, external agencies, consortia partners, and the general community with whom it interacts in two primary ways: consortium relationships and collaborative relationships. There is an opportunity to describe the process used to manage relationships with state and federal government, and various external accrediting bodies, along with consortia and collaborative relationships.

**9P6, S.** UNO assesses whether partnerships meet the needs of those involved by gathering feedback data from advisory groups or using stakeholder surveys. The review team would like to have seen more detail about how it gathers and analyzes data about the extent to which external partnerships are in fact benefitting the school and its students.

**9P7, O.** UNO uses engagement links, research triangles, the Institute of Collaboration Science,

and teaching circles as ways to formally facilitate cross departmental collaboration to build relationships. The university cites selected faculty-based groups as examples of internal collaboration, but neither documents how it creates and builds those relationships, nor how it collaborates with other significant groups such as Faculty Senate and Staff Senate. There is no mention of how UNO assures integration and collaboration across these relationships. No evidence is presented or discussed of similar collaborations within staff functions or across faculty and staff functions.

**9R1, O.** UNO has identified a number of measures that represent activity in collaborative relationships and collects participation numbers for them by category. The “measure of building collaborative relationships” seems limited here to a simple numerical listing of the number of partners UNO has at any given time. Simply listing this number tells little about the success or failure of given partnerships or how they could be improved. There is an opportunity to include qualitative assessment data from partner organization participants. The university would benefit by analyzing other data which it reports collecting through Program Review and through UCOE to measure the effectiveness and performance for its relationships. The process section of Category 9 lists both surveys and advisory board participation of sources of information, but these are not indicated as results evaluated by the university in response to 9R1. Information on the quality of partnerships would better serve the institution’s responsiveness to both partner and institutional need than the number of participants does.

**9R2, S.** The university reports a variety of data from strategic partners showing significant levels of satisfaction among collaborators. The university cites quantitative data (enrollment in dual credit programs and the number of partners) and qualitative data (student and teacher satisfaction) among its performance results. The dramatic growth in dual enrollment is notable and admirable, and seems to be accompanied by some meaningful perception surveys that justify the existence of the program and suggest it is accomplishing its purposes. The university could strengthen its case by providing data for the last five or ten years of the measures UNO said it was collecting and to see UNO's interpretation of what it means for its collaborative relationships.

**9R3, OO.** UNO is a recognized leader for student engagement in service learning, but there are certainly many other higher education and non-higher education institutions who are leaders in student engagement in service learning to which the university could compare itself.

**9I1, S.** Three excellent examples were cited as evidence of improvements: increasing dual

enrollments, five campus-wide priorities (referenced elsewhere) and the new community engagement building. However, it is unclear how recent improvements cited demonstrate progress for Building Collaborative Relationships. No examples of process improvements are provided.

**9I2, O.** UNO is in the early stages of building an infrastructure for quality improvement. UNO's mission and values statements are focused around community engagement and collaboration, and the university reports that this guides day-to-day processes. Aside from dual enrollment, few results are documented in the portfolio as evidence of this statement.

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#### ACCREDITATION ISSUES THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

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 core components therein) or that it may face difficulty in meeting the *Criteria* and 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.

***The Systems Appraisal team noted that evidence that University of Nebraska at Omaha currently meets Core component 4.B. is unclear or incomplete.***

There is little systematic evidence of meeting expected student learning outcomes provided in the portfolio. HLC Criterion 4.B states "The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning." UNO states that assessment takes place but does not provide adequate results of student learning or improvement efforts in Category 1 of the portfolio. Substantive and systematic documentation of student learning is necessary.

**1P1 & 1P2.** Comment on the evidence provided for 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.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Subcomponent 3.B.3 is not addressed in 1P1 or 1P2. There is no indication that students, in their degree programs, do these things: collect, analyze and communicate information, master modes of inquiry or creative work. These sections are silent beyond general education.

Subcomponent 3.B.5 is not addressed in 1P1 or 1P2. There is no indication that students, in their degree programs, do these things: faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge appropriate to their mission.

