Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission NCA

Lamar Community College

RESULTS FOR DISCUSSION

Vital Focus Constellation

September 2004

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◆ *Serving the Common Good by Assuring and Advancing the Quality of Higher Learning* ◆

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THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CONSTELLATION ONLINE SURVEY AND ITS RESULTS

This is a summary report of the Constellation on-line survey you completed. You should know several things about this report and its purposes.

♦ **The results are meant to launch discussions that lead to action.**

♦ **The results are linked to processes and ways of working together.**

♦ **The data in Constellation emphasizes what you collectively agree (versus disagree) on.**

♦ **Today's conversations culminate in proposals for action that will lead to two sets of additional discussions to prioritize and develop five to six action projects that are most important to accomplish.**

♦ **A set of Constellation Appendices with full data and all your comments is a companion to this report, designed for use in your next conversations.**

♦ **More discussions with the Constellation Appendices and other data from students, employers, the community, and others will distill your proposals for action into specific projects to make a difference.**

Results Meant to Launch Discussions that Lead to Action

Your conversations and recommendations using the data are more important than the data itself. In fact, the data from the Constellation demand a discussion of what matters most right now, what is done well already, and what would make a significant difference if accomplished. It is your collective discussions, experience, agreement, and commitment that turn the data into information and information into action.

Simply put, this report encourages you to talk about your hopes for Lamar Community College and for your work.   The report will have served its core purpose if your discussions uncover new ideas, tap areas of great strength, and define highest priority opportunities to which you commit to action and learning.

Results Linked to Processes and Ways of Working Together

Each of the statements you rated for importance and performance in the survey is linked (a) to group of processes common to colleges and universities and (b) to a characteristic of high-performing colleges and universities. Each of these process groups is one of the criteria of the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP); each of the high-performance characteristics is and one of the Principles of High Performance of AQIP. In this report, you will see results for individual statements AND results by process group (AQIP criteria) and high-performance characteristics (AQIP Principles of High Performance).

For example, look at this statement from the Constellation:

> **When making institutional decisions, administrators consider the impact on students and learning.**

This statement from the Constellation is linked to teaching and learning processes, the *Helping Students Learn* criterion in AQIP. In addition, the statement is linked to the high performance principle *Focus,* a mission and vision driven by students' and other stakeholders' needs, in AQIP.

Conversations Culminate in Recommendations for Action

The three discussions you will hold today build on each other and define:

♦ What you collectively agree matters most to be and do at LCC,

♦ What you agree is already done well at LCC, and

♦ What specific proposals for action you collectively agree would make a significant difference at LCC.

Additional Reports Provide More Information for More Conversation

This Constellation summary report contains your collective responses. The Constellation Appendices will provide you with the detailed data on every question of the Constellation, the breakout data by staff group and longevity, and your comments. Finally, the Conversation Day Summary Report, which your facilitator writes after Conversation Day, will include all the conclusions and proposals from your Conversation Day, as well as observations, questions, and other feedback from the facilitator.

More Discussions with Other Data Distill Specific Projects for Action

The Constellation is just the first step of a four-part process called Vital Focus designed to get you acting on top priority areas you collectively agree would make a difference. After Conversation Day, there will be discussions to prioritize and then discussions to develop your proposals into specific big and "quick do" action projects. In these later discussions, you have the option to include other institutional reports and data about and from students and other stakeholders.

The AQIP Criteria and AQIP High Performance Principles

AQIP has adopted nine criteria and ten principles evident in the day-to-day work processes and the characteristics of high-performing colleges and universities; i.e., institutions able to systematically and consistently improve their quality over time. (See the last page of this Briefing for an overview and definitions of these Criteria and Principles.)

Each **AQIP Criterion** covers a **group of processes** common to institutions (for example, Helping Students Learn includes processes related to teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment, program development and evaluation, etc.). Each **AQIP Principle** captures a characteristic of those institutions able to improve continually and to change successfully.

Each statement in the survey is linked to one AQIP Criterion (group of processes) and one High Performance Principle.

INFORMATION ON WHO COMPLETED
THE CONSTELLATION SURVEY

Survey Components: 82 Item Statements and General End Questions

        66 Standard Item Statements
        14 Customized Statements
         2 General End Questions

Participants: 93 LCC employees

FIGURE A: Constellation Participants by Employee Type

Constellation Respondents

Adjunct Faculty 6%
Administrator 37%
Fulltime Faculty 33%
Classified Staff 24%
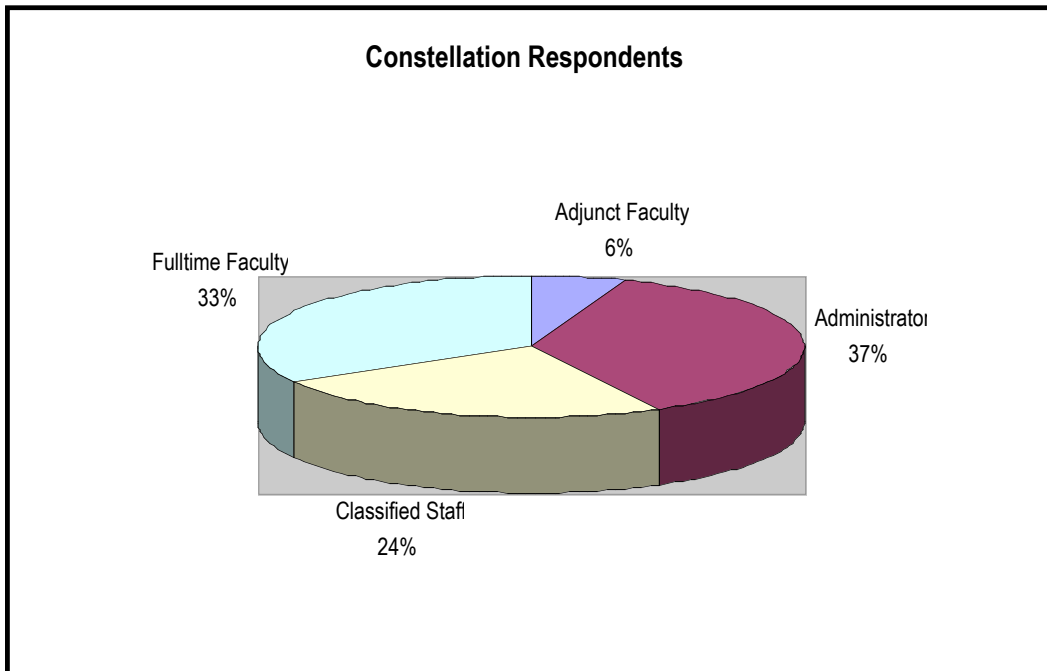
TABLE 1: Participants by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents
Male	41
Female	49

TABLE 2: Participants by Longevity

Longevity	Number of Respondents
5 or fewer years	47
6-10 years	14
11-15 years	18
Over 15 years	11

CONVERSATION ONE

WHAT DO YOU AGREE MATTERS MOST RIGHT NOW?

Key Questions

A key purpose of the survey you completed is to identify the common priorities of Lamar Community College — those day-to-day ways of operating and those cultural aspects that you collectively agree matter most.

♦ **What matters most for LCC's students and other stakeholders?**

♦ **What matters most for your work? Do you agree about what matters most?**

♦ **What ways of thinking and working together are important to you and to the continued success of LCC?**

What Matters Most at LCC Right Now?

To complete the Constellation, you rated each of the statements twice, once for how important it is now, then again for how well it is done now. Table 3 lists the ten statements that received the top importance ratings across all staff, indicating those things that are collectively held as highest priority.

TABLE 3:   Areas LCC Employees Agree Are Most Important

Item	Statement: What matters most?	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	% Responding	% Don't Know
43	Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.	6.95	2.55	94.44	8.23
81	Its employees have the skills, knowledge, and & abilities to improve LCC's effectiveness in the future.	6.59	2.57	93.33	7.14
34	Administrators communicate a clear vision for LCC's future.	6.59	2.42	94.44	4.71
48	Lamar Community College ensures that students have easy access to the people and services they require to be successful.	6.56	2.81	93.33	9.52
30	Lamar Community College's hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.	6.52	2.36	94.44	3.53
32	Lamar Community College trusts employees to do their work effectively.	6.52	2.52	94.44	5.88
41	Appropriate maintenance ensures that both facilities and equipment can be used effectively.	6.49	2.23	93.33	4.76
79	Students have convenient access to the information and resources necessary to support their learning.	6.48	2.76	93.33	10.71
74	Lamar Community College has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.	6.48	2.65	93.33	8.33
73	It is easy for those we serve to get their questions answered.	6.4	2.74	93.33	8.33

Rating Scale: 9 = high importance 1 = low importance   Rank ordered most important first.

Results

"Technology is up-to date and well-supported" had a score that rated it as the most important (6.95) and was the statement that all four employee groups agreed was critical. The other nine most highly rated statements focus strongly on ensuring employees are qualified and then trusting them to do their work and ensuring students have access to the variety of institutional support services that contribute to a learning environment.

Interestingly, while there are high response rate (93% or better) on the statements associated with Table 3, there is also a sizable percentage of respondents who marked "Don't Know".   The "Don't Know" responses on Table 3 ranged from 3.53% to 10.71%. You will note similar response levels on other tables in this report. Review of data in the appendices indicates an even larger "Don't Know" response rate to individual statements and that the highest rates occur within the classified staff. LCC might ask why these "Don't Know" response rates are so high. Are individuals or particular groups of individuals not able to obtain institutional information which will assist them in feeling well informed about LCC? Are all staff members involved in conversations, e-mail messages, meetings, etc. which discuss institutional issues? Will this lack of awareness slow down efforts to better serve students?

In the Appendices, a companion report that follows Conversation Day, the written comments across staff types and years of longevity point to several opportunities for LCC's future. The greatest opportunities focus on building relationships and leadership. LCC might ask itself how individual and collective resources might be used to leverage growth in the development of its leadership capacities and its collaborative relationships.

What Processes and Ways of Working Together Are Most Important?

On the Constellation, each statement was cued to a basic process or system of an institution, as well as to a cultural trait common to high-performing institutions. These processes and traits related to the AQIP Criteria and the AQIP Principles of High Performance. Figures B and C show your opinions on the importance of the processes and principles emphasized in AQIP and answer this question:

  ♦ **Which processes and which cultural aspects common to high-performing institutions matter most to LCC employees?**

Results

Figures B and C below present your importance results grouped by major institutional processes and principles. (See quick definitions of these at end of this document and full definitions in the AQIