

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Pacesetter Feedback Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of the Pacesetter 2001 Board of Examiners, thank you for applying for the 2001 Pacesetter Award and for your interest in pursuing organizational performance excellence. Your participation in this year's program is a testimonial to your commitment to strengthening quality performance in higher education. Grand Rapids Community College has made a significant beginning and has established a foundation for continued improvement efforts.

The most important strengths or outstanding practices are:

1. Grand Rapids Community College has consciously created a focus on students and their community. The leadership, through the mission, vision, and End Policies, set a tone for visionary leadership and learning-centered education. This focus helps the institution develop programs, processes, and procedures that should support the development of a student's full potential.
2. A systematic strategic planning process has been in place since 1997 which features participation of current and future students and stakeholders. The Board of Trustees' Strategic Conversations, the internal microcosm groups, and the monitoring process that is currently being developed should provide a solid basis for the institution's improvement efforts.
3. Grand Rapids Community College has several comprehensive and formal means to collect student satisfaction data and student need data. These include surveys, studies, and data from the new information system. The use of these data provides Grand Rapids Community College with important data for decision-making.
4. Cooperation and collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and community members is promoted through formal and informal groups and teams, including cross-functional teams and advisory committees. This institution-wide approach may promote personal and organizational growth.

The most significant opportunities for improvement are:

1. The absence of key performance requirements and measurements. Many areas are in the early stages of developing such measures and numerous mechanisms are in place to support this effort including the President's Monitoring reports. However, there is little evidence of a systematic approach or deployment in these areas. Without such measures, Grand Rapids Community College may find it difficult to evaluate its effectiveness in these areas.
2. While some evidence is provided that comparative data is used from peer organizations, there is no evidence of benchmarking of selected organizations being used for comparative or key performance measures. Isolated, "stand-alone" data may not be sufficient to support the improvement efforts envisioned in the strategic plan.

The most significant opportunities for improvement are (continued):

3. There is no evidence of short- and long-term strategic objectives or how they are linked to student achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, or organizational goals, targets, or objectives. Without such focus, Grand Rapids Community College may fail to anticipate or respond to future or emerging needs.
4. Grand Rapids Community College benefits from a variety of activities that support its performance excellence efforts but lacks a systematic alignment between these activities. As an example, it is not apparent how institutional priorities and Ends Policies are aligned through the institutional level report card, the assessment team's review of data, or the President's Monitoring Report. Alignment of these areas may support Grand Rapids Community College's efforts to achieve performance excellence.

Considering the organization key factors, the most significant strengths, opportunities for improvement, and/or gaps (data, comparisons, linkages) found in the organization's results are:

1. Grand Rapids Community College shows early good performance levels in areas such as student satisfaction, increased use of computers and computing support, and foundation contributions.
2. The absence of identified key performance measures means that results are not reported for many areas of importance to Grand Rapids Community College and lack of comparative and benchmark data limits the institution's use of the information provided. In particular, there are no direct results for Student Learning (7.1) and few results for Budgetary and Financial Results (7.3), Faculty and Staff (7.4), or Organizational Effectiveness (7.5).

CATEGORY 1: LEADERSHIP

Item 1.1 - Organizational Leadership

STRENGTHS

1. Senior leaders at Grand Rapids Community College guide the institution using a policy governance model, an approach to managing the institution that emphasizes values, empowerment of both the Board and the staff, and the strategic ability to guide leaders through four types of policies: Ends, Executive Limitations, Governance, and Board-Executive Linkages. This model led to the establishment of cross-functional teams and councils organized around significant college processes with policy and decision making authority. The model supports Grand Rapids Community College's value of providing a working environment characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility for the whole.
2. Senior leaders set, communicate, and deploy the institution's vision, mission, values, and performance expectations through the traditional administrative structure combined with cross-functional teams. The Quality Leadership Team, for example, increases communication and collaboration among functional units and teams and sets direction, reviews progress, and recommends priorities. This creates an environment that promotes empowerment and supports the institution's commitment to being learner-centered, collaborative, and flexible.
3. Senior leaders communicate with members of the community, students, and staff in a variety of ways such as monthly Board of Trustees meetings, Strategic Conversations, advisory group meetings, open forums for students, web, and e-mail. This demonstrates the institution's commitment to the value of community connection and its end of community outreach.
4. Senior leaders are using campus teams to develop a formal process that assesses organizational health. Several assessment tools are used such as the college report card and student satisfaction surveys. These steps can help the organization manage by fact and support alignment with the vision, mission, and values.

