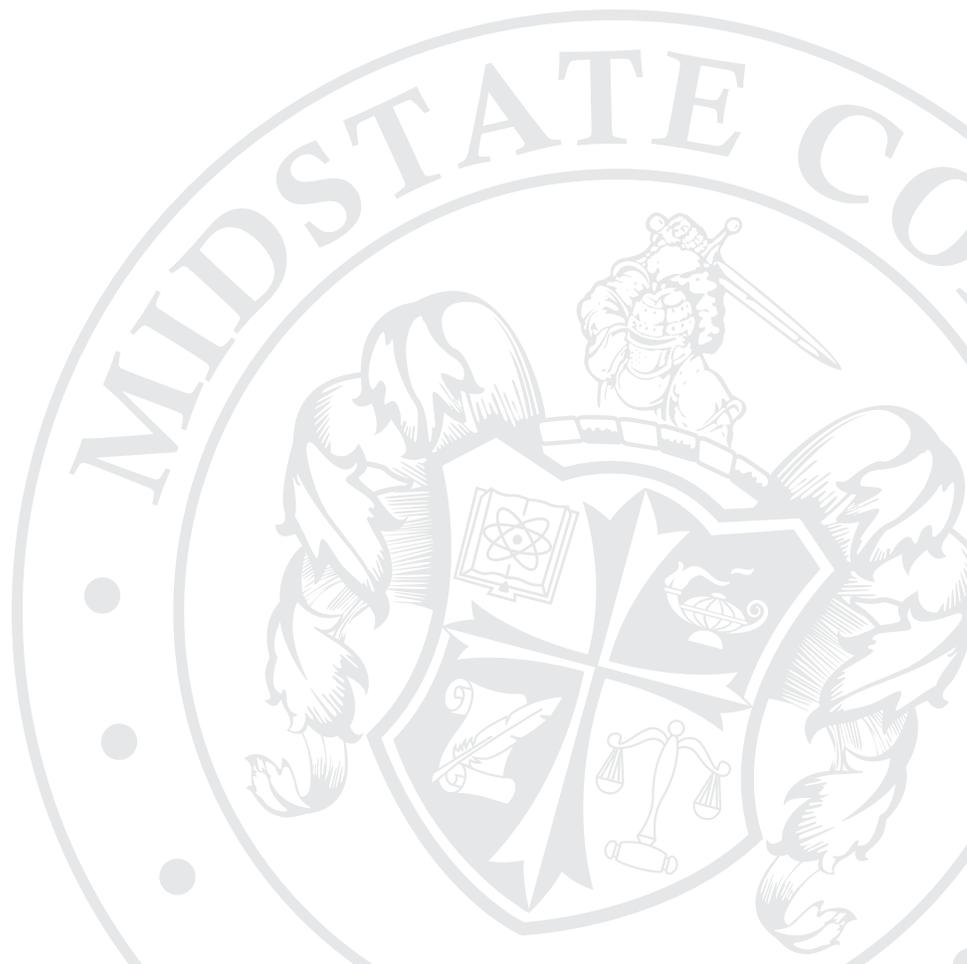


AQIP Systems Portfolio

*Category Eight – Planning Continuous
Improvement*



Processes (P)

8P1: Key planning process

Midstate incorporates a variety of planning processes across the institution including strategic planning, financial planning, academic planning, and quality improvement planning in a hierarchical fashion with strategic planning governing all other planning processes. The college's inclusive governance and committee structure, coupled with these key-planning processes, provide a means for implementing critical initiatives in alignment with our mission. In addition to relying on an annual SWOT analysis, the college also refers to survey feedback, focus group feedback, category improvement team feedback, employee evaluations, employer feedback, program advisory board feedback, labor projections and the like. Figure 8.1 identifies the annual strategic planning, budget and review cycle that incorporates key decision points in the process. Figure 8.2 overviews the development of the strategic plan and approval process.