3.B.1 and 3.B.2 are implied through processes. But neither in processes nor in the results section is there any evidence that these exist or are measured beyond the policy to establish them and require reviews. The general education program outcomes are not included in the portfolio. Going to the link provided, there is a list of general education courses required and the outcomes expected after completion of the course or clusters of courses. The goals of the UNO General Education program say there *should be* assessment of the effectiveness of the learning toward the goals but there is no evidence here or in results that this is being done.

**1P2 & 1P18. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 4.B. *The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

4.B.1 is met. There is insufficient evidence that 4.B.2, 4.B.3, and 4.B.4 are met. UNO has a university wide assessment committee which has established a standardized process for reporting assessment and results with program faculty responsible for completing an annual report for review and feedback. While the process has been developed and described well, there is no data available on how well the process is being followed, e.g., do all programs submit the annual report? Of those, do all provide substantive evidence? Of those, are any changes made based on the assessments? Nothing is provided on assessment of the co-curricular programs.

While the university uses the CLA for assessment of some common learning objectives no data are provided that would confirm the scope of implementation, level of achievement, or comparisons to other institutions (4.B.2). The NSSE survey is used, but again no data are provided. No process is described to indicate the institution uses information gained from these assessments to improve student learning (4.B.3). Lack of detailed descriptions and results data prevent making a judgment as to whether assessment methodologies reflect good practice (4.B.4).

**1P4 & 1P10. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 1.C. *The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Items 1P4 and 1P10 do not fully address this core component. They do refer to UNO's "explicit commitment to develop and serve a diverse student body reflecting a dynamic metropolitan community." However, the discussions only address career guidance for students and support services for selected students: the disabled, first generation, underrepresented, veterans and student-athletes. Diversity support

and services do not include the gifted, the prepared students, foreign students, gender, etc. 1P4 and 1P10 do not address UNO's role in a multicultural society.

UNO has implemented many program and processes to address diversity among its students, including appropriate disability services, Project Achieve to support first-generation students, multicultural affairs, and services for military and veteran students.

The university also engages in broad student service learning programs, which introduces students to broad segments of the community.

**1P4 & 1P12. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 3.A. *The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Item 1P4 makes it clear that faculty have the role of establishing and modifying curriculum. UNO contracts with Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMI) to present information on local and regional occupational trends, which is considered by faculty in developing, revising, and assessing programs. No discussion is provided for how this might assist faculty to differentiate learning goals at different program levels (3.A.2).

Item 1P12 talks about the use of technology and attempts to help its use to be pedagogically sound. However, there is no evidence, or discussion, of either how there is assurance that programs are at the appropriate level (3.A.1 and 3.A.3) or that how all modes of delivery and credit awarding assures credit only for equivalent learning. The implication is that the learning is the same. There is no evidence this has been assessed. (3.A.3)

**1P4 & 1P13. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 4.A. *The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The institution relies on several processes, including systematic curriculum review, the Educational Policy and Advisory Committee, and university-wide assessment to ensure that its programs and courses remain up-to-date and effective. Item 1P13 describes a full program review process which, if it is fully implemented, would provide regular program reviews. However, there is no data on the actual number of program reviews, compared to the total number of programs that have been completed in the last seven years. The concern is that sometimes processes are articulated but not fully implemented. Item 4.A.1 subcomponent is likely met.

Subcomponents 4.A.2, 4.A.3, transcribed credit for transferred credits, dual credit courses (4.A.4) and experiential learning or prior learning assessment are not addressed at all in 1P4 and 1P13.

The program review process mirrors accreditation processes, with programs preparing self-studies, visits by peer review teams, response to the external report by the program, and consultation with appropriate administrative staff (4.A.5). Specific specialized accreditations are not discussed. In addition to formalized program review processes, many programs have created community advisory councils to engage the broader community in discussions of the curriculum.

**1P6. Comments on the evidence provided for 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.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

UNO provides extensive and readily available print and web-based resources identifying all degree requirements, programs of study and admissions policies. All first-year and transfer students are required to attend a day-long orientation program and meet with their advisors prior to beginning studies. The Course Catalog Maintenance System (CCMS) ensures that learning outcomes, pre-requisites, degree requirements and program revisions are integrated and publicized to avoid confusion or unnecessary duplication.

