August 6, 2010

Dr. Mick Starcevich, President
Kirkwood Community College
6301 Kirkwood Boulevard, SW
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404

Dear Dr. Starcevich:

This is a letter of notification regarding state accreditation for Kirkwood Community College. The Iowa Department of Education conducted a comprehensive accreditation visit at Kirkwood Community College on April 6-8, 2010, according to Iowa Code and Administrative Rules.

On July 29, 2010, the Iowa State Board of Education accepted the Kirkwood Community College accreditation report and approved accreditation through the 2014-2015 academic year. The Kirkwood Community College state interim accreditation will be conducted during the 2014-2015 academic year. There were no recommendations for Institutional Improvement noted by the accreditation team. State review requirements such as the Quality Faculty Plan, faculty personnel files, faculty load, career and technical program evaluation, and a review of the college catalog and AS28s did not present any issues.

You and your staff are to be commended for the level of broad participation in the accreditation process. It is clear that the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and state accreditation activities and reports were the result of a college-wide effort. We look forward to working with you and your staff as you prepare for the future. Congratulations on your successful interim accreditation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Roger Utman, Ph.D., Administrator
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation
515/281-8260; roger.utman@iowa.gov

RU: CH/sew

cc: Colleen Hunt, Chief
Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education
Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary
July 29, 2010

Agenda Item: Kirkwood Community College's Accreditation Report (KCC)

Iowa Goal: Individuals will pursue postsecondary education in order to drive economic success.

Equity Impact Statement: KCC supports an open-door policy in enrollment of all students.

Presenters: Colleen Hunt, Chief Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education Services
Mick Starcevich, Ed.D., President Kirkwood Community College

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: The Iowa Department of Education (Department) recommends continued accreditation for KCC through 2014. A state compliance accreditation visit will be held in 2014.

Background: This is a report of the evaluation of KCC for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-granting institution. The Department conducted the evaluation visit on April 6-8, 2010. The findings reflect the work of the accreditation team in the comprehensive review of KCC.

KCC is following the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) model for accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, a commission of the North Central Association (NCA). With AQIP, an institution demonstrates it meets accreditation standards and expectations through sequences of events that align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their performance.
Accreditation Evaluation

Kirkwood Community College

On-Site Visit Conducted
April 6-8, 2010

Iowa Department of Education
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation
Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education Services
STATE OF IOWA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Grimes State Office Building
400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

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Roger Utman, Ph.D., Administrator

Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education Services

Colleen Hunt, Chief

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If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E 14th St, Des Moines IA 50319-0146, telephone number 515/281-5295, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 111 N. Canal Street, Suite 1053, Chicago, IL 60606-7204.
Kirkwood Community College Accreditation Visit
April 6-8, 2010

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Kirkwood Community College’s State Accreditation
Conducted on April 6-8, 2010

Purpose of the Visit

This was an accreditation visit for Kirkwood Community College (KCC) by the Iowa Department of Education (DE).

Organizational Context

Consistent with the philosophy held by the college and in accordance with the charge given it by the state of Iowa as an institution of higher education and in concert with other agencies, KCC has the following vision, mission, principles and values:

Vision: To invent, develop, and deliver learning solutions for the 21st century.

Mission: Identify community needs, provide accessible, quality education and training, and promote opportunities for lifelong learning.

Principles and Values: Integrity, mutual respect, open communication, innovation, partnership, lifelong learning, servant leadership, and excellence.

KCC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). KCC embraces the philosophy, principles, and practices of the HLC, Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). The college was approved to participate in this form of continuous improvement accreditation in 2006 integrating its own Kirkwood Quality Improvement Program (KQIP). Developed by the HLC, this approach informs and sustains the college’s self-assessment by placing strong emphasis upon performance data and progress evidence. Thus, KCC’s strategic and operational improvements are systematically aligned and integrated into the accreditation self-assessment process.

To ensure the college continues to advance its mission, vision, and priorities in a manner aligned with the HLC, the college engages in a reaffirmation procedure every seven years to demonstrate it is meeting or exceeding the HLC’s accreditation standards and expectations. KCC relies upon five core AQIP processes to demonstrate it is meeting the ongoing requirements of HLC’s criteria for accreditation. These processes are: Action Projects, Systems Portfolio, Systems Appraisal, Strategy Forum, and the Quality Checkup Visit.
KCC Facilities

KCC has an expansive campus built on 680 acres, the nation’s only student-operated hotel/restaurant at a community college, a 400-acre working farm, programs in Geographic Information Systems, Biotechnology, Precision Sheet Metal Fabrication and Web Technologies, and the Midwest's premier equestrian facility.

- **KCC’s campus** covers 680 acres, including a 400-acre working farm on its main campus. The 27 buildings hold more than 1.1 million square feet of interior learning space. Kirkwood also has a 15-acre athletic complex.