Figure 8.1 – Annual Strategic Planning, Budget and Review Cycle

July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Administration Leads Campus Strategic Planning Efforts											
Unit/Dept. Prepare Annual Report (from previous fiscal year)											
			Campus Budget Planning								Campus Strategic Forums
Unit/Dept. Strategic & Budget Plan Development											
			Strategic Plan & Budget Finalized								
Update Systems Portfolio											
Admin Meeting		Admin Meeting	Admin Meeting		Admin Meeting	Admin Meeting		Admin Meeting	Admin Meeting		Admin Meeting
					AQIP In-Service						
Faculty Meeting		Faculty Meeting				Faculty Meeting			Faculty Meeting		
		Term Assessment Day		Term Assessment Day			Term Assessment Day			Term Assessment Day	
Action Project Committee Work											
* Unit/Dept Annual Report Due - Sept 15											
* Unit/Dept Budgets Due to Administration - Oct 1											
* Strategic Plan & Budget Presented to Board for Final Approval - Nov 1											

Several planning processes take place that inform the overall strategic plan. A variety of meetings across the institution provide opportunities for envisioning and facilitating the strategic objectives in order to accomplish the vision and mission of the college. Assessment tools, such as the Examiner and the ALFI survey, provide benchmarks with other institutions of higher learning, and institutional assessments such as the Student Opinion Survey, Employer Survey, Graduate Exit Survey, course evaluations, focus groups, and advisory committees provide information for strategic as well as operational planning.

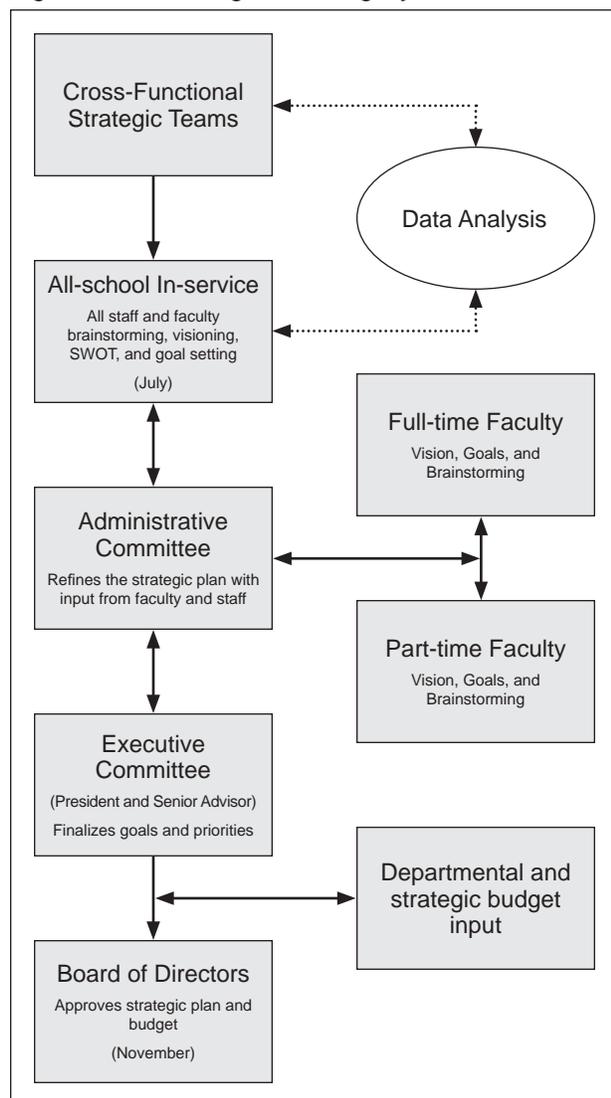
The college's proactive culture and small size enables it to respond quickly to issues and concerns that are identified through its assessment activities. For example, the ALFI data suggested that a strategic initiative might focus on enhancing faculty response time to students. Rather than delaying this opportunity until the next strategic planning cycle, the administration acted on this feedback immediately, thus operationalizing improvement activities that were meaningful to both students and faculty.

Strategic Planning

Inclusive strategic planning serves as the primary guiding process for the institution, and all planning processes are developed in alignment with the college mission. Since 2006, the college has extended the collaborative strategic planning efforts to include the campus as a whole. At that time the college adopted a formal strategic planning cycle that incorporates input and feedback from everyone at the institution [See Figure 8.2]. In the summer of 2006, the first campus-wide strategic in-service was held to develop five-year Strategic Goals with a focus on a three-year plan. Each summer the annual planning cycle begins with our annual strategic planning in-service. During this event all members of our staff and faculty come together to evaluate our five-year strategic goals in the context of our mission, vision, and values. Additionally, each department examines its operational goals for the following year as well as how they will be incorporated into the college’s strategic plan and budget. All other activities follow suit with regularly scheduled meetings for planning and follow-up.

The annual in-service supports the three-year plan. The Board of Directors provide the final approval of the strategic plan; the Administrative Planning meetings, including administration, faculty, and staff, provide the major venue for motivating and following up on the progress and achievement of strategic goals, objectives, and action items. Category Improvement Teams assist in evaluating essential assessments and targets for improvement to feed strategic decisions through the quality improvement initiative.

Figure 8.2 – Strategic Planning Cycle



Financial Planning

The size and nature of the institution, as well as the close working relationship between the operational and academic departments, have enabled the administration and Board of Directors to implement effective fiscal practices. The college’s financial planning process has been aligned with strategic planning since 2006; however, in 2011 we created a more thorough decentralized budget planning process in which individual departments are required to align their strategic goals and needs with annual budget requests. These requests are submitted to the administration for review and inclusion in the overall strategic plan. Finally, the annual budget and strategic plan are presented to the Board of Directors for final approval [See Figure 8.1]. Communication with the financial office in aligning the strategic planning process with the budget has improved through regular bi-weekly financial meetings with administration.

Academic Planning

The Chief Academic Dean, in cooperation with the faculty and the Director of Assessment, drives academic planning across the institution. Program directors provide overall guidance to full-time and adjunct faculty who teach in their programs. In addition, program directors are responsible for maintaining the academic quality and currency of their academic programs, and coordinating curriculum activities including assessment, program review, program and course revisions, and faculty assignments. They also play a vital role in academic advisement, which aids them in projecting student course needs from term to term.

In the fall, program directors submit program plans for assessment of their individual programs and complete the cycle by submitting results and plans for improvement the next year. All faculty have input to budgetary needs via the self-assessment process, and program directors submit their requested budgets annually. Program directors serve as the key contact with Program Advisory Boards who provide input for assessment standards and changes to curricula in order to stay current with business trends and needs, thus informing the academic strategic plans. As a result of the strategic planning in-service, the academic vision for Midstate College becomes part of the strategic plan that is ultimately approved by the Board of Directors.

Quality Improvement Program

The quality improvement program drives continuous improvement through the institution. Midstate College's quality improvement program is managed by the AQIP Core Team and is directed by the President. The organization has embraced continuous quality improvement as paramount to the improvement and success of the institution. The AQIP Core Team is comprised of individuals from the following positions: President, Senior Advisor, Chief Academic Dean, Director of Assessment, Controller, Director of eLearning, Director of Student Success, the Director of Student Records, the Director of Library Services, Director of Student Affairs, Business Manager, and Director of Marketing. This cross-functional team of leaders from all areas of the institution meets weekly and provides a forum for on-going communication and progress in the quality improvement program.

Action projects have served as the foundational vehicle for our system of continuous improvement. The Midstate action project development process is driven by feedback via the accreditation process as well as internal formal and informal communication processes, while the AQIP Core Team manages project implementation and progress. To date, Midstate has initiated ten action projects [See Figure 8.3]; seven of which have been successfully completed and three which are currently active. Action projects serve as the key continuous improvement activities for the college, thus, the effort put into planning, supporting, and maintaining the best practices that come out of the projects is critical to the institutions planning processes. Some action projects come out of in-service activities while others are driven from accreditation feedback. For example, emphasis on assessment has been driven by accreditation feedback. Action projects also drive additional action projects. The current assessment action project was driven by feedback from the previous assessment action project.