Item 1.1 - Organizational Leadership

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Although senior leadership demonstrates a focus on creating and balancing value for students, faculty, and staff, it does not appear to demonstrate the same focus on other stakeholders such as business, industry, and the general community. Not balancing values for students and all stakeholders (internal and external) could limit the institution's ability to reach its vision of contributing to the vitality of the community.
2. Grand Rapids Community College provided no documentation that students are involved in the process of identifying mission, vision, values, and Ends statements, or that they are included on the various teams used to set direction and make decisions for the institution. Failure to include a major stakeholder group in these processes could limit the institution's ability to provide a quality-learning environment that is nurturing and challenging for this stakeholder group.
3. Grand Rapids Community College appears to be in the beginning stages of developing an organizational performance review process. However, there is no mention of assessment of performance relative to competition, comparable organizations, or benchmarks. While the development of a fully functional performance review process takes significant amounts of time and, in many cases, requires multiple cycles of the P-D-S-A cycle before full implementation is achieved, it is critical that these critical components be included in the plan for assessment. It is this comparative data which will allow decision makers at the institution to determine not only how well they are doing but also where they should place their priorities for the future.
4. While Grand Rapids Community College has created a focus on collaboration and enhanced quality improvement efforts, it is unclear how senior leaders plan to measure the success of these efforts. The lack of key performance measures related to this focus may make it more difficult to determine the effectiveness of these efforts within the institution and to determine ongoing opportunities for improvement.

Item 1.2 - Public Responsibility and Citizenship

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College has addressed its responsibilities to the public through its mission, vision, values, and Ends statements. One example is the End statement, "We serve the community as a quality educational resource providing leadership to the expressed needs of the community." These agreed upon and published statements provide a strong commitment to the institution's students and stakeholders.
2. Grand Rapids Community College addresses its risk management, safety, and accessibility issues that affect students and staff. In the area of safety, for example, the institution's collection of crime data led to recommended policies for the protection and safety of the general public. By addressing this issue, the college displays public responsibility.
3. The applicant is participating in the Higher Learning Commission's (formerly North Central Association's) Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) and also has ten special accreditations for specific programs such as nursing and culinary arts. The use of accreditation standards to improve the organization and its programs demonstrates the college's support of its value of accountability and the quality improvement program.
4. The institution uses Strategic Conversations, advisory committees, and collaborative work with community and business groups to help the institution anticipate public concerns and assure compliance in the areas of safety, regulatory, and legal requirements. These community interactions are evidence of community based leadership and service and provides Grand Rapids Community College with valuable stakeholder input for use in the planning process.
5. Numerous partnerships with local, regional, and state organizations provide opportunities for senior leaders, faculty, staff, and students to actively support the community. For example, the institution has been involved in helping the city determine goals for an improved regional workforce development system. These efforts support the institution's value of strong community connections.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Grand Rapids Community College does not appear to have determined outcomes or measures for key regulatory, safety, accreditation, or risk-management processes associated with the college's operations. Lack of such outcomes or measures could inhibit the institution's ability to determine successful processes and to plan ongoing improvements.
2. Although it is clear that Grand Rapids Community College considers education, training, and economic development to be areas of emphasis, it is less clear how the institution identifies those key constituents that will be served by these areas of emphasis. The identification of these key constituent groups is the first step in soliciting input and feedback on programs and services. Without this input, the institution may lose significant opportunities for improvement as identified by the customers being served.

Item 1.2 - Public Responsibility and Citizenship

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

3. Although senior leaders, faculty, and staff clearly participate in and help strengthen local communities' services and professional associations, there is no mention of efforts by the college to strengthen the environment. While these efforts may exist, without a clear delineation of these processes, the institution may have difficulty in assessing its effectiveness in this environmental category of public responsibility and citizenship.

CATEGORY 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Item 2.1 - Strategy Development

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College has a systematic strategic planning process that has been in place since 1997. This process includes input from faculty, staff, and the community, along with information from environmental scans, surveys and evaluation results, and Strategic Conversations. The Board of Trustees, Cabinet, and teams have clearly defined roles in the process. The process supports Grand Rapids Community College's organizational learning model that emphasizes openness, collaboration, data based decision making, and the role of strategic planning.
2. Grand Rapids Community College has documented the key factors of current and future needs of students and stakeholders. They describe how they use internal and external means to collect and consider market and new technology needs, and how they reflect on ethical and societal issues within their planning process. The planning process supports the applicant in meeting its mission and remaining committed to its values.
3. Grand Rapids Community College addresses the challenges and balances of the competing needs for students and stakeholders by setting institutional priorities. This is carried out using the Strategic Opportunity Fit Analysis and the Strategic Opportunity Development Analysis. There is evidence that these analyses are being used to set directions for the organization.
4. The General Learner Outcomes (Figure 2.1-5) will provide a framework for acquiring outcome assessment around general learner categories such as technology skills, communication skills, critical thinking, and personal skills. This effort appears to support the quality improvement efforts at the college.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. The applicant clearly identifies the ethical and societal factors included in its strategic planning process but does not appear to include budgetary and other potential risks. Failure to identify and incorporate these elements into the process may create an increased risk to the organization of failing to identify potential opportunities and to recognize constraints or risks that the organization may face.
2. Strategic Objectives and Strategies included in Figure 2.1-6 demonstrate the institution's action planning. However, the identification of key strategic/longer-term strategies and the timeline for accomplishing these strategies is not evident. Lack of this delineation creates an increased opportunity for failure to achieve long-term initiatives.

