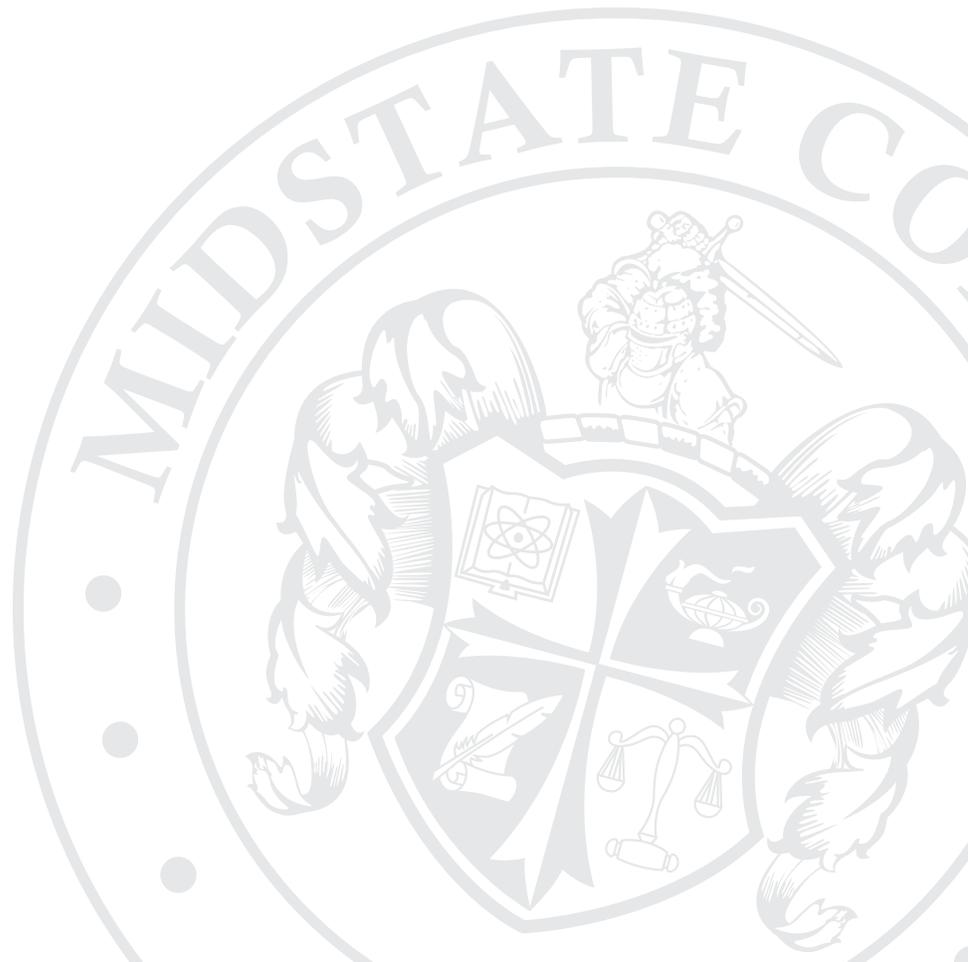


# AQIP Systems Portfolio

*Category Seven – Measuring  
Effectiveness*



## Processes (P)

### 7P1: Selecting, managing, and distributing data

Our infrastructure places demand on the speed, reliability, and facility with which data may be accessed across the institution. As such, emphasis is placed on a streamlined approach to selecting, managing and distributing data and performance information.

**Data Selection:** Data selection related to instructional programs is done at the department level through the various planning processes described in 8P1. Data selection for non-instructional programs is performed by individual department directors under the supervision of the President. Data selection is based on individual department needs in alignment with the strategic plan, as well as established Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and governed by applicable guidelines and requirements. Our process for data selection is monitored and evaluated in twice-quarterly administrative meetings, while integration of the strategic planning process as outlined in Category 8 structures the use of this data to drive improvement.