- **The Hotel at Kirkwood Center:** An upscale 71-room hotel, complete with an elegant gourmet restaurant, will be operated almost entirely by KCC’s Hospitality and Culinary Arts students. Once complete in the summer of 2010, this Center of Excellence will be the nation’s only such facility at a two-year school, and students will earn valuable real world experience right on campus.

- **Linn Hall Simulation Lab:** KCC’s health care students receive hands-on experience in crisis situations in the $3.6 million emergency medicine simulation lab, added to Linn Hall in 2008.

- **Jones County Regional Education Center:** Eight (8) local school districts, the city of Monticello, the Welter family, and KCC partnered to support rural students and sustain a viable, educated workforce through the Jones County Regional Education Center. The center occupies eight acres along Highway 151 in Monticello, strategically located near the midpoint between Cedar Rapids and Dubuque. At approximately 30,000 square feet, the center houses state-of-the-art classrooms, career and technical labs for academic programs, and administrative offices.

- **Benton/Cedar Academic Wing:** The $14 million academic wing added 90,000 square-feet of classrooms and offices for English, KCELT (Kirkwood Excellence for Learning and Teaching), Institutional Effectiveness, Learning Services, and Social Science departments.

- **Kirkwood Center for Continuing Education:** The Kirkwood Center for Continuing Education blends technology with "green" architecture to create a premier learning environment for conferences, retreats, seminars, meetings, or other special events.

- **Horticulture/Floriculture:** The 32,000-square-foot Horticulture/Floriculture building features state-of-the-art energy efficiency, including geothermal heating and cooling, fully automated controls, plus a roof system that catches rainwater for use in the greenhouses and landscaping areas. A large student commons area, a small engine lab, and an indoor dirt floor used to teach patio building and other outdoor skills in all weather conditions are just a few of the amenities students will find at the complex.

- **Michael J Gould Kirkwood Recreation Center:** Opened in 2004, the 43,500-square-foot recreation center caters to healthy choices in exercise and relaxation. Three (3) full-size athletic courts, a 200-meter walking/jogging track, a weight room, a fitness area featuring dozens of exercise machines, an aerobics/multipurpose room, plus many fitness and wellness classes make it easy for students, faculty, and staff to stay fit and healthy.
• Iowa Equestrian Center: The Midwest’s premier equestrian facility serves a dual purpose: During the week, the stables, stalls, and arena serve as KCC’s Horse Science classrooms and working laboratory. On the weekends, the center hosts hundreds of prominent regional and national horse shows.

• Jones Hall: The center of industrial technology at KCC, Jones Hall, received an $8.5 million makeover in 2008, featuring a new precision sheet metal fabrication area. The 30,000 square foot addition also made room for indoor shops for carpentry, HVAC (Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning) and plumbing programs.

Sites or Branch Campuses/Centers Reviewed

• Kirkwood Community College Campus—Cedar Rapids, Iowa City,
• Jones Center, Monticello

Interactions with Institutional Constituencies

1. Cabinet
2. President
3. Chief Academic Officer
4. AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) Director
5. Dean of Students
6. Career and Technical Faculty
7. Deans and Directors
8. Arts and Sciences Faculty
9. Instructional Staff
10. Corporate College Staff
11. Enrollment Staff
12. Institutional Researcher
13. Equity Staff
14. Student Services Staff
15. Staff and Faculty Development Committee
16. Division Chairs
17. Board of Trustees
18. Human Resources Staff
19. High School Staff
20. Advisory Committees
21. Support Staff
22. Library Services Staff
23. Foundation and Grants Staff
24. Business Office, Radio, Marketing, Food Service, and Facilities Staff
25. Curriculum, Online Standards, and Assessment Committees
26. Job Training, Promise Jobs, WIA (Workforce Investment Act), and Youth Programs Staff
27. Quality Faculty Plan Committee
Principle Documents, Materials, and On-line Information Reviewed