Item 2.1 - Strategy Development

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

3. The applicant appears to be in the beginning stages of providing measurable outcomes of both performance and environmental changes in relation to each Ends Policy. As noted in this Feedback Report, the inclusion of key performance measures, benchmarks, and/or comparative data is critical to the evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and the institution. Key leadership is encouraged to incorporate these elements, even in a rudimentary form, in this initial stage of the process.

Item 2.2 - Strategy Deployment

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College developed strategies for the college's eight Ends Policies through the ten strategy clusters that were developed to represent work occurring across campus. The clusters created a need and desire for cross-functional teamwork and avoided structural barriers created by individual units. These actions support Grand Rapids Community College's valuing of a work environment that is characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility.
2. Grand Rapids Community College has begun the integrated deployment of the Strategic Plan throughout the organization by developing criteria for prioritizing the ten strategy clusters' action plans. The criteria that have been developed determine readiness for implementation and how critical the need. Budget allocation and action planning are also beginning to align. The re-design of these processes indicates that college leaders are focusing on database decision-making and improvements to achieve desired results.
3. Grand Rapids Community College has made a visible commitment to securing data that can be documented and key assessment measures to evaluate success. The applicant also states that the work on their readiness and neediness analyses led to the decision to add additional personnel to help in the implementation phase of the plan. This commitment of resources and responsiveness to the needs of the institution demonstrates the values of integrity, accountability, and responsible risk-taking.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Grand Rapids Community College provides the Ends Policies (Figure 2.2-1) and describes the process used to develop these statements. However, the alignment between these Ends Policies and the college's strategic objectives is not clear. The creation of clear linkages between the Ends Policies and the institution's action planning is critical if the college is to fulfill its mission, vision, and values.
2. There is no evidence of a plan for projected human and financial resources requirements tied to the strategic plan. Because these resources, or the lack of these resources, often pose the greatest risk for an institution, they are a critical component of any institution's strategic planning. Lack of these elements could lead to delays in Grand Rapids Community College's fulfillment of stated mission and objectives.
3. According to Grand Rapids Community College, performance projections and measures are currently being identified. The institution is encouraged to continue this development since the lack of performance projections and measures will make it difficult for the institution to determine success and opportunities for continuous improvement in meeting the college's mission, comparing its progress with competitors, and in determining future initiatives.

CATEGORY 3: STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

Item 3.1 - Knowledge of Student Needs and Expectations

STRENGTHS

1. The college uses a variety of data sources (application form, student orientation questionnaire, surveys) to gather information from new and continuing students that provides demographic, academic, and satisfaction information. Teams and departments use this data to improve processes related to academic planning and evaluation of student support services. The institution's collection and use of this student information assists the staff in realizing not only the stated institutional value of providing a nurturing and challenging learning environment but also its mission and vision.
2. Information and data from important group segments (AFP, New, At Risk, Non-Service Area Students, etc.) are systematically tracked and reported to campus decision-makers. The data are analyzed and improvements are made accordingly. Through data collection and analysis processes, student requirements are noted and provided. This process assists the applicant to the fulfillment of its mission and values of "a nurturing and challenging learning environment" and "respect for differences in people."
3. The installation of the new Campus Wide Information System will expand Grand Rapids Community College's capacity to collect, analyze, and archive additional data to enhance student response efforts. The system has provided significant improvement in data collected resulting in service to student improvements. Examples include course schedules that have been adapted to meet student needs and revamping of services for academically under-prepared students. These changes support Grand Rapids Community College's stated value that the community and learners are the essence of their work.
4. Stakeholders concerned with the curriculum and learned skills provide feedback concerning curricular and program issues. These data are combined with information from the scanning process, in which trends are monitored on a regular basis, and potential implications for college programs and services are identified. Continual review and updates of programs and services support the mission of providing the community members with learning opportunities to meet their goals.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. While Grand Rapids Community College indicates that occupational programs are evaluated on a five-year cycle, it is difficult to determine how this evaluation is used to initiate needed changes in the curriculum. Failure to link the improvement process with the five-year evaluation cycle could put the institution at risk of losing the integrity of its occupational programs.

Item 3.1 - Knowledge of Student Needs and Expectations

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

2. Although the applicant has a number of student organizations designed to meet the needs and interests of a diverse student body, there is no mention of the use of focus groups, surveys, or other modes of determining student needs and expectations. While student organizations are an important part of the academic and social life of the institution, they are often limited in scope and participation. Heavy reliance on this source of student satisfaction data could provide an incomplete set of data for institutional decision-making.

Item 3.2 - Student and Stakeholder Satisfaction and Relationships

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College builds relationships with various groups such as students, faculty, staff, community, and future students in high schools through a variety of methods.
2. The applicant indicates that it determines student/stakeholder requirements from meetings of advisory boards and through special meetings such as Strategic Conversations. College teams then assess the information from these sources. The results of the assessments are deployed through e-mail and newsletters.
3. Grand Rapids Community College determines student and stakeholder satisfaction through a variety of processes such as advisory board meetings, Strategic Conversations, and occupational program surveys of graduates, faculty, and advisory committee members. These beginning efforts at determining student/stakeholder satisfaction are to be commended.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Although Grand Rapids Community College indicates that it maintains its relationships with students and stakeholders, there is little evidence that demonstrates the college's effectiveness in maintaining these relationships. A clarification and quantification of these as a process would allow college leadership to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of these relationships.
2. Grand Rapids Community College indicates that it does not benchmark with its competitors. While difficult to accomplish, benchmarking could allow leadership to determine those areas that have the greatest opportunity for improvement over those which cannot be substantially improved, thereby saving limited time and resources.
3. Grand Rapids Community College reports that its complaint management process needs to be developed so that current problems can be solved and that there can be a prevention of similar occurrences. The development of this process may help Grand Rapids Community College support its values of accountability and integrity.

CATEGORY 4: INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Item 4.1 – Measurement of Organizational Performance

STRENGTHS

1. The campus-wide computer information system (CWIS) assists the college's staff in retrieving real-time data and information. Data collection is cyclic and corresponds to the key indicators listed in Figure 4.1-1. This resource system supports the learning and work environments of the college via collaboration and shared responsibility in decision-making.
2. Grand Rapids Community College prepares an annual report card for stakeholders demonstrating 3-year trend data for its ten indicators and the organization's health relative to the Ends statements. Data includes: success rates of under-prepared students, transfer GPAs, fund balance, number of articulation agreements, persistence rates, graduation rates, employment rates, staff, student, and community diversity rates, and market share.
3. The college has dedicated the staff and financial resources required to be a "leading edge" user of technology while maintaining up-to-date information systems. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP), in conferences, in surveys, and in information tracking provides continuous review opportunities. This assures that performance measurement trends and needs are available for analysis and corrective action.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. The applicant does not appear to address how access and security issues are balanced within the CWIS system. Staff agrees to an "Acceptable Use Agreement," but there is little evidence of specific parameters. Without a balance between access and security, data integrity and confidentiality may be compromised.
2. Grand Rapids Community College reports limited evidence of comparative data within or outside the academic community. Only enrollment data appears to be provided. Without the ongoing use of comparative data, the applicant's ability to evaluate performance and competitive positioning may be hampered.
3. The college does not adequately document the alignment of the report card, the Ends Policies, and other performance reports. There is little evidence of how the organization utilizes data to track overall organization performance. If these data are not aligned, the performance measurement system may provide inadequate and/or conflicting information for decision-making.

Item 4.2 - Analysis of Organizational Performance

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College documents extensive use of surveys, analyses, and reports for organizational planning and data based decision-making. Information documents are made available to the Board of Trustees, the President's Cabinet, the Dean's Council, the Strategy Team, the Advisory Committees, and other cross-functional teams. This promotes a collaborative and consultative management environment.
2. The reported cross-functional team review and recommendation process provides for organizational change. The cited example of a yearlong study of the developmental education program with resulting changes in staffing and coursework indicates a broad-based evaluation process that appears to promote broad-based support of institutional decision-making.
3. The Institutional Research and Planning Office regularly posts multiple reports to the Web for use by college staff in the analysis and decision-making processes of the institution.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. While Grand Rapids Community College has established the President's Monitoring Report in support of senior leaders' performance review, there is no evidence that the process has been initiated or the level of deployment.
2. The applicant indicates the planning necessary has begun to align course objectives with Ends Policies and general learner outcomes. As described, this alignment process does not appear to include all stakeholders (i.e. department heads). Lack of stakeholder support in the alignment of these strategic planning processes may lead to a failure to deploy throughout the institution and the loss of a broad-based systems perspective.
3. The college uses trends and projections for data analysis. However, supporting comparative and correlative data appear to be limited. Lack of such comparative data may create a data based decision-making environment.

CATEGORY 5: FACULTY AND STAFF FOCUS

Item 5.1 - Work Systems

STRENGTHS

1. The Board of Trustees establishes boundaries of acceptability through its Executive Limitations Policies. These policies allow staff and faculty to identify their own methods and activities for personal and professional development. One of the policies states that the college president cannot fail to provide faculty and staff with the opportunities for meaningful professional and personal development. This policy and the resulting college practices support the applicant's desire, listed in the overview, to correct institutional barriers and promote collaboration, initiative, and innovation.
2. The use of integrated project and cross-functional leadership teams at Grand Rapids Community College promotes cooperation and innovation for improvements in the learning environment for students as well as for faculty and staff. These teams and their findings and recommendations support the institutional values of innovation, creativity, collaboration, and shared responsibility.
3. The job analysis and review for characteristics and skills needed for job positions includes input from appropriate unit staff, faculty, administrators, and human resources personnel. This analysis and review process addresses the college's value of providing a work environment characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility.
4. When a vacancy exists at Grand Rapids Community College, the position is advertised and a cross-functional, diverse interview team is established to conduct interviews. The use of this diverse interview team could serve as one of the elements of the institution's commitment to achieving the Ends Policy addressed in Item 3.2 above.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Grand Rapids Community College states that it is in the process of developing an organizational performance management system that will recognize high performance through promotion as well as recognize performance in other formal and informal ways. Until the organization fully deploys its organizational performance management system, Grand Rapids Community College may have difficulty in motivating staff and faculty to fulfill their potential and assisting them to attain job and career-related development and learning objectives.
2. Grand Rapids Community College indicates that it uses many communication vehicles to support collaborative and cooperative work across the campus (printed media, electronic communication tools, meetings, and college learning days). However, there appears to be no mention of how many faculty and staff use these communication vehicles. This apparent lack of data on the effectiveness of the communication processes of the college will make it difficult to separate viable and non-viable processes that need to be improved.