The college has several iterations of cross-functional improvement teams. In 2009, the Core Team developed "Apple Teams" as a means to move our quality improvement efforts forward following the completion and feedback from our first systems portfolio. The Apple Teams were cross-functional teams that were led through a process of interpreting and prioritizing feedback from the systems portfolio. Once that phase was complete, "Category Improvement Teams" were established that include participation from all full-time staff and faculty. The Category Improvement Teams built on the work of the Apple Team and took on the re-writing of the systems portfolio. The Core and administrators worked with staff and faculty to build the teams through educational in-services and direct work with the teams. Although establishing the work of these teams and involving everyone in the process has been challenging at times, the development of understanding and knowledge of AQIP has grown significantly throughout the college. We are proud of our creative efforts and dedication to embracing academic quality improvement as an entire organization. College leaders see the evidence of this growth in how we communicate with each other. Discussion and planning of processes, systems, results, improvement, and informed decision-making have become common in all levels of the organization. Going forward, the Category Improvement Teams will continue the work of evaluating progress, measurement, improvement, and development of initiatives around each of the AQIP categories on a continual basis. Through this process, our continuous quality improvement efforts will be well supported and integrated in all institutional operations.

Establishing the strategic planning process has been a great first step for the college, but the recently developed budgeting process and adoption of the Strategic Planning Framework we are implementing this year is an important progression for the college toward a more comprehensive strategic planning system. Additionally, the AQIP Category Improvement Teams are providing enhanced focus on evaluating system outcomes, aligning strategic initiatives with on-going quality improvement, establishing effective

measurement and feedback systems, and identifying well-defined targets for improvement. The administration has invested considerable energy and resources developing staff and faculty knowledge, understanding, and participation in Midstate's Quality Improvement Program for the last four years.

Figure 8.3 – Action Project

AQIP Category	Action Project	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1 Helping Students Learn	Develop a Master Course Schedule That Supports Sequential Learning	D	A	A	A	R			
2 Helping Students Learn	Faculty Orientation Program that Supports Good Teaching					D	A	A	R
3 Helping Students Learn	Implementing a revised assessment evaluation, reporting and feedback cycle					D	A	R	
4 Helping Students Learn	Define and Initiate an Academic Support System Promoting Student Success							D	A
5 Leading and Communicating	Leading and Improving Communication Processes Throughout the Organization	D	A	A	R				
6 Helping Students Learn	Aligning Course Objectives							D	A
7 Helping Students Learn	Developing a Prior Learning Assessment Program								D
8 Measuring Effectiveness	Comprehensive Evaluation and Improvement of Assessment Processes	D	A	A	A	R			
9 Building Collaborative Relationships	Developing Educational Initiatives in Collaboration with Other Institutions				D	A	R		
9 Building Collaborative Relationships	Fostering Relationships with Area Businesses and Organizations	D	A	A	R				

D = Declared, A = Active, R = Retired

8P2: Strategy selection

Strategic priorities are initially evaluated based on the extent to which they align with the college's mission and vision. Brainstorming, SWOT analysis, and prioritization are essential parts of the process. External compliance requirements, such as those mandated by the U.S. Department of Education, state, and federal regulations, are given the highest priority. In addition, we also consider resource needs, time to completion, and estimated overall benefit to the institution and stakeholders. In an effort to incorporate risk assessment, the college is piloting the Association of College and University Auditors (ACUA) Risk Dictionary framework as an additional means of prioritizing strategic initiatives. Finally, our Strategic Planning Framework provides a basis for college departments to specify strategic goals/opportunities, and plan a timeline, with specific action items, for operationalizing these strategies [See Figure 8.4]. Each year in administrative meetings, the college uses the strategic planning progress levels key to evaluate the degree to which we have fulfilled the stated strategic opportunities [See Figure 8.5].

Figure 8.4 – Strategic Planning Framework

AQIP Category: _____

Mission: _____

Institutional Objective: _____

Strategic Goal/Opportunity: _____

Objectives	Tasks/ Activities	Timeline	Lead Individual	Measure/ Document	Training Needed	Resources Needed	Priority Level	Progress Level

Decision Making Triage Framework is used to inform the priority level of the objective.

Figure 8.5 – Annual Strategic Plan Progress Level Key

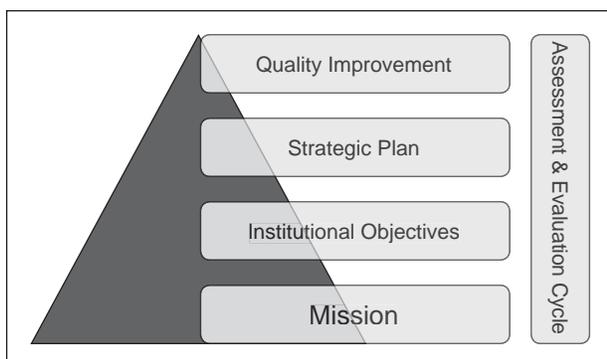
Progress Level	Description
0	Plans in progress, no definitive action yet taken
1	Startup/initial action undertaken; concept work completed; early organization efforts underway, 25% to goal
2	Process underway and on track; steady progress being made; funding may be secured; 50% to goal, but no results yet
3	Deeply deployed; substantial elements of a project may be nearly or fully completed; 75% to goal and beginning to have results
4	Fully developed; 100% success on results
O	Ongoing planning, program, or funding process. Annual report on results.
I	Implement to be undertaken in another year

8P3: Developing key action plans

Our key action plans are the direct result of our planning processes [Figures 8.1and 8.2]. The Strategic Planning Framework is a means for taking strategic initiatives and turning them into plans for action [Figure 8.4]. Additionally, specific strategic and operational objectives are envisioned and facilitated through a variety of formal venues such as Assessment Day meetings, AQIP Core Meetings, Administrative Meetings, Action Project Meetings, Department Meetings (Operational), Board of Directors Meetings, Advisory Board Meetings, Faculty Meetings, Program Director Meetings, Academic Department meetings well as AQIP In-services. Focus groups and formal surveys, such as course evaluations, the Student Opinion Survey, Employer Survey, Graduate Exit Survey, The Examiner, as well as the ALFI survey inform strategic as well as operational planning.

8P4: Aligning the planning process

Figure 8.6 – Alignment of Planning Processes



The model in Figure 8.6 demonstrates the alignment of our planning processes with an on-going cycle of assessment and feedback. Using the collaborative planning processes referred to in 8P1-8P4 as well as the Strategic Planning Framework described in 8P2, the college is able to coordinate and align planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans. The continual work of the AQIP Core Team with the Category Improvement Teams is vital to aligning our processes, strategies, plans, and facilitating improvement throughout the institution.

8P5: Selecting measures and setting targets

Objectives, measures and performance targets are selected and defined through the inclusive planning processes introduced in 8P1-8P3. The first step is to identify the objectives. After objectives are identified project metrics are based on the project phase, project risk, project success criteria. Further, metrics are broken down into cost, time, scope, quality, and risk [See Figure 8.7]. We also rely on historical data, benchmark comparisons, and budgeting and enrollment targets when selecting measures and setting performance targets.

Figure 8.7 – Decision Making Triage Framework

Metrics	Questions
Cost	Will the project meet the budget?
Time	Will the project meet the schedule?
Scope	Will the project deliver planned scope? Are scope changes in line with expectations?
Quality	Is the customer happy (are targets being met)?
Risk	Are we effectively anticipating and managing risk events relevant to this project?
Communications	Are stakeholders getting the information they need? Are project results being reported accurately?
Procurement	Are we on track in the planned acquisition and management of goods and services?
HR-Issues & Actions	Are there significant, unresolved issues and action items? Are they seriously affecting the project?
HR-Resources	Are we using the planned number of labor hours and other resources?
Student Focus	What is best for the students?

The outcomes of the goals, strategies, and/or action projects provide the basis of the measurement. Performance targets are developed and reviewed as progress reports are completed or as new data are available. Some measures are identified through researching historic data. Survey data such as the SOS, GES, and ALFI, provided a basis for comparison benchmarks. The administration maintains a keen eye on critical data such as enrollment projections versus actual enrollments, the nature of enrollments (i.e., full-time, part-time), student satisfaction ratings, assessment results, and action project progress. Furthermore, the administration monitors activities of retired action projects to ensure that the spirit of those action projects as well as processes and procedures that were outcomes of those action projects are maintained. The assessment peer review group provides annual feedback regarding assessment plans and reports in an effort to further engage faculty in conversations regarding instructional design, teaching practices, and assessment as related to their courses and programs.

8P6: Linking strategy and resources

The close working relationship of the administration, staff, and faculty has resulted in great successes that allow for strategic initiatives to be realized. Using the strategic planning framework as a foundation with departmental budget proposals the controller creates an annual budget. Biweekly meetings between the controller and administration ensure that decision-making is occurring with relevant and current budget and operational information. The revised strategic and budget planning process enables departments to review previous year expenditures to aid in forecasting budget needs for the new fiscal year, thus providing an opportunity for internal benchmarking. The Board of Directors provides oversight for the planning and budget processes.

The small college environment allows for flexibility in planning and decision-making. The organization staffing structure as well as the committee structure allows for regular communication regarding the status and progress of all initiatives.

8P7: Risk

In addition to incorporating SWOT analyses during the annual strategic planning in-service, the college is using ACUA Risk Dictionary as an objective means by which it can systematically evaluate risk for key college units. Specifically, the college is incorporating a review of the following: Financial Management Risks, Institutional Support Risks, Instruction and Academic Support Risks, Information Technology Risks, Physical Plant Risks, and Student Services Risks. Each of these core areas includes a variety of sub-processes for which risks and affiliated controls have been identified.

The college has an on-campus emergency notification process if issues present themselves in classrooms or offices. Liability insurance provides a control as it covers the institution in the event of catastrophic activities. Furthermore, Midstate carries a surety bond for employees who are responsible for fiscal matters. Business disruption insurance also provides coverage in the event normal business is disrupted due to disasters. Liability insurance is carried as well in the event of on-campus accidents.

8P8: Developing capabilities

The college recognizes the importance of professional development and embraces a “grow your own” philosophy. As a result, staff and faculty are afforded numerous opportunities for formal professional development through conferences, formal education, in-services, and on-the-job training. Content area experts, as well as strategic initiatives, typically drive the need for additional professional development opportunities. Action projects also provide a venue through which professional development opportunities emerge. For example, the Faculty Orientation action project facilitated opportunities for faculty development including the “Bridges Out of Poverty” book discussion group as well as a teaching methods video library.

Ongoing educational and professional development support of faculty and staff is an important operational priority at the college. When faculty and staff request approval for conference attendance or other professional development opportunities, they are asked to identify why this opportunity is beneficial and how it will help them with their responsibilities at Midstate. In addition, upon returning from a conference or other professional development activity, employees are asked to summarize what they attended, what they learned, and how this information will be useful.

Results (R)**8R1: Measures of effectiveness**

Measures are identified on an annual basis for academic and administrative entities. Some departments generate data on a regular basis as a way to assess and evaluate if their activities are on the right track. Appropriate metrics and criteria for success are discussed with the administration to ensure that operational activities are in line with the overarching institutional goals.

Reports of varying kinds are generated weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually, depending on the measure. They are reviewed and analyzed to provide feedback regarding the current state-of-the-institutional climate and to inform the administration regarding opportunities for immediate improvement. The culture of the college results in immediate action for areas that are identified as needing improvement. As a result, many activities are not formally identified in the strategic or budget planning process because the college is able to respond and act on them on an as needed basis, which results in a very customer-centric business model. All entities of the college are responsible for periodic reporting. There are significant efforts aimed at monitoring graduation rates, retention rates, and satisfaction rates.

Strategic Planning

- Annual progress level key
- Strategic planning measures as identified on strategic plan
- New student enrollment targets
- Retention after one term
- Student Opinion Survey
- Employee Communication Survey
- Graduate Exit Survey
- ALFI
- AQIP Examiner
- Reaffirmation of accreditations

Financial Planning

- 90/10
- CFI
- Default Management
- Loan default statistics

Midstate Continuous Improvement Program - Action Projects

- Annual feedback regarding annual action project reports
- Attainment of goals within stated timelines

Academics

- Percent of objectives reported on faculty self-assessments that achieve target
- Percent of objectives reported by academic programs that achieve target
- Graduate Exit Survey
- Student Opinion Survey
- Placement rates
- Course evaluations

8R2: Performance results

See Figures 8.8–8.21 for examples of performance results.