1. Web Page
2. AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) Documentation
3. Kirkwood Organizational Chart
4. Student Handbook
5. Employee and Faculty Handbooks
6. College Catalog
7. College Statement of Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals
8. Student Placement Data Report
9. Course Schedule (all terms at main campus and centers) 2010, Fall 2009, Summer 2009, Spring 2009, and Fall 2008
11. Continuing Education Catalogs, February 2009—August 2010
12. Strategic Action Framework
13. Enrollment by Program (Fall 2009, Spring 2010, and Summer 2009)
14. Enrollment by Off-Campus Location (Fall 2009)
16. Program Data Report
18. Counseling Materials
19. Recruitment Brochures
20. Civil Rights Related to Grievance Procedure
21. Contract Agreement Forms for Student Job Placement
22. List of Advisory Committee Members
23. Disaggregated Employee Data by Race/National Origin, Sex and Disability
24. Handbooks for Clubs, Co-Curricular, and Extracurricular Organizations
25. Discipline and Harassment Policies
26. Yearbooks and Graduation Awards Program
27. Coaches Handbooks
28. Housing Options Handbooks
31. Career Services Coordinators Reports
32. Board Policies
33. Career and Career Option Programs
34. Program Review Process
35. Accreditation Agreements
36. AQIP Documentation
37. Campus Safety Reports
38. Board Minutes
39. Organizational Chart
40. Student Handbook
41. Faculty Handbooks
42. Kirkwood Community College Continuous Quality Improvement Accreditation 2010
43. Official Letter of Higher Learner Accreditation Status
44. Data on Student Enrollment in Campuses, Departments, Programs, and Courses on the Basis of Racial/Ethnic Background, Gender, and Disability
45. Quality Faculty Plan
46. Continuing Education Brochures
47. International Travel Information
48. Financial Assistance Pamphlets
49. Faculty Workload Report Fall 2009, Spring 2010
50. Distance Demographic Information
52. Minutes from Standing Committees
53. Sports Offerings Demographics
54. Document of Strategies to Recruit, Enroll, Retain, Successfully Serve Students in Nontraditional Careers, Students from Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Groups, English Language Learners, Students With Disabilities, and Other Nontraditional Students
55. Long-Range Planning for Building Development and Equipment
56. EEO (Equal Opportunity Employment)/AA (Affirmative Action) Documentation
57. Written Human Resources Policy and Procedures
58. Teacher Load Information
59. Faculty Personnel Files
60. Quality Faculty Plan

Additional State Review Requirements

✓ The Quality Faculty Plan (QFP), as required by Iowa Code, was reviewed at KCC and was found to meet the stated requirements of the Iowa Code.
✓ Review of faculty personnel files, as required by Iowa Code, did not present any issues.
✓ Review of faculty load, as required by Iowa Code, did not present any issues.
✓ Iowa Code requirement of reviewing 20 percent of career and technical education programs per year is being followed.
✓ Special needs issues were reviewed and found to meet the stated requirements of the Iowa Code.
✓ The college's AS-28s and the college catalog were reviewed and did not present any issues.

Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previous Accreditation Visit

Kirkwood’s QFP will require revision in order to bring it into compliance with Iowa Administrative Rules. The Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation looks forward to working with Kirkwood to bring its QFP into compliance. Met: KCC submitted a revised QFP in 2009 to the DE, which met the stated requirements of the QFPs.
1. HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Category 1 identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations. The pivot of any institutional analysis, this category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context yet also addresses how your entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. This category asks you to measure and analyze the performance of these key processes, and to describe what actions you take to continuously improve teaching and learning.

Strengths:

- The college’s Iowa City Campus is adding additional developmental courses and a learning community (fall 2010) to address the large influx of underprepared students registering for courses at that campus.

- The college demonstrates a commitment to innovation through such examples as developing a hands-on medical simulation center and through an on-campus hotel connected with its culinary arts program.

- KCC has an Academic Program Improvement and Review Process with a five-phase process found in the Career Program Assessment Committee Overview document. The assessment process includes a three-year life span for specific programs. The college has a systematic approach to assessment.

- Interviewees from the assessment committee indicated strengths that included Kirkwood’s employees’ willingness to adapt to and create an environment that encourages positive change.

- Learning communities provide underprepared students the support they need to be successful. Of special note are Project Start and Project Finish. These two programs show a commitment on the part of the college to serve under-prepared, first-generation students. Students are given additional funding to help with expenses during their education. Underprepared learners may also participate in a College Prep Block which includes basic math, reading, writing, and computers. Students meet daily which helps to build community and leads to their success.

- The COMPASS test is used to assess KCC students’ reading and math abilities for placement. KCC counselors can assess students’ academic or personal needs and refer students to the appropriate resource.

- KCC’s Learning Center provides a welcoming, nurturing environment that contributes to the success of students by providing free group and individual tutoring. Student athletes gather to work on skills and build community, which aids in retention.
• The Board of Trustees is committed to serving community and student needs. Interviewees expressed pride regarding the quality of staff and the hands-on environment that encourages staff initiatives. They were also proud of the Kirkwood Foundation, community partnerships, and the international diversity at the college. The administration commented about the Center for Professional Development for staff through tuition assistance. Faculty was encouraged to receive feedback from peers as well as through classroom observations. Interviewees also discussed the Kirkwood Excellence for Learning and Teaching (KELT) and the pursuit of sustainability through reduction in energy costs by the use of geo-thermal energy and green initiatives.

• The library staff indicated that they felt they were a definite part of the college and had administrative support. The interviewees indicated they participated in the Action Committee that provides services to students through the use of data. The library staff has a three-year action plan which was implemented in 2007. They indicated that they continued to serve additional students daily. As part of the library staff contribution to credit and noncredit courses, the staff offers a two-credit class for students. Library staff also conducts at least two training sessions every year and have two separate focus groups specifically for webpage design for library workers. Interviewees indicated a pride in the college because of the proactive nature of the college. Quick response to change, flexibility, and adaptability were mentioned as strengths that aid in staff retention.