Item 1P6 describes the website and course catalog produced by UNO which evidently describe course and program requirements. There is no description in 1P6 as to how students and the public are informed about its faculty & staff, costs to students, control and accreditation relationships. It is unclear from the systems portfolio if students are made aware of common or specific learning outcome expectations.

**1P7 & 1P15. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 3.D. *The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

All students are assigned advisors according to major or, if undeclared, within the College of Arts and Sciences. There are individual advisors by program. This specialization implies good advice once in a program (3.D.3). UNO provides support services for various groups of students both by their background, 1P15, and by their academic needs, 1P8 (3.D.1).

UNO supports multiple academic support centers and programming for Service Learning and Faculty development to ensure high-quality instruction and assist students in successfully accomplishing course objectives (3.D.2). The Criss Library supports not only access to books and periodicals but also a wide range of other technologies and databases for student and faculty use, and seeks input from students and faculty to improve its services. The Center for Faculty Development, Academic Partnerships for Instruction, and the Faculty Senate's Professional Development Committee each provide opportunities for improving teaching (3.D.4).

There is no evidence of pre-testing or screening for adequate preparation before students engage in a course or program (3.D.3). There is no evidence in 1P7 or 1P15 that students receive any direction based on their skills or knowledge level. 1P7 indicates major is student choice and until they decided they are directed to general education courses that would fit all programs (3.D.2). From the portfolio it is not possible to determine if resources for specific programs are available and provided (3.D.4). There is no discussion of evidence of teaching evaluation in the tenure process.

**1P11. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 2.D *The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.***

**Evidence is clear and strong.**

The Board of Regents and University of Nebraska System have a clearly articulated policy concerning the nature and limits of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression for students and faculty. UNO has a Strategic Plan that emphasizes instructional excellence and developing multiple delivery methods to ensure students are able to effectively pursue truth and education. UNO has developed a sophisticated student course-evaluation instrument and other devices for measuring the effectiveness of classroom instruction and program design for its students.

**1P11. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

UNO has clear by-laws governing “the responsible acquisition and application of knowledge.” Faculty achievements within and outside the classroom are reviewed annually and, when possible, rewarded and/or acknowledged by the university (2.E.1 and 2). UNO’s Strategic Plan identifies excellence in research and instruction as key goals of UNO, and directs that appropriate resources be devoted to accomplishing these goals. No discussion is provided that the institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity (2.E.3) for students, faculty and staff.

**1P16. Comments on the evidence provided for Core Component 3.E. *The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Processes and supporting evidence that assure that the university fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment are not provided in the portfolio (3.E.1). The Academic Planning Council coordinates reviews to ensure that all of UNO’s academic and co-curricular programs/units are reviewed at least once every seven years. However, no evidence that might emerge from these reviews is provided in the portfolio to support any claims about contributions the institution makes to an enriched educational environment through co-curricular programming (3.E.2).

**3P1. Comment on the evidence provided for 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.***

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Although the university may include retention, persistence and completion rates in its PING database, these measures and any use of them are not mentioned in 3P1. Goals for student retention, persistence and completion are not presented (CC 4.C.1). No description is provided to indicate that UNO collects and analyzes this information or uses it to make improvements (CC 4.C.2 and 3). Therefore, it is impossible to tell from the information presented what the data are, what the trends are, whether their methodologies are appropriate (CC 4.C.4) and what, if any, impact these results have on the operations at UNO both across the institution and by program.

**3P3 & 3P5. Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component 1.D. *The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.***

**Evidence is clear and strong.**

UNO's commitment to its public obligations (CC 1.D.1) is evident through its mission and vision statements which specifically states "As Nebraska's metropolitan University, UNO is characterized by its strong academic foundations and creative community relationships that transform and improve the lives of constituents, the region, and the nation." UNO's institutional values point to an institution that demonstrates its commitment to the public good through teaching (CC 1.D.2), research, and service for both its students and external stakeholders (CC 1.D.3). The University's institutional values also reflect a commitment to the public good.