Strategic Planning

Figure 8.8 – New student enrollment targets

Term	Target Enrollment	Actual Enrollment
Fall 2008	682	657
Fall 2009	723	666
Fall 2010	766	730
Fall 2011	812	632

Figure 8.9 – Retention after one term

* Recent data suggests that retention is 70% at the end of one term.

Figure 8.10 – Student Opinion Survey

Year	Composite Score*
2009	4.27
2010	4.32
2011	4.39

* 5-point scale

Figure 8.11 – Graduate Exit Survey

Question	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011
What is your present attitude toward Midstate College? (Answering “Positive” or “Very Positive”)	90%	95%	91%
Would you refer others to Midstate College? (Answering “Yes”)	94%	95%	92%

Figure 8.12 – ALFI

* ALFI data indicates that the college performs high in all areas as well as being rated higher than comparison institutions in all questions and categories

Figure 8.13 – Reaffirmation of accreditations

* Midstate College received reaffirmation of accreditation from the HLC in 2011.

Financial Planning

Figure 8.14 – 90/10

Reporting Timeframe	90/10 Percentage
Year end 8/31/2008	85.7%
Year end 8/31/2009	79.6%
Year end 8/31/2010	87.3%

Figure 8.15 – CFI

Year	Score
2007	2.2
2008	2.4
2009	2.5
2010	2.5

Figure 8.16 – Default management

* The college established a partnership with a third-party default management vendor in 2010. As a result, 352 students have been removed from loan delinquency.

Midstate Continuous Improvement Program - Action Projects

Figure 8.17 – Annual feedback regarding annual action project reports

* The college consistently receives positive feedback regarding annual reports.

Figure 8.18 – Attainment of goals within stated timelines

* The college has achieved all action project goals.

Academics

Figure 8.19 – Percent of objectives reported on faculty self-assessments that achieve target

* 90% of objectives reported on faculty self-assessments achieve target. The most recent terms for which data were gathered indicate that 88% of faculty report objectives were achieved.

Figure 8.20 – Percent of objectives reported by academic programs that achieve target

* 100% of objectives reported by academic programs achieve target.

Figure 8.21 – Course Evaluations

Year	Composite Score*
Fall 2010	3.31
Winter 2010	3.26
Spring 2011	3.33
Summer 2011	3.33

* 4-point scale

8R3: Performance projections**Strategic Planning**

- 100% virtualization of key production servers
- 100% conversion to Joule (LMS) for online courses (excluding Realtime Reporting BlackBoard presence)
- Increase new student enrollments by 5% each fall term
- Completion & implementation of a guide to using electronic library resources
- By Winter 2012, 50% of on-campus classes will have a web presence in Joule
- By Winter 2013, 100% of on-campus classes will have a web presence in Joule

Budget Planning

- Keep loan default rate below 30%
- Monitor effectiveness of default management activities (# success/#approached) through ratio
- Develop year-to-year comparison data for departments
- Develop year-to-year comparison data that identifies variance from targets

Midstate Quality Improvement Program – Action Projects

- Successfully complete all action project objectives
- Launch next phase of category improvement teams

Academics

- Obtain ABA approval for the Paralegal Services Program
- Obtain ACBSP approval for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program
- Obtain IBHE approval for the Bachelor of Arts in Law and Social Justice Program
- Develop MBA degree application for submission to IBHE and HLC
- 100% participation of all academic programs in annual academic assessment cycle
- Ongoing WAC assessment
- Identify signature writing assignments for all academic programs to support WAC
- Identify signature oral communication assignments for all academic programs to support oral communication
- Evaluate all course level assessments to ensure that they are appropriate for the course objectives for which they are designed to fulfill.
- Maintain or increase 70% retention after one term
- Revise admission writing assessment to facilitate more effective placement in English courses.
- Complete Phase I of Professionalism assessment, Phase II of Oral Communication assessment, and identify next general education objectives to undergo assessment cycle.

8R4: Comparisons

Midstate has participated in the AQIP Examiner Survey twice, which provides longitudinal comparisons internally as well as externally. In 2004, Midstate College scored higher in all of the areas related to Category 8 than the benchmark institutions. In 2010, Midstate College scored higher in all of the areas related to Category 8 than the Midstate 2004 scores as well as the 2010 benchmark institution scores. This represents longitudinal improvements both internally and externally. Given that the standard deviations reported for the 2010 results are generally less than the standard deviations reported for the 2004 results, we can assume that the opinions of Midstate employees are becoming more cohesive [See Figures 8.22 and 8.23].

Figure 8.22 – AQIP Examiner Feedback Report: April 30, 2004

The AQIP Criterion 8: Planning Continuous Improvement	Midstate College		Other Organizations	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
reviewing our mission, vision, and philosophy in light of changing priorities and conditions.	3.93	1.02	3.34	1.11
developing strategies that deal with institutional challenges and opportunities.	4.01	0.89	3.24	1.07
translating our strategic objectives into concrete, achievable action plans.	3.78	1	3.11	1.11
communicating our strategies and action plans throughout the organization.	3.45	1.14	3.02	1.13
evaluating our systems for planning.	3.52	1.11	2.88	1.11

5 = Very effective process, 1 = Very ineffective process

Figure 8.23 – AQIP Examiner Feedback Report: May 3, 2010

The AQIP Criterion 8: Planning Continuous Improvement	Midstate College		Other Organizations	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
reviewing our mission, vision, and philosophy in light of changing priorities and conditions.	4.24	0.9	3.27	1.11
developing strategies that deal with institutional challenges and opportunities.	4.11	0.93	3.2	1.08
translating our strategic objectives into concrete, achievable action plans.	4	0.97	3.09	1.11
communicating our strategies and action plans throughout the organization.	4.04	0.97	3	1.14
evaluating our systems for planning.	3.91	0.97	2.86	1.12

5 = Very effective process, 1 = Very ineffective process

8R5: Evidence of effectiveness

The college continues to identify effective means of measuring and evaluating our planning processes and activities. Examples of initiatives developed thus far include the annual assessment cycle which involves the cross-functional assessment peer review group using the assessment plan/report rubric for evaluating program assessment plans and reports. Additionally, the July 2011 Faculty Assessment Needs Assessment indicated that 100% of the faculty who are involved in the current assessment action project have enough information to complete the action project objectives.

Furthermore, the President surveys staff and faculty regarding their perceptions of strategic planning processes. The July 2011 Strategic Planning In-Service data indicate that of those surveyed 87% responded that the in-service was an effective use of their time, and 80% reported that they had a better understanding of the budget process as a result of the in-service presentation regarding the budget. Given Midstate's inclusive culture, this is critical feedback for our campus to consider.

Improvement (I)

8I1: Improvements

The most telling improvement has been an increase in employee awareness of AQIP and the importance of continuous improvement as reported in the 2010 In-service Survey results. 80% of the respondents indicated that they had "a better understanding of AQIP." Midstate has made several improvements in this category including the implementation of an annual systematic assessment cycle, assessment days, incorporation of benchmark materials, enhanced the alignment between the budget and planning, and regular program director meetings with the Chief Academic Dean. In addition, the college implemented a structure and process for a systematic review of course evaluations, assessment plans/reports, and strategic planning in-services. Additionally, the college is adopting a formal strategic planning framework and decision-making triage framework which will supplement and enhance our strategic planning, budget and review cycle.

8I2: Culture and infrastructure support

Transitioning to an AQIP institution had a significant impact on creating a culture focused on continuous improvement. The small college atmosphere and family environment lend themselves to an informal work environment whereby positive and collaborative working relationships provide a strong foundation. The open-door policy practiced by the administration ensures that there is minimal bureaucratic red tape to impede forward movement. Furthermore, there is generally a short decision-making time-frame which enables individuals to act immediately and decisively on important initiatives whether they are strategic goals or operational activities. Midstate has facilitated activities to purposefully engage members of the campus community in continuous improvement activities. Evidenced by recent Apple Team efforts designed to evaluate the prior Systems Portfolio and Systems Portfolio Feedback Report, as well as the Category Improvement Teams that have been called upon to rewrite the Systems Portfolio using the revised categories, the College prides itself on nurturing a culture that lives and breathes meaningful continuous improvement activities.