• KCC provides flexible classroom delivery through its distance learning. This allows the college to provide services to all of its seven counties. In addition, a new position has been implemented for on-line liberal arts programs. Through the one-stop shop concept, on-line students are able to contact a designated individual with questions on such areas as financial aid and advising. The distance learning staff interviewees indicated pride about the number of opportunities in distance learning available to students. Most of the distance learning incorporates “face-to-face experiences” for students. KCC distance learning faculty is encouraged to visit various class locations during the academic year. Both full-time and adjunct instructors teach utilizing the distance learning process. Staff receives training/orientation every semester. Adjunct instructors are paired with experienced distance learning instructors as mentors. Interviewees emphasized how the staff works individually with students and provides technology support to them. Interviewees also expressed that they were allowed to experiment and not be afraid to fail. One example cited was that they are evaluating the software, AXION, which is believed to increase the identification of students as they log into class assignments.

• KCC utilizes Video on Demand to support professional development sessions and to expand campus communications.

• Interviewees indicated that administrators, faculty, and staff utilize KTS (Kirkwood Telecommunication System) to conduct meetings and training. This eliminates staff having to drive to campus for meetings. Tuesday and Thursdays, from 11:00 to 11:50 a.m., have been designated for this purpose.
**Opportunities for Improvement**

- Interviewees indicated challenges to the college include continuing to provide support services to students due to increased enrollment, while also experiencing budget cuts. The college may want to discuss how it can continue to adapt to community and student needs on such things as delivery of library services to students and staff and the ability to serve underprepared students given these factors.

- Interviewees representing various committee members indicated a feeling of "operating in silos." The college has established committees such as assessment and curriculum, which all deal with assessment issues. The college might consider a way to integrate these committees and to develop a systematic process to provide information into the committees so as to enhance collaboration.

- The library staff interviewed "students who use the library" to determine what services and databases might be added to assist learning. Concern exists regarding the lack of data around "students who do not use the library." Including interviews from this group of students could provide additional insight regarding library services and materials.
2. ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

Category 2 addresses the processes that contribute to achieving your institution’s major goals other than educating your students. Distinctive objectives are those that distinguish your institution from other colleges and universities, even if the performance of these processes does not currently make your institution distinguished. This category also asks how you track and evaluate these processes to ensure they contribute directly to achieving your institution’s mission.

Strengths:

- KCC has had successful sports teams that have not only excelled in athletic competitions but also have emphasized academics. KCC administration stated that they have made a conscious decision to limit their offerings to three male and three female sports including basketball, baseball/softball, golf, and volleyball.

- The Kirkwood Foundation has assets of $18 million, which indicted strong support from the business and community. The foundation has been able to offer $1.7 million in scholarships to students annually. Foundation staff reported that their main efforts were to obtain scholarships for students.

- KCC supports endowed faculty chair awards. Endowed faculty chairs provide an opportunity for selected faculty to undertake professional development projects in their disciplines or in instructional pedagogy, through writing, preparing, and presenting a special lecture, conducting research, or pursuing other opportunities. This program is a major effort by the Kirkwood Board of Trustees and the Kirkwood Foundation Board to demonstrate their commitment to quality instruction by recognizing and fostering instructional excellence and lifelong learning. Six (6) faculty members were recognized as Endowed Chair Recipients in 2009-2010.

- Administration, faculty, and staff reported that KCC supports innovation and risk taking among its personnel. Recent examples of such include the new hotel being built and the Jones Regional Education Center in Monticello, which were initially suggested by KCC faculty and administration.

- Administration reported that green initiatives were being implemented on campus. One example includes the fact that all chemicals used on the campus are green.

- Interviewees indicated that partnerships aid the programming and support of student learning. The college establishes and maintains partnerships with both public and private sectors. Examples include the K-12 districts, universities, and businesses located both on and off campus. AEGON, Ruffalo CODY, and Diamond V Mills are located on KCC’s campus.
Multiple interviewees indicated that KCC became a leader for the community when Cedar Rapids was affected by the flood. Community animals were housed at the equine center. In addition, over 120,000 square feet of the campus was utilized for various reasons to assist in the flood relief efforts. In addition, Linn County Emergency Management was located on the college campus.

Administration indicated private fundraising efforts, which ended in spring 2008, had a goal of $2 million, but in fact raised $11.2 million. Multi-year pledges were included in this amount. Scholarships were a major component of this fundraising effort as well as support for noncredit initiatives.

The college's food service program serves a variety of ethnic foods during diversity celebrations. The C-Store has made a conscious effort to reach out to groups by stocking a variety of ethnic foods and snacks. Staff employed in the bookstore, shipping and receiving, mail services, purchasing, and all auxiliary services provide mentorship through their daily interactions with students employed by the work-study program.

KCC prides itself on its international education efforts. Development of the Kirkwood International Education Program has allowed delivery of programs to a variety of countries. In addition, Kirkwood participates in the Global Education Network and hosts the Community Colleges for International Development (CCAD).