Item 5.2 - Faculty and Staff Education, Training, and Development

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College offers a wide range of education and training programs (college learning days, just-in-time training for computer skills, and new equipment training for faculty and staff needs) that are supported by a variety of internal and external funds. These faculty and staff educational and training programs are indicative of the college's focus on its internal stakeholders.
2. The applicant fosters the development of leadership potential by sending employees to leadership training and once a year "loaning an employee" to the United Way to help lead the annual campaign. These activities support the college's value of creating a nurturing and challenging learning environment.
3. Faculty and staff excellence in training is recognized by sabbaticals awarded yearly to faculty and year-end recognition luncheons for employees. Skill standards and technology assessment are addressed through department and accreditation requirements for performance excellence.
4. A new Assessment Coordinator has been hired at Grand Rapids Community College to review performance practices, encourage development of assessment processes, and help lead the college in developing a college-wide plan for assessment. This application of resources reinforces the college's commitment to accountability.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. The applicant indicates that a variety of surveys and feedback from events are used to improve the design of programs. However, there is little evidence of how input from senior leaders and supervisors or individual professional development plans are used to help design and improve education and training programs for employees. Lack of this input may hinder the college's efforts to have a work environment that is characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility.
2. Although Grand Rapids Community College offers faculty and staff training and educational programs through a variety of modes, there is little evidence of a formal plan for evaluating these internal educational processes and their overall effectiveness in improving faculty and staff performance. Lack of evaluation may allow the institution to apply resources unwisely and to diminish the effectiveness of the entire program.
3. There is little evidence of the methods faculty and staff use to measure performance, skill standards, or use of technology. Although the institution has begun the improvement process with the employment of an Assessment Coordinator, until assessment plans for training and educational programs are developed and deployed, it may be difficult for the college to support its value of "a nurturing and challenging learning environment."

Item 5.2 - Faculty and Staff Education, Training, and Development

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

4. Grand Rapids Community College appears to be in the beginning stages of benchmarking best practices as they relate to the performance of the whole college. Until benchmarking is used to determine the college's overall performance in the areas of faculty and staff learning programs, Grand Rapids Community College may not be able to support its value of "a nurturing and challenging learning environment."

Item 5.3 - Faculty and Staff Well-Being and Satisfaction

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College indicates that it actively supports “a nurturing and challenging learning environment” through provisions for employee fitness and wellness, safety, and ergonomics. Examples are a wellness team's sponsoring a fitness program, special and general safety programs, and an ergonomics consultant hired to do individual assessments and provide recommendations to alleviate current and potential problems.
2. Employee benefits are determined through personnel surveys, union negotiations, and the "meet and serve" focus groups. This employee involvement and input enhances faculty and staff well-being and satisfaction.
3. Grand Rapids Community College addresses diversity training through diversity lecture series, an Institute on Racism, an annual diversity conference, and diversity training. These activities support the college's Ends Policy of diversity and its value of “respect for all people.” These activities should be incorporated into the identification of a process cited in Item 3.2.
4. The applicant reports that it uses a variety of surveys, such as the Personal Assessment of College Environment (PACE) and the Campus Climate Survey. In addition, web-based surveys and feedback from events and activities held on campus are collected and used to make program adjustments. These practices support the college's value of “community and learners are the essence of its work.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Although there are programs designed for the wellness and fitness, ergonomics, and safety of employees, there is little evidence of identified outcomes and measures of effectiveness for these areas. Without outcomes and measures it may prove difficult to determine those improvements that generate the greatest satisfaction and effectiveness.
2. Grand Rapids Community College offers a diversity lecture series, an Institute on Racism, and an annual diversity conference. However, there is little evidence of employee input into the identification of their diversity needs. Without employee input into their needs, it may be difficult for Grand Rapids Community College to support its value of “diversity and respect for differences in people.”
3. The applicant reports that it is in the beginning stages of relating evaluation findings to key or organizational performance results. Therefore, it is just beginning to identify work environment, faculty, and staff support climate improvement priorities. Continued improvement in these areas may help Grand Rapids Community College address its work and learning environment related values.