**Data Management:** Primarily, our instructional and non-instructional data are maintained in either our institutional data system (CampusVue) or on shared network drives which are accessible to faculty and staff both on campus and off campus via web interface. The gateway system also houses course evaluation, faculty self-assessment, and student opinion survey data. These resources are managed by the technical support department, which ensures that all employees have access to this information. Individual campus departments are encouraged to actively participate in the management of their unique modules within CampusVue. Except where prohibited by institutional or regulatory mandate, employees have virtually unfettered access to all of this information.

**Data Distribution:** As discussed in the management section, employees have largely unrestricted access to information and this aids them in performing their jobs. We've recently created an online gateway to distribute data reports (based on department) to individual areas of the institution. Reports are tailored to the needs of each department, and once created, may be accessed from anywhere via the web.

The college employs a variety of additional means for distributing data whenever necessary. Regular meetings are held for both faculty and administration, while newsletters are distributed to all personnel each quarter. In addition, the college also holds all-school in-service meetings throughout the year to discuss specific topics crucial to our operations.

### 7P2: Data supporting planning and improvements

Planning initiatives are spurred by input from the entire organization through our culture of open communication, and more specifically through our annual Strategic Planning In-service. Once key areas of planning and improvement have been identified, individual departments and committees establish both short and long-term goals as well as a practical plan for realizing those goals. Currently the college is implementing a strategic planning framework for clearly identifying goals that support institutional objectives and the relevant measures for evaluating their effectiveness. Special focus has been made to integrate our strategic planning process with AQIP, and data relating to our KPIs are evaluated annually by both department directors and members of administration to identify areas for improvement. Within this framework, the college is able to establish and address long-term goals through our strategic plan while addressing immediate opportunities for improvement via action projects.

Individual departments, as well as standing committees, including those assembled to support action projects are responsible for selecting, managing, and distributing performance information. For example, the admissions department is responsible for managing new student enrollment data and distributing this data to the administration and academic dean on an ongoing basis. In addition, the student records office is responsible for managing student registrations as well as distributing registration numbers to the administration and academic dean on an ongoing basis. Both admissions and student records rely on

historical trends as well as target numbers as measures of comparison. The State of Illinois has mandated that institutions participating in the Monetary Award Program (MAP) are required to report data via the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS), and the college complies with this mandate.

Key data are distributed to individuals and departments on a need-to-know basis as indicated in the master assessment database.

### **7P3: Determining data needs**

Individual departments, committees, and the AQIP Core determine the needs related to the collection, storage, and accessibility of data and performance information. Additionally, department needs are driven by accreditation, state, and federal mandates. For example, although the college has traditionally gathered placement data, recent Gainful Employment statutes resulted in the need to gather and report additional placement data. Furthermore, a recent action project related to assessment facilitated the transition from paper-based course evaluations, faculty self-assessments, graduate exit surveys, and student opinion surveys to online tools. The deployment of electronic versions of these tools allows for assessment data to be made readily available to all faculty and staff members through the shared drive and gateway in a timely and effective manner.

### **7P4: Analyzing performance**

The institutional assessment process provides a mechanism for reviewing all departmental assessments. The Institutional Assessment Database is used to ensure that all assessments have been completed, and that all outcomes are routed through the correct channels. College staff members maintain responsibility for specific data elements and use tools such as Excel, Survey Monkey, and Access to analyze data.

Statistical data is disseminated to all members of the organization, while our open-door communication policy and employee surveys aid in gauging employee interpretation and reaction. Assessment tools are evaluated for relevance on a regular basis; For example, the student opinion survey is on a three-year evaluation cycle; the graduate exit survey is on an annual evaluation cycle; and academic program assessment plans and reports are reviewed annual via assessment peer review group process described in Category 1.

### **7P5: Determining comparative data**

In an effort to gain additional perspective on the quality of our instructional and non-instructional services, the college places a value on the consideration of comparative data sources whenever available. While external data and information mandated by state agencies, federal agencies, and accreditation agencies are first priority, we have identified opportunity for additional targeted comparisons with relevant benchmark institutions.

As a substantial portion of our student population consists of adult learners, Midstate identified the Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) Assessment Tool as a source of valuable and uniquely-tailored data and feedback. A collaborative effort between the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and Noel-Levitz, ALFI employs a multifaceted selection process to identify 26 benchmark institutions to yield the most accurate and relevant comparative data for our institution with regard to adult learners. Midstate is committed to an assessment cycle through ALFI every three years.

Additionally, the college participates in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) annually. IPEDS provides the institution with a comparison group of 24 institutions similar to our own in size, focus, scope, etc. to establish context in which we may analyze our own results. In addition, the college may employ IPEDS Executive Peer Tool to create a custom comparison group from over 6,700 participating institutions.

**7P6: Ensuring alignment**

As mentioned in 8P2, the strategic plan framework provides a means for aligning all strategic initiatives and related activities with the institutional goals and mission. The college also uses a matrix system to illustrate the correlation between our mission, institutional objectives, and program goals. Within this structure the college is able to determine key areas requiring analysis. Additional matrices include the institutional objectives in relation to the mission; vision and goals in relation to the mission; program objectives in relation to the institutional objectives; and course objectives in relation to the program objectives. The college's mission and vision are at the forefront in the development of all program and institutional objectives. Each department uses a system of matrices when reviewing academic programs and course objectives. This tool is invaluable in aligning the structure of the curricula with the core purposes of the college in all facets. Additionally, the accreditation cycle and continuous improvement through AQIP helps clearly outline the connection between our goals and assessment measures. All of this information is stored on the network share drive mentioned in other items of our portfolio in order to facilitate sharing of the information.

**7P7: Ensuring system effectiveness**

Individuals from several areas of the college including academic departments, IT, eLearning, student records, and assessment collaborated to develop an operational calendar of deadlines for systems management and review. Currently, Midstate College replaces student-accessible computer equipment and server hardware on a three-year cycle. The older computers are then used to replace employee computers or utilized for instructional purposes.

Midstate interacts with outside vendors to provide two of its core educational support systems: CampusVue, which serves as the institutional data system, and the Joule learning management system, which facilitates the eLearning experience. Both systems receive constant functionality upgrades from their respective vendors. In addition, CampusVue executes regular updates to remain current with any and all government regulations.

Full image-based backups of the internal servers are made on a weekly basis. In addition to the image based backup, a granular file-level backup is created weekly; these are supplemented by nightly incremental backups made throughout the work week. The image-based backups are replicated off-site to ensure data recovery in case of disaster. The technical support department performs test restorations of our backups each month to ensure their integrity.

Paper storage of recent records is maintained on-site, while older records are stored off-site. Access to electronic information is regulated using Active Directory groups. Each employee's password-protected account is added to those groups which provide access to only that information which the employee needs to perform their job function. SSL encryption is used to protect all sensitive information transmitted over the Internet; such information includes usernames, passwords, email, and course materials.

In all handling of student information electronic or otherwise, the college strictly adheres to all current FERPA guidelines.

**Results (R)****7R1: Measuring effectiveness**

The Information Technology staff performs test restorations of all data backups on a monthly basis. These tests ensure that should the need arise, the information located on our networked shared-drives can be quickly and fully restored in a manner which will not create undue delay in the performance of our daily operations. Performing this restoration allows us to measure both the speed with which a backup may be applied to our system as well as the integrity of the backup itself. With regard to our web interface, the college prides itself on full compliance with Section 508 and the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act. Anytime a change is applied to our website, regardless how small, the site is resubmitted for HTML validation. Finally, our IT staff receives daily updates as to the status of network health, and backup stability to ensure that our infrastructure of knowledge and information is secure and reliable.

## 7R2: Evidence of effectiveness

Our system for measuring effectiveness is rooted in the quality and accessibility of data and information across the organization. As such, one of the key resources we rely on in gauging that effectiveness is our staff and faculty's sense of inclusion, and engagement with the data collection we perform, as well as its value to the overall goals of the college. Through annual in-service meetings, faculty assessment, and faculty needs surveys, we seek to gauge the degree to which our personnel feel adequately informed to perform their functions within the organization, recognize their role in performance trends, and establish short and long-term goals for improvement. For example, in a recent faculty needs assessment, key faculty members involved in a recent action project were asked several questions about the effectiveness of the project and the ways in which it was being conducted. When asked if they were receiving enough information to continue and develop their efforts with the project, 81% of respondents stated that they were. This type of feedback is vital to the success of our instructional and non-instructional services and serves to reinforce that our system for collecting, managing, and distributing data is effectively contributing to our institution's ability to achieve its goals.

## 7R3: Comparisons

Across the external data systems currently employed by the college, we have seen consistently high marks in comparison to benchmark institutions. These results serve to reinforce the efforts we are currently making, while illuminating areas in which we may wish to concentrate additional focus. Participation in AQIP and the AQIP community has aided in the college's ability to identify new tools, and performance initiatives employed by other institutions which may serve to enrich our own systems. Because of its direct relationship to the category, perhaps the best source to-date in directly comparing our processes for measuring effectiveness comes from the 2010 administration of the AQIP Examiner.

Figure 7.1 – The AQIP Criterion 7: Measuring Effectiveness

Item	Midstate College		Other Organizations	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Collecting, storing, and distributing data information to those who need it.	3.92	1.03	3.12	1.17
Establishing a set of key institutional measures for tracking effectiveness in achieving the institution's mission and goals.	3.94	0.98	3.04	1.1
Determining and responding to the data needs of our departments and organizational units.	3.92	1	2.92	1.15
Analyzing performance data and sharing results throughout the institution.	3.81	1.07	2.85	1.13
Measuring and evaluating how well our data collection, storage, and distribution system works	3.68	1.11	2.75	1.14

5 = Very effective process, 1 = Very ineffective process

Another source of comparative data that considers our processes for information management and distribution in a less direct way is the ALFI survey. The survey offers student respondents the following: "Technology enables me to get the services I need when I need them." Students are then asked to rate how important this factor is to them and their educational needs, and accordingly, how satisfied they are with Midstate's performance in this area. The gap between these responses then demonstrates how well we are delivering on components that are important to our students. Midstate is pleased and encouraged by the fact that the gap between these points is significantly lower than the aggregate of the 26 benchmark institutions in our comparison group.

Midstate is currently considering the potential for measurement against businesses outside of higher education; however, the value of such comparative analysis is dependent on the quality and relevance of benchmark organizations, as well as the availability and applicability of assessment tools.

## Improvement (I)

### 711: Improvements

Through our assessment processes, we are continually identifying new resources, tools, and techniques to drive value-added change in the organization while maintaining focus on the efforts we've made in the past, and the value they may have moving forward. Our Director of Assessment is currently in the process of mapping historically-collected data to newly acquired data, in efforts to identify trends and areas where opportunity for improvement exists.

Recent improvements in relation to Category 7 include:

- The transition from largely paper-based survey tools to online components easily accessible to individuals throughout the organization.
- The development of an Operational Calendar of Deadlines to review and update our systems for data acquisition and management.
- The updating of critical software in all workstations on campus including Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2010.
- The college's LMS platform transition from Angel to Joule in an effort to increase accessibility and usability for all of our eLearning students.

While we are currently pleased with the data we receive through our current measurement tools, we are constantly looking forward to identifying new tools and additional comprehensive measurements for our processes. Guidance from AQIP and success stories from other AQIP institutions is invaluable in expanding our resources to include additional relevant and effective measurement tools.

### 712: Culture and Infrastructure support

The culture of Midstate College is one which fosters communication and interaction at all levels of faculty, staff, and administration. Our faculty and staff are invested in pursuing an ongoing drive toward excellence in our processes and performance. As we become increasingly familiar with available assessment tools as well as our own performance trends, we grow increasingly better positioned to identify and establish targets and goals for which we may aim in our efforts toward continuous improvement.