**Opportunities for Improvement**

Interviewees indicated that the college has begun working on a career pathways project. Modularization of courses in programs initially such as Technology and Advanced Manufacturing are included. KCC currently is utilizing a grant issued by the DE for the purpose of development of such programs. KCC is encouraged to continue that process and investigate the possibility of gaining other grant opportunities to further this initiative.
3. UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS’ AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS’ NEEDS

Category 3 examines what your institution does to understand the specific needs and requirements of the individuals and groups it serves. It analyzes how you identify and subcategorize your student and other stakeholder groups (i.e., employers, students’ families, communities, etc.) to understand what they need and expect from your institution. This category also looks at how you use the analysis of these results to continuously improve your operations.

Strengths:

- KCC offers a variety of services to students with disabilities and actively explores how the college can increase these services and funding. An example includes a grant application for funding to support a three-level program for autistic students, which would include programming for students who are ready for life skills training; programming for students ready for associate degree level work; and programming for students who are ready for transfer college level work. Each student is assigned to a case manager.

- KCC has made a commitment to its student body to keep the cost of education down. The college does not charge students beyond tuition and books. Students have access to the services of a free attorney to answer their questions.

- Recently, the college opened a lounge for over 400 veterans from the college area. KCC employs a full-time person to work with veterans and their needs. KCC was named one of the nation’s top 20 veteran-friendly colleges by the Student Veterans of America (SVAO), a coalition of student veterans groups from college campuses across the United States.

- Students have the opportunity to work side-by-side professionals in the operation of a radio and television station and a student newspaper.

- KCC uses CCSSE (Community College Survey on Student Engagement) and other instruments to assess student needs and student activities. KCC staff reaches out to parents and students through the Kirkwood Events Group and the Kirkwood Roommate Finder on Facebook. The staff reaches out to parents through monthly electronic newsletters and a “Kirkwood Alert,” which provides warnings in the form of an e-mail and text message.

- The college provides information to students through the handbook, accessible on-line and in paper format.

- Community partnerships provide opportunities for students. For example, students are offered employment, internships, and scholarships. Community partnerships also provide equipment and space to enhance student learning. One example is a partnership where six high schools send their students to one location to take college courses through KCC.
• During the flood of 2008, the college provided services to the community in a variety of ways, including housing over 1,000 animals in campus facilities. Through this experience, the college recognized there was a need for specialists in the area of animal rescue and developed a Human Officer Resource Program, which is the first in the nation.

• KCC’s Career Center offers resources to over 3,000 businesses for recruitment of employees. The entire seven-county area uses the Career Center.

• Advisory committees give valuable input to programs that is used in program development.

• The Board of Trustees is committed to community needs and changing curriculum to meet students’ needs. The interviewees exhibited pride on the quality of staff and the encouragement for staff initiatives. Interviewees stated that they were also proud of the Kirkwood Foundation and community partnerships as well as the international diversity that exist on campus.

• Every Friday, KCC has scheduled a structured college visit for high school students called TGIF (To Get Information Fast). This day is publicized in all surrounding high schools.

• A KCC representative visits the surrounding areas to conduct an orientation for high school parents and students and gives information on admission and academic opportunities.

• The athletic coaches ensure that their student athletes are aware of and utilize the student support services, tutoring, library resources, academic advising, and study labs. A student athlete’s progress report is reviewed 3-4 times a semester depending on the coaches’ requirement.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

• There are multiple services available to international students, but none specific to those underserved minority populations indigenous to the college area. Students could benefit from a staff member actively engaged in program development, as well as one who could further the discussion of embracing a student body; starting by including those minority students indigenous to the area.

• A limited number of staff or faculty who represent the diverse student body is available on campus. Both recruitment and retention would be enhanced by adequate representation across the campus.
4. VALUING PEOPLE

Category 4 explores your institution's commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators emphasizing that the coordinated efforts of all those you employ are required for institutional success. This category examines your institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment and focuses on measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Strengths

- KCC has added two staff development days during the fall semester specifically for faculty to explore "best practices" relating to instruction.

- KCC's Endowed Faculty Chairs program funds provide release time of six hours for approved faculty to explore interests related to their teaching area.

- Professional development dollars are available from a variety of sources. Faculty and staff can request dollars to attend conferences and seminars, and gain release time for writing and research. Tuition reimbursement is also available.

- Faculty and staff are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their initiatives to develop programs services to benefit the college and the community. KCC received a local award for being an ideal place to work, which sends a positive message to the community. The college values risk-taking, which serves as a motivator and morale booster for employees.

- The KCELT (Kirkwood Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching) Center is highly utilized for the development and training of staff, faculty, and community. All training is free and accessible to the employees. In addition, each staff and faculty member is given a $500 training allowance to be used in the area of community education classes. Staff may take credit classes at no cost. Adjunct instructors may also earn free credit and coursework through non-credit offerings.

- KCC has developed an outstanding scholarship program. They have raised $11.2 million over a two-year period. Clearly, the staff and faculty care a great deal about the student body. In fact, many cited the student body as their number one strength.

- When the floods of 2008 occurred, KCC responded in an efficient and beneficial way to both staff and community. Staff indicated that those impacted by the flood were given release time, financial compensation, counseling, and a place to stay, if needed. The college designed a website to coordinate donations. The college clearly showed that it valued the community and staff through outreach.
• A strong faculty and staff mentoring program is in place. In each case, the mentor/mentee meets monthly for lunch and for training workshops. This shows a strong commitment on the part of the college and on the part of the employees who volunteer to assist with the project for no additional compensation.

• Decentralizing work environments led to cost efficiency operations, which in turn led to retention of employees.

• There has been a significant increase in first-generation college students. This provides the KCC community a valuable opportunity to break the cycle of devaluing education.

• During annual evaluation, the staff and the supervisor develop an annual professional development plan together. The staff member can bring this into the supervisor at any time for revisions.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

• It would benefit the college to document processes to retain valuable information that will be otherwise lost through many upcoming retirements. It is evident that the college has done an outstanding job of retaining employees; however, many of those 20-30 plus year leaders will be leaving the college within a few years.

• Repeatedly, the team heard about communication issues, which is to be expected in a large organization; however, poor communication can lead to employee discontent and it impedes progress. A cross-functional group dedicated to collecting and disseminating information may be helpful.

• The large increase in enrollment this past year has brought a concentration of behaviors and mental health issues for which faculty and staff may not be prepared. Training for addressing students with behavior issues, including classroom management techniques, would be of value. This may be a priority area for research and study and for use of staff/faculty development dollars.
5. LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

Category 5 takes stock of your institution’s leadership and communication structures, exploring the structures and processes that guide your institution in setting priorities, making decisions, and communicating institutional visions and goals to stakeholders and employees. This category also examines how measures, analysis, results, and efforts to continuously improve how these areas operate in your institution.

**Strengths**

- KCC provides a variety of retreats for college departments, as well as for the entire college staff to discuss a variety of topics important to the functioning of the departments and the college.

- The college has a commitment to quality teaching through the Endowed Chairs tuition assistance.

- Employees have an opportunity to get involved and provide input in the decision-making process as it relates to the college.

- Kirkwood Futures Initiative (KFI) provides all staff the opportunity to interact and offer suggestions for improvement. "Mick’s Memo," a regular e-mail from the president, offers staff and faculty an opportunity to give the president feedback or to ask questions. The president also has lunch with students on a regular basis to gather feedback.

- Employees know, recognize, and identify with various programs because of the acronyms used. For example, KAPS, KQIP, KFI, KFA, KCELT, all begin with the "K brand." Similar to a college mascot, the "K brand" becomes recognizable to staff and faculty. KCELT—Kirkwood’s Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching; KAPS—Kirkwood Activities Programs and Services; KQIP—Kirkwood Quality Improvement Process; KFA—Kirkwood Faculty Association; and KFI—Kirkwood Futures Initiative.

- Members of the Board of Trustees state that the college’s administration provided them with timely and appropriate information, allowing the board to have sufficient time to make decisions.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

It would benefit the college to have a succession plan in place. As part of the process, information from current staff should be gathered concerning the duties associated with the positions.
6. SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

Category 6 examines a variety of key institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. They are: the design, the operation, and the performance of your institution’s processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning, and accomplishing other institutional objectives. Items in this category examine day-to-day operations, and how you use data, analyze results, and make improvements in these areas.

Strengths

• KCC’s Foundation provides $1.7 million in scholarships annually to support students with limited resources.

• KCC has developed a proactive retention program that includes an early earning system. Two (2) staff members reach out to at-risk students through phone calls, e-mails, and face-to-face sessions.

• College 101, a semester-long orientation class, has helped in retention and overall GPA. Data indicates those who have completed the class are more successful during their college career.

• Some students are advised by their program faculty and or department coordinators. This leads to better communication with the students starting before they ever go to class. Program expectations are clearly laid out ahead of time. The advisors in this area are very knowledgeable about the programs. Students are prepared for transfer as the coordinator or faculty works side-by-side with the student throughout the program. A further advantage to the students enrolled in these programs is that they cannot register unless they are advised. They also attend a program conference.

• KCC has strong mentoring programs in place. Students can request a mentor when they apply for admissions. Those staff and faculty wishing to mentor a student meet periodically with assigned students. This aids in retention and overall student success.

• The college’s Cedar Rapids Campus provides a One-Stop Center enabling students to go to one individual to take care of enrollment, financial aid, and payment without having to be sent to additional sites.
• Interviewees stated that the IT department has done an outstanding job of providing assistive technology to students with disabilities. This includes large screen access and other reading-assisting technologies through the buildings. Instant messaging is available through the college and 75 percent of the projectors are ADA compliant. There are special computer stations for students in wheelchairs, special keyboards, software, and adjustable tables in the classrooms. Through technology, the college is also reaching out to international communities by providing software language conversation packages (i.e., when the college recruited a large number of students from Egypt, the IT department responded by installing Arabic language conversation software on computer systems).