CATEGORY 6: EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORT PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Item 6.1 – Education Design and Delivery

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College appears to match workforce need to programs, uses employer input and data, and uses community needs to develop educational programs and offerings that meet the learning needs of the community. These components of an educational design process support the mission of “enabling people to meet their goals.”
2. Grand Rapids Community College has strengthened the design processes for the development and delivery of programs and offerings within the context of the mission statement by developing a new component in the faculty evaluation system that collects student perceptions and feedback of courses. Faculty members are trained in multiple ways to encourage student learning and are given information about changes in student and market requirements. Additionally, technology is apparently being infused into the learning environment and faculty is trained in its use.
3. Grand Rapids Community College has department chairs and deans who have primary responsibility for improving the design and delivery of educational programs and offerings and assessing their effectiveness. Program department heads “are charged with maintaining the quality of their curriculum.” This allows expansion of faculty input into the program evaluation and improvement process.
4. Grand Rapids Community College programs are developed or revised based on a school process model (Figure 6.1-1). Courses are approved or revised based on the Course Approval and Review Process (CARP) (Figure 6.1-2). The deployment of these processes supports the mission and values of the institution.
5. Differences in learning rates and styles are assessed for placement into appropriate courses. Under-prepared students may be placed in academic foundation courses or special courses that include information on adjusting to college. The use of these data assists students in achieving their learning objectives without compromising the integrity of the programs of the college.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Although Grand Rapids Community College encourages faculty members to incorporate active learning into their classrooms, there is little evidence that the institution has developed and deployed a process that would ensure that all programs and offerings incorporate active learning into the design of the program or offering. Without this level of commitment, Grand Rapids Community College may find it difficult to adequately address the needs of a diverse student population and create a challenging learning environment.

Item 6.1 – Education Design and Delivery

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

2. It would appear that courses are analyzed in the Grand Rapids Community College course approval and review process for sequencing and linkages. However, little evidence is provided that addresses the use of formative and summative assessment within the overall curriculum. While this is critical for student evaluation, it also provides the basis for ongoing program improvement (as required by NCA) and meets the institution's stated value of "maintaining a competitive edge with its listed competitors."

3. Grand Rapids Community College supports faculty training and development for implementation of its educational programs and offerings through the Center for Training and Learning, funding for other faculty development, and tuition reimbursement. However, little evidence indicates the presence of a system that would keep occupational faculty up-to-date with industry improvements, changes, and upgrades. Without such a system it will be difficult for the institution to ensure that faculty are prepared to implement and maintain a state-of-the-art curriculum.

Item 6.2 - Education Support Processes

STRENGTHS

1. Key educational support processes appear to be distributed across the institution to assist in meeting student and stakeholder needs. Services are delineated in the student handbook and include student services, the academic dean's office, financial aid, registrar, counseling and academic support services, and the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation. These services support some of the listed student/stakeholder requirements such as assessment, advisement, counseling, and competent faculty.
2. Key support process requirements are solicited from students through surveys and informal meetings, from stakeholders through discussions at advisory meetings, and from faculty and staff at meetings. These efforts support the college's mission and the value of "a nurturing and challenging work environment characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility."
3. Information about the college's improvements in support services is transmitted through monthly newsletters, the website, and alumni publications. Sharing of improvements with students and stakeholders supports the college's values of "community connection" and "the community and learners are the essence of the college's work."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Grand Rapids Community College lists several key education support services such as student services, financial aid, and advisement and counseling support services. However, there is little evidence of other services such as tutoring, libraries, accounting, plant and facilities, food services, and bookstores or listed student/stakeholder requirements (small classes and low tuition). While it is probable that these support services exist, lack of their inclusion in the support process for the educational programs of the institution could suggest a lack of understanding of systems analysis that could damage the institution's ability to meet its mission.
2. Although there a number of key educational support services listed and the ways in which the key process requirements are identified, there is limited evidence as to how these processes are designed to fulfill Grand Rapids Community College's educational and operational requirements. Without such specifically designed/aligned processes, Grand Rapids Community College may find it difficult to meet increasingly stringent student and stakeholder requirements.
3. The applicant states that Grand Rapids Community College is in the beginning stages of using and collecting data to implement meaningful changes in operations. One team is working on streamlining the entering student process. Grand Rapids Community College is encouraged to fully deploy the use of data to analyze and improve all key support process areas. Without such full deploy, the institution may have difficulty in meeting student and stakeholder requirements in the future.

Item 6.3 - Partnering Processes

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College appears to be committed to maintaining close relationships within its service region as well as counties outside of its service region (sending recruiters to high schools, hosting campus tours and open houses). Grand Rapids Community College's relationships with public schools support the Ends Policy of community partnerships and the value of "community connection."
2. Partnership with a nearby four-year university has resulted in a reciprocal relationship involving the Applied Technology Center at Grand Rapids Community College. Both institutions use the same equipment and, after ten years, the two schools have initiated a concurrent enrollment agreement. This partnership represents the applicant's value of the "community and learners are the essence of its work" while enabling student transitions.
3. Grand Rapids Community College partners with employers for student job placement. Four Grand Rapids Community College staff members are at a state agency that finds employees for nearly 2000 jobs annually. The types of community partnerships between Grand Rapids Community College and various employers demonstrate the college's value of "the community connection" while providing feedback into the institution on employer requirements and ensuring successful transitions of students upon completion of their courses of study.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. The applicant states that Grand Rapids Community College needs to improve its partnership communication and to develop a consistent philosophy and message between the beliefs and activities of its various staffs and programs. This improvement would be encouraged as a means to ensure effective student transitions to other educational institutions and businesses.
2. Grand Rapids Community College's primary relationship with high schools appears to be provided by the Admissions Office. No formal assessment appears to be done on Grand Rapids Community College partnerships with other schools. Without an ongoing process for such assessment, it may be difficult for Grand Rapids Community College to consistently improve its partnerships with local and regional high schools to ensure the effective transfers of students into Grand Rapids Community College.
3. While the Delta Strategy is cited as an excellent example of a strong community partnership, it is unclear how the partnership is linked to the overall mission of Grand Rapids Community College.
4. Although advisory boards are available to Grand Rapids Community College for input and feedback concerning its occupational programs, there is little evidence regarding the systematic management and application of the information provided. The deployment of such a system would assist the college to ensure various programs.

