

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

AUGSBURG COLLEGE

March 2, 2006



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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CATEGORY FEEDBACK

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP Categories, selected *Critical Characteristics* are again highlighted, those the Systems Appraisal Team believed were critical keys to reviewing that particular AQIP Category. The symbols used in these “strengths and opportunities” sections for each Category stand for *outstanding strength* (SS), *strength* (S), *opportunity for improvement* (O) and *pressing or outstanding opportunity for improvement* (OO). The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the Systems Appraisal Team members, and deserves your thoughtful consideration. Comments marked SS or OO may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Helping Students Learn identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how your entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student

learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Augsburg College that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

Item Critical Characteristic

- 01a Augsburg College is a private, non-profit college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Augsburg is the only ELCA college located in the center of an urban area. The College also has a branch campus in Rochester, MN and teaches nursing courses at United Hospital in St. Paul, MN. Augsburg has joined with other colleges and universities in the area with similar missions to form consortia.
- 01b Augsburg is an innovative college that offers a variety of degrees to meet the needs of various learner populations. Its mission statement indicates that it provides “high quality educational opportunities” based in the liberal arts and “shaped by the faith and values of the Christian church.” Thus, the University provides a transforming education revolving around the Lutheran concepts of vocation, stewardship, and community service. It also has a commitment to establishing and maintaining a diverse campus environment, tapping into the strength the University sees in being located in a vital metropolitan setting. It is the extension of teaching and learning from the classroom to the urban community that sets Augsburg apart from other Lutheran colleges.
- 02a The College is organized onto three academic divisions (Fine Arts and Humanities, Professional Studies, and Natural and Social Sciences) and two administrative divisions (Graduate Studies and Interdisciplinary Programs). Within these divisions, it offers students (through its own program or through members of the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities) over 50 majors in liberal arts and professional studies (Table 0.1) along with master’s degrees in leadership, nursing, education, public administration studies, social work, and business administration. The College also offers teaching licensure courses, certificates, and continuing education programs.
- 02b College meets the needs of its diverse student population through a variety of delivery methods including the traditional classroom, online or hybrid courses, use of a web-based

course management system, and experiential education. Multiple means of delivery will assist student enrollment and retention.

- 02c Extensive support for student success is provided through a wide variety of programs that focus on the first year experience, mentoring, addressing students with disabilities including those in substance abuse recovery, early intervention with students experiencing academic difficulties and both academic and career counseling from varied sources.
- 02d Besides traditional classroom instruction, Augsburg provides instruction through a variety of delivery systems including web-based courses, online hybrid of courses, and field/service activities and courses. Service learning is provided through experiential partnerships and is a key component of the curriculum in a number of academic departments.
- 03b Augsburg offers degrees to meet the needs of traditional undergraduates, Weekend College (WEC), and students of diverse races with current marketing initiatives targeted toward increases in traditional undergraduates and these populations. The College is seeking to bolster the number of Lutheran students.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Augsburg College’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 1, Helping Students Learn.

SS	1P1 Augsburg College developed common student learning objectives for the general education program and developed specific course and program learning objectives through learning collaboratives and via individual departments. Augsburg College sought and received funds from the Bush Foundation to support this initiative.
O	1P1. The Academic Affairs Committee asked the mission themes to be articulated to infuse diversity and global awareness across the Augsburg Core Curriculum. No clear process to align the College’s mission, vision, and philosophy during the redesign of the general education curriculum or continue assessment of learning outcomes is evident. The Assessment Committee appears to be functional, but there is no evidence of institutional action related to the curriculum based on the results of assessment of student learning. A formal process may assist the College in assuring the mission themes are infused and aligned across the curriculum.

SS	1P2. The mature process for new programs or revisions of existing programs, including the program's alignment to the College mission and vision, and proposed estimate of resource needs provides information to make effective, data-based decisions.
O	1P2. Learning collaboratives formed to define the learning outcomes for each element of the Augsburg Core Curriculum includes a convener to facilitate meeting and report progress and an assessment liaison to guide assessment efforts and report results. A clear process to understand student needs and market issues, report and use the information is not apparent. Providing systematic feedback about learning outcomes can provide information for improvement of outcome results and alignment with Core curricula, as well as address student needs and market issues.
O	1P3. Augsburg College utilizes the following means in determining student preparation for coursework at the undergraduate and graduate levels: overseeing the admissions standards, the placement of students in entry-level courses, and the need for prerequisites that they communicate to students through the advising process. The standards for determining admissibility, placement of students, and prerequisites are not identified. Identifying the standards provides information leading to determining the success of its student body.
S	1P5. The College-wide program, Exploring Our Gifts, emphasizing the concept of Christian vocation and the Core Curriculum designed to introduce students to a variety of disciplines with faculty advisement will assist students to select a major suited to their needs, interests, and abilities consistent with the institution's mission.
O	1P5. While a number of opportunities to identify discrepancies between the necessary and actual preparation of students and their learning styles are listed, a clear process for identification and intervention is not evident. A process to evaluate the student, report the results and an intervention plan would provide proactive and systematic support throughout the student's undergraduate career.
O	1P5. Both the availability of career counseling through the Center for Service, Work, & Learning, and the vocation emphasis characteristic of the Exploring Our Gifts project offer the potential for connection to student interests, talents, and learning styles. The process by which targeted students may access and utilize these resources is not clear.

O	1P6. Augsburg College employs varied criteria and methods to document effective teaching; however, there is less information provided regarding the process of how they define and document effective student learning. While the Assessment Committee plans are mentioned, the process of how to collect and use the data in the assessment of student learning would inform improvements in teaching/learning activities.
S	1P7. The course delivery system is managed with the input of a variety of internal stakeholders and incorporates both faculty workload and budgetary allocations within the comprehensive process.
O	1P8. Departments and programs monitor the currency and effectiveness of majors, minors, and graduate programs, with multiple means of participation through various groups. It is not clear how the process to change or discontinue programs or courses uses the factors considered to make decisions or affect faculty position.
O	1P9. The Center for Teaching and Learning activities and services encourage professional, scholarly, and teaching development through the solicitation of ideas and evaluation. A process for determining student and faculty needs and aligning them relative to learning support is not evident. Alignment of professional development and student needs to initiatives will assist Augsburg College in accomplishing its goals.
SS	1P10. Augsburg College's commitment to the alignment of curricular and co-curricular learning objectives is clearly illustrated through the Academic and Student Affairs collaboration on the First College Year Project.
O	1P11. While critical players who align co-curricular goals with learning objectives are identified and analysis of current practice and discussions about the future have taken place, a process for alignment an assessment plan that deploys the alignment of curricular and co-curricular learning objectives is not apparent. A clear process for alignment and deployment, as well as regular review will support on-going revision and assessment.

S	<p>1P11. The <i>Working Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning</i> and guiding principles for the process provide a framework for regular improvement and communication of assessment plans. The structure allows resource allocation, multiple student learning surveys, and input from stakeholder groups. The distribution of results and implementation of plans in determining priorities will provide effective communication and appropriate decisions.</p>
S	<p>1P12/13. Augsburg College uses accepted measures for determining student performance and preparation for further study or employment.</p>
S	<p>1R1 The Augsburg Core collaboratives were charged to specify learning outcomes, pilot Classroom Assessment techniques (CATs), and develop rubrics for specified learning outcomes. At the end of the first year, specified leaning outcomes existed in 85% of the collaboratives, 69% of the collaboratives had utilized or piloted CATs, and 31% were piloting newly developed rubrics. This successful first year indicates great improvement gains possible over the project term of three years and provides evidence of change in program design as a result of assessment of learning</p>
O	<p>1R1 A framework for organization of continuous improvement efforts in Academic Advising since 2002 and survey data from the 2003 New Student Orientation led to some conclusions regarding these areas. No results in the form of baseline data or improvement results are included. Tracking performance measures will provide information to improve these processes to provide continuing access to information for planning schedules and tracking degree progress.</p>
OO	<p>1R1 Augsburg College has developed a plan for assessment of its curriculum and identified a means of assessment in most areas. Results are reported in general terms rather than providing data. One cannot identify how effective the curriculum and instruction have been in terms of addressing the objectives and mission of the College. For example, numbers of students are reported who studied abroad, however, data on how or if the experience changed their perceptions of other cultures has not been provided.</p>

O	1R1 Results for common student learning objectives, as well as specific academic and co-curricular objectives are outlined in detail, along with associated course or curriculum changes made in view of the results. Most of the data reported is from 2004. As the new assessment initiatives continue, it will be important to analyze data over a suitable interval, and base curricular changes on adequate trend data.
O	1R2 Some evidence of improvement in Graduation Skills courses and certain majors is included. No overall evidence that students have obtained the required knowledge and skills base across the curriculum or trend information is included. An overview of all students and trends over time, including the use of more direct measures, will enable the College to analyze completely student learning improvements.
S	1R3 The progress in developing an assessment of student learning culture, communication and response to information has led to significant awareness and engagement in assessment practices.
O	1R3 Augsburg College has identified (1) new courses and programs using design teams for curriculum and a new MBA program based upon a market survey and (2) progress in developing assessment of student learning. Results regarding Augsburg's use of design teams to improve or produce a new core curriculum would be enhanced by including student learning data as evidence of student learning and effective teaching. Data provides insight into the robustness of their changes and/or additions and informs the reader as to what changes were or will be made.
S	1R4 Data for NSSE Survey results are disaggregated into First Year and Senior scores. This will allow a comparison of student experience results at two levels of their academic career.
O	1R4 While the 2003-04 results show the differences for two student groups, no trends over time or comparisons to other state/national results are included for these groups. Comparative data provides information about aspects to target improvements and trends support improvement efforts.