• While the college does not have on-campus housing, the college has hired a full-time housing coordinator to assist with issues and activities experienced by students living in apartment housing adjacent to campus.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

• Advising staff attend ELA (English Language Acquisition) classes to register students. This is an advantage to the students in those courses. However, in general the ELA students may benefit by having a staff member appointed to help with their needs and provide advocacy, as these learners need more support. While International students who are at the college on student visas have a lot of support services available to them, non-visa, and ELA learners have more limited services.

• While the advising model for career and technical education students has many advantages, the model does create some silos. This can be confusing for students, especially for those who transition from one program area to another. More cross-training may be needed to provide advisors with the tools they need. Advising for students enrolled in liberal arts programs appears not to be meeting all student needs. Students stated that they skip advising together and register themselves—sometimes into classes for which they are ill-prepared. Further, it appears that while faculty are relied upon to advise in the liberal arts programs, the responsibility rests with a few who are willing. Consequently, the advising center sees the bulk of the students and is, according to many students, very understaffed. Adding to this issue is the increase in underprepared students registered for classes. While there is mandatory placement for both math and writing courses, students can register for difficult classes that require an advanced level of reading. According to many staff and faculty, the college has seen an increase in underprepared students, students with mental health, social, and academic needs, which compounds the issue and the need for increased and structural advising.

• Efforts have been made to centralize services through the one-stop concept. To address all student needs, the concept may need to be expanded to include additional counseling and advising.
7. MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Category 7 examines the systems your institution uses to collect and analyze information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. Items in this category ask you to examine your institution's systems for collecting, storing, managing, and using information and data at all institutional levels. This category asks how you track overall institutional performance in collecting the right data and distributing it to the right people at the right time. This category examines the effectiveness of your entire information system and assures it aligns with your institutional needs and directions.

Strengths:

- According to the interviewees, the success rate for athletic students in terms of transfer to a four-year institution is 90 percent, and the graduation rate is 75 percent.

- KCC has initiated Kirkwood Futures Initiative (KFI). This is a strategic action framework which is organized around past achievements and ideas generated by administration, faculty, and staff. The initial phase centered around the question, "How can we measurably strengthen our processes to improve student learning, our partnerships, and most of all internal collaboration."

- The college has strategic priorities that have measurable action statements—Key Performance indicators (KPI). Utilizing these KPIs, the college works under a "great to greater" concept. The strategic priorities are aligned with the mission and vision statement. The college uses survey data, communication among administration, faculty, staff, and work teams with SMART goals to continuously improve the institution.

- KCC has developed a comprehensive assessment of career and technical programs, transfer programs, and general education. Academic programs have developed competencies in collaboration with external partners and advisory committees. These competencies are assessed and documented. Programs also utilize industry-based assessment.

- Kirkwood currently uses COMPASS to assess incoming students for mandatory placement. In addition, KCC utilizes the National Community College Benchmarking Project for comparative data.

- Perception surveys are used for current and past students. This data is analyzed in order to recommend and implement change to improve student learning and success.

- KCC assesses student engagement through CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement).
• The Department of Institutional Effectiveness collects data through reports on their website. This single-point of contact provides effective communication for planning and decision-making. The college also has a system to track data requests and to monitor the quality of client services. The data collected by the Department of Institutional Effectiveness is selected to correlate with the college’s action statements. This ensures effective data processes, measurement, and analysis.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

Because of the wide variety and quantity of data that KCC collects, it will be important for KCC to identify which data is critical to collect, analyze, and use to manage the institution and to drive performance improvement.
8. PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Category 8 examines your institution’s planning processes, asking how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision. Items in this category raise questions about your institution’s vision, planning strategies, and action plans. They ask how you project performance targets and forecast resource needs. This category also investigates how you evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of your planning system, and undertake regular efforts to improve it.

Strengths

- KCC’s attention to “going green” has lowered energy costs for four consecutive years even though the college has continued to build new facilities. A commitment to geothermal has contributed as well as a reduction in the number of individual printers and copiers yielding a $500,000 savings annually. This cost savings has in turn translated into increased student opportunities. The college community recognizes that efficiencies are achieved not only by bottom-line saving of money. The college understands that savings can serve as means to expand educational opportunities that advance the college’s student learning and community service priorities.

- The college’s advanced planning initiatives allow them to capitalize on projects when opportunities for funding (i.e., grants, private funding) are available. Interviewees indicated that the college seeks grants and funding to support initiatives that meet the needs of the college and its constituents rather than seeking the grants and then making them fit.

- The team observed that KCC has established a process for a quick response to community needs. An example is during the flooding in 2008 of Cedar Rapids when the college provided space for the needs of the community that was flooded.

- All levels of staff are part of the planning process and have equal opportunity for input and a channel in which to convey their concerns and ideas. In 2010, all KCC employees will look at progress data and provide input to the college’s continuous improvement planning framework. Employees will look at processes and make suggestions on how to improve processes, while also examining resources needed. Interviewees indicated that the Futures Initiative gives all employees a sense of inclusion. This provides an opportunity for employees to identify themselves in the organizational, which impacts the culture of the college. Previous planning events resulted in such programs as the Wind Turbine and Humane Resource Officer programs.
• KCC developed a five-year model to manage budgets. Two (2) years ago, the college incorporated cost containment projects. Examples of this included eliminating many of the individual printers on campus and substituting them with printer/copier/fax machines for multiple person use, as well as energy cost-cutting initiatives such as geothermal, which allowed savings that enabled the college to not have to cut staff members who work directly with students such as retention specialists, and implemented developmental math initiatives. In another effort in advanced planning, the college anticipates a drop in enrollment in two years. They are making plans in the event that this occurs.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

The task for increasing diversity with the KCC administration, faculty, and staff will be ongoing. The effort must be multifaceted and persistent. Current efforts might be strengthened by using more minority students and community members on interview teams, continuing to work collaboratively with community organizations such as Diversity Focus to achieve goals and by providing support systems for minority staff once they are hired to enhance the quality of their work experience as KCC. KCC’s plans should include a strong rationale for developing a more diverse workforce and clearly show how diverse role models or staff can contribute to a greater student success and a more inclusive college climate for learning. KCC might also want to explore other ways to get students and minority community colleges more involved in recruitment.
9. BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Category 9 analyzes how your institution’s current and potential relationships contribute to accomplishing your mission. Items in this category examine your institution’s processes and systems for building key internal and external collaborative relationships that align with institutional goals and directions. This category investigates how you measure and analyze the effectiveness of these efforts, feeding your evaluation into your own processes for improvement.

Strengths

External:

- KCC is a leader with the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City business corridor partnership and works effectively with a variety of businesses and industries in establishing priorities.

- The college's Iowa City campus works closely with the University of Iowa in meeting the needs of students who are dually enrolled at the two institutions to ensure their success. KCC and the University of Iowa share over 700 students.

- The college’s Jones County Regional Educational Center has created a partnership with eight local school districts in providing career academies (computer, construction, automotive, welding, and graphics), and arts and sciences academy and Project Lead the Way (PLTW) courses in meeting the needs of students.

- Several groups (cabinet and library services groups) interviewed provided examples of the culture of service to humanity that exists in the KCC community. Examples included the use of college facilities as an emergency coordinating site during the Cedar Rapids flood of 2008. An emergency animal shelter was housed in the equestrian center.

- Partnerships with workforce development agencies help to meet the needs of returning students and the community.

- The college shows evidence of collaboration both internally and externally. They place a strong emphasis on teamwork and collaborating between the departments.

- The three businesses that are housed on the KCC Cedar Rapids campus provide employment opportunities for current students and graduates. Based upon these business relationships, students have internship opportunities that sometimes lead to permanent employment.
• There appears to be a significant amount of collaboration between academic departments, as is evidenced by the progress made in the Quality Faculty Plan and the cooperation between departments for the benefit of new faculty member. Faculty mentors collaborate with new faculty to create a faculty portfolio.

• There is collaboration between departments and divisions in developing SMART goals and other plans that feed into the AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) plan.

• Many groups interviewed named community partnerships as one of many strengths of KCC. Business and industry partnerships such as Rockwell Collins, Diamond V Mills, AEGON, etc. are deeply valued by Kirkwood personnel. Groups interviewed were complimentary of the administrative team and faculty who are widely visible in the community. Providing ongoing community presence assures the community that KCC is a committed and connected community partner.

• KCC also provides the atmosphere for effective learning through continuing education. A 13-member staff interviewed expressed their satisfaction in the ability of the college to offer both credit and non-credit and certificate programs to students. The group interviewed was proud of collaboration and partnership among and between faculty members, the foundation, and other agencies in the community, as well as other colleges. The interviewees survey students once or twice a year to measure their satisfaction to the quality of program offerings.

**Internal:**

KCC staff is encouraged to test innovative entrepreneurial ideas. Resources are regularly available to test and refine innovative ideas. As an example, the math department piloted a new program a new program to deliver instruction through a combination of direct and on-line instruction. No change in student achievement resulted so refinements are being sought to see if student can be positively impacted. The culture of continuous improvement, based on data-drive decisions, is work that is never complete.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

More collaborative team meetings within and across divisions continue to allow faculty to get to know one another. As the college continues to grow, however, it is important to note that it would be important to continue these meetings so that there is no sense of disconnect between campuses.
SUGGESTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations: None noted.

The State Accreditation Team recommends continued accreditation for Kirkwood Community College. A State Comprehensive Accreditation visit will be held to coincide with the college's next Higher Learning Commission visit in 2014.