CATEGORY 7: ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Item 7.1 - Student Performance Results

STRENGTHS

1. With one exception (American Indian), ten other student subgroups demonstrated improvements in persistence from the freshmen to sophomore year at Grand Rapids Community College. These results demonstrate the college's commitment to their value of "learners as the essence of the college's work" and, if the trend continues, demonstrate the effectiveness of the diversity initiatives on campus.
2. In three years, 1995-1997, transfer rates of Grand Rapids Community College students to other institutions rose from eight percent to twenty-five percent.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Figures 7.1-2 through 7.1-5 provide data about student performance results. However, no comparative data appears to be available for comparable organizations and student populations. Without this comparative data, Grand Rapids Community College will be unable to examine its performance in comparison to other institutions to determine priorities for continued improvements.
2. Figure 7.1-6 reflects percentages for only 1997-1998 graduates. While these data showed high satisfaction with student preparation, there is no comparable data for 1996-97, 1998-99 and 1999-2000. Lack of trend data makes this difficult to interpret for both the institution and the reader.
3. In Figure 7.1-9, the percents appear to be lower or the same in all but one year, 1998-99 English for developmental students. Based on this Figure, it does not appear that Grand Rapids Community College is experiencing an increase in at-risk student performance and thus may not be able to fulfill its mission.
4. In Figures 7.1-1-10 a and b, G.P.A.s show a drop in fall and spring 2000 based on an apparent change in grading policy. While G.P.A.s are indicators of individual student success, their use as indicators of institutional success are somewhat problematic due to ongoing concerns with variability, reliability, and validity issues. This, when combined with a major shift in grading policy, would suggest that this is not a viable measure for the institution to base its improvement initiatives.
5. Based on the data provided, the college appears to lack the necessary critical measurements needed to document learning and effective support for students. Without this ability to implement change and document results, faculty and staff will be restricted in achieving their desired improvements.

Item 7.2 - Student and Stakeholder Focused Results

STRENGTHS

1. Figure 7.7-5 illustrates the highest ratings of graduate satisfaction with key services over three years in the Career Resource Center and Student Activities. These ratings reflect positive student satisfaction with these support services
2. In support of maintaining state-of-the-art equipment and high-level, hands-on technology, Grand Rapids Community College doubled the number of student computers between 1996 and 2001.
3. Figure 7.2-10 illustrates the increase in contributions to the College's Foundation. These contributions exemplify the community's support of Grand Rapids Community College and the college's efforts to fulfill its mission.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Figures 7.2-2 and 7.2-3 show results from two surveys of students who rated their satisfaction with experiences at Grand Rapids Community College. The data reflect only those ratings of "above average" (2000-01) and "very satisfied" (1999). Reporting these data in isolation with no trendline data and/or comparative data limits the ability of the institution or the reader to draw conclusions from the data.
2. While Grand Rapids Community College did surveys of overall student satisfaction in 1997 and 1999 (where 94 to 95% indicated that their needs were met), there are no apparent indicators that provide the institution with a definition of these "met needs." Without more specificity in data, faculty and staff may not be able to determine future initiatives for continued improvement of instruction and student support.
3. Figures 7.2-7 and 7.2-8 provide comparative data relative to results achieved by Grand Rapids Community College's listed competitors. This type of data is needed for Grand Rapids Community College. Without this type of data, leaders may find it difficult to assess progress and determine the improvements needed in customized training and adult services to remain competitive with other listed competitors.

Item 7.3 – Budgetary and Financial Results

STRENGTHS

1. Grand Rapids Community College has identified fund balance growth as a key budget indicator. As reflected in Figure 7.3-2, cost containment practices have resulted in increased fund balances each year since 1998-99. This positive trend in fund balance may provide opportunity for innovation and creativity that is "cutting edge."
2. The applicant organization has supported instructional activities at a level exceeding other community colleges in the state. Figure 7.3-3 reports Grand Rapids Community College has exceeded the state average expenditure since 1995-96. This supports the college's stated mission and Ends Policies.
3. A campus climate survey provided information that some staff members wanted to be more involved in the budgeting process. In response to this request, Grand Rapids Community College provided budget update sessions. Evaluations indicated that 31% of responding staff rated the sessions a 5 on a scale of 1-5. These sessions support the mission of Grand Rapids Community College as well as the value of "community and learners being the essence of the college's work."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Limited comparative data is provided. The applicant does not report indicators of budgetary and financial performance in areas of tuition and fees, income, expenses, budgetary increases or decreases, tax rates, or scholarship growth. Maintaining a competitive market edge may be difficult without this form of comparative data.
2. Grand Rapids Community College provides no evidence of budgetary and financial efficiency and effectiveness through measures and comparisons of areas such as cost per student, program expenditures as a percent of budget, or resources redirected to education from other areas. Without this type of comparative data, leadership may find it difficult to determine the overall budgetary and financial performance of the institution in meeting its mission.

Item 7.4 - Faculty and Staff Results

STRENGTHS

1. Figure 7.4-2 details the number of employees trained in health and wellness activities. From 1998-99 through 2000-01, the numbers trained have increased from 85 to 319. This demonstrates the college's commitment to its employees' health and wellness.
2. Figure 7.4-4 indicates that 467 employees were trained in technology skills. Of all the trainees who attended, excellent ratings were given on financial systems at 73%, student systems 69%, and related software 79%.
3. Figure 7.4-5 demonstrates that Grand Rapids Community College experiences a low faculty turnover and that their staff turnover has remained consistent over the last two years. This supports the college's institutional effectiveness goal with employees.
4. Figure 7.4-6 shows an increase in faculty and departments using technology-enhanced instructional techniques and Figure 7.4-7 shows increased use of the Center for Teaching and Learning. These figures illustrate Grand Rapids Community College's efforts in meeting their value of being a "community of learners as the essence of work" and its strategic priority of integrating technology.
5. Figure 7.4-8, 1999 PACE Campus Climate Survey Results Comparison with Norm Base shows scores on the PACE compared to the norm base of community colleges. Using comparative data can help Grand Rapids Community College to determine areas of satisfaction and effectiveness in faculty and staff management and support.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. The crime statistics reported in Figure 7.4-3 show an apparent increase in instances where help is provided to personnel (escorts, lockout, and dead batteries) and improvements in number of incidences such as trespassing. However, Grand Rapids Community College crime statistics continue to show apparent increases in other areas such as theft, larceny, embezzlement, and forgery as well as property destruction or damage. These data provide the institution with an opportunity for improvement that could directly affect the institution and its well-being.
2. Although Figure 7.4-8 provides positive comparisons between Grand Rapids Community College's own climate survey and the PACE Norm Base Survey, there are no apparent comparisons with other institutions using the PACE throughout the United States. If available, these comparisons may assist Grand Rapids Community College in its efforts to measure progress through both trend analysis and comparison to comparable institutions.
3. Figures 7.4-4 and 7.4-9 indicate only "excellence" or high-ranking scores of training on the climate survey. There is no apparent evidence of less than excellent ratings (dissatisfaction scores). Without the results of dissatisfaction scores, Grand Rapids Community College may find it difficult to determine those areas needing improvement.

Item 7.4 - Faculty and Staff Results

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (continued)

4. No results are indicated for innovation, suggestion rates, cross-functional teams' satisfaction, collaboration rates, and shared responsibility satisfaction for the college's listed values and strategic context. With no results in these areas, it may be difficult for Grand Rapids Community College to improve its faculty and staff management system and support its stated values.

Item 7.5 - Organizational Effectiveness Results

STRENGTHS

1. In Figure 7.5-3, the data indicate that employers mirror the service district in ethnic diversity with one apparent exception (Caucasian). Apparently, students exceed the county diversity statistics for Asian but are less for African-American and Caucasian. These statistics support the college's diversity Ends Policy.
2. Figure 7.5-5 and Figure 7.5-6 support the college's strategic context of flexible learning. The number of students in distance learning courses increased in instructional television, telecourses, and Internet courses from fall 2000 to winter 2001. The number of open entry classes increased by ten from fall 2000 to winter 2001.
3. The applicant's effectiveness is measured and reported in relation to the college's strategic plan and Ends Policies. The Grand Rapids Community College report card to the community is distributed to alumni, community residents, and employers throughout the service area. These efforts provide feedback to the community based on expectations voiced through advisory groups and Strategic Conversations.
4. Grand Rapids Community College provides learner-centered, flexible, and collaborative learning experiences. The varied learning experiences create a focus on the education and training necessary to meet the students' educational goals. Providing these opportunities supports the institution's mission.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Although Grand Rapids Community College's ethnic and gender diversity reflects that of its region, there are no results evident of how students and stakeholders demonstrate respect for differences in people. Without data from improvement efforts that address respect for differences, Grand Rapids Community College may have difficulty in improving or supporting its stated value "respect for differences."
2. While the organization has designated key indicators of effectiveness related to its strategic plan, trendline data is not apparent in this report. Tracking this data over an extended timeframe should enhance the institution's self-understanding and its ability to initiate quality improvements.
3. The applicant's mission, Ends Policy of community partnership, and value of "community connection" supports the college's community involvement. Without results in these areas, Grand Rapids Community College may find it difficult to assess its community connection and its partnerships.