**4P2 & 4P10 Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component 3.C. *The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

UNO's hiring process is structured to ensure that only qualified applicants are hired for faculty, staff, and administrative positions (3.C.1, 2 and 6). 4P2 and 4P10 describe how prospective employees are evaluated both prior to hiring and on an ongoing basis. Eight core mission-related competencies are used in the performance review process. Annual performance reviews of all full-time employees confirm and monitor all employees to ensure ongoing quality (3.C.3). Professional development opportunities and support services are made available for faculty and staff (3.C.4).

From the evidence given, it is not possible to determine the extent to which instructors are accessible for student inquiry (3.C.5).

UNO has not documented how it anticipates future needs for faculty and staff.



**4P7 Comment on the evidence provided for 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.*

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

UNO operates under the authority and policies of the University of Nebraska Board or Regents. The university also has an established Code of Professional Ethics and Code of Fiscal Responsibility. Related policies, processes, and compliance information are disseminated to all employees and on the university's web site.

UNO has established policies and procedure regarding its values and ethics, however, no evidence is presented, nor is it discussed whether or not the policies and procedures are followed and how UNO knows it.

**4P7 Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component 2.E.** *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

**Evidence is unclear or incomplete.**

Processes in UNO's academic and administrative units are designed to function within ethical and accountable guidelines and policies. Research involving human subjects is subject to training and to the authority of the Institutional Review Board, and research involving animals is closely regulated by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (2.E.1).

No evidence is provided about any guidance given to students in the ethical use of information (2.E.2) or if the institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity (2.E.3).

**5P1 & 5P2.** Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component *1.A The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.*

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The Planning Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from all areas and levels of the institution, is active in the interpretation (when appropriate) or revision of the Strategic Plan, which the institution's mission. Both the University of Nebraska system-wide strategic framework and the University of Nebraska Omaha strategic plan are readily accessible via the internet on the UNO website (1.A.1).

The mission: "As Nebraska's metropolitan University, UNO is characterized by its strong academic foundations and creative community relationships that transform and improve the lives of constituents, the region, and the nation" is consistent with the institution's academic programs, services, and student profile (1.A.2).

Each campus of the University has established quality indicators aligned with the institution's mission and strategic plan (1.A.3). There is no evidence presented to show that the mission is not broadly understood or used -- but no measures or evidence were presented to support it in 5P1 or 5P2 either. The only measures listed were measures that all universities in the system are required to track with regard to the systems goals.

**5P2 & 5P6.** Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component *5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.*

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The Performance Information Gateway (PING) is maintained as "the portal for accountability information" by the OIE and Strategic Planning Steering Committee, which would demonstrate a sustained effort at data collection and evaluation by a planning body (5.C.1). UNO has set clear goals for all units within the system and has coordinated these goals with the Strategic Framework of the NU System. No description is provided to describe how assessment of student learning is linked to operations, planning and budgeting (5.C.2).

UNO engages in an annual strategic planning process that involves multiple internal and external stakeholders. Each campus in the system has clearly established quality indicators that are used in the planning process and to manage operations. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provides multiple sources of data to campus decision makers for use in the strategic planning process (5.C.3).

There are a systems-wide and a UNO specific strategic plan. However, in 5P5, it sounds like most of the decisions are made at the college level with some review and oversight from committees and deans' groups. What is unclear is the extent to which the institution understands its current capacities and emerging factors, and incorporates the potential impact into the institution's planning (5.C.4 and 5).

**5P2.** Comment on the evidence provided for 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.*

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The NU Board of Regents, as supreme governing body for UNO, does have real and substantive autonomy and is sufficiently insulated from forces within the university to make decisions in the best interest of the university (2.C.1).

No indication is given of how information is systematically gathered, interpreted and supplied to the NU Board of Regents to ensure that they are making well-informed decisions that truly are in the best interests of the institution. These need to be specified.

The governing board is made up of eight voting members elected by district for six-year terms and four non-voting student regents, one from each campus of the University of Nebraska (2.C.2).

Day-to-day operational decisions of the University are delegated to the administration (2.C.3). Faculty members are responsible for the institution's curriculum (2.C.4)

**5P3 & 5P8.** Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component *1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.*

**Evidence is clear and strong.**

UNO clearly articulates its mission through the Strategic Framework for the NU System and the UNO Strategic Plan. These are public documents, incorporating the mission, vision, and values, communicated to and discussed with university employees regularly, and are subject to scrutiny and inquiry by the public (1.B.1).

UNO's mission, vision and values are posted on its website and do articulate its emphasis on various aspects of its mission (1.B.2).

Mission, vision, and values documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents for the UNO programs (1.B.3).

**5P5 & 5P9.** Comment on the evidence provided for 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.*

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

Shared governance and a system of committees clearly support collaborative decision-making and provide many across the institution with leadership opportunities (5.B.1). The university has a variety of bodies tasked with communication, but the process by which they seek input and promulgate information is not reported. The university could consider method of communication and potential redundancy, and not simply source, as it considers its leadership and communication processes.

From the evidence provided in the Systems Portfolio it is not possible to determine whether the governing board is knowledgeable about the institution and provides appropriate oversight (5.B.2).

No details are given about how the UNO Center for Faculty development addresses leadership development. A more transparent strategy for identifying and developing leaders internally would be appropriate in this document. The existence of an Administrative Fellowship Program is encouraging and does indicate a desire to cultivate leaders internally.

It is not clear how the institution enables the involvement of administrators, faculty staff and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes (5.B.3).

**7P2 & 7P4. Comment on the evidence provided for Core Component 5.D. *The institution works systematically to improve its performance.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has systemized collection and dissemination of institutional data relevant for decision-making across the institution. Key performance indicators are reported to the University of Nebraska system level for accountability and comparisons across the system and relevant comparison schools (5.D.1).

Systems are in place for assessment of academic programs through the Director of Assessment and the Assessment Committee. The internal strategic planning process maps to Board of Regents expectations to select projects and opportunities to pursue (5.D.2).

**8P6. Comment on the evidence provided for 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.***

**Evidence is adequate but could be improved.**

The University of Nebraska-Omaha understands its fiscal constraints and has responded to the challenge of dealing with flat funding from the state by slightly increasing tuition and prioritizing requests and investing in the highest priorities. This is commendable and, as long as educational purposes continue to be considered one of its strategic priorities, resource allocation will consider them and not sacrifice them (5.A.1 and 3).

The Strategic Budget Advisory Committee provides a safeguard that aligns individual action items through the Strategic Planning Steering Committee with institutional goals and budget realities.

In order to manage strategic priorities, UNO has incorporated budget experts into the Strategic Planning Committee's discussions (5.A.2 and 5).

Evidence provided elsewhere in the Portfolio (4P1, 4P2, and 4P8) identifies processes and policies in place that ensure that staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained (5.A.4).

However, of concern is that the university relies extensively on both state legislature-appropriated revenue and tuition, and its resources are lower than peer institutions in virtually every resource-related statistic, including core expenses per FTE. Elevated expenses and investment planned for campus expansion to accommodate more students (20,000 students by 2020), could mean that educational resources could be in danger of being compromised if the increase and retention of students does not reach projected levels.

## **QUALITY OF SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA**

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 the University of Nebraska at Omaha with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

*Although the portfolio was well laid out and properly formatted, the team had significant issues with content. The narrative was sometimes difficult to follow because process descriptions often failed to accomplish the intent. The data shared in the systems portfolio was limited, not always consistent with the prompts in the questions, and often did not indicate where the university collected said data. From the portfolio, it would seem that UNO is in the early stages of adopting quality improvement processes. The portfolio should contain much more evidence regarding improvement processes and data used in decision making. In the next portfolio, UNO might consider a more detailed mapping of the connections between their process, data, and improvement descriptions. It seemed too that not enough attention was given to inclusion of the HLC Criteria evidence in relevant process descriptions. Overall, the disconnected nature of the sections and lack of data in each category tended to undermine the story the university tried to tell in the portfolio. The process of creating a systems portfolio is an occasion for an institution to celebrate its successes and to prioritize its plans for addressing opportunities. Incorporating portfolio development with short- and long-term planning might result in a more complete and comprehensive narrative of UNO's journey.*

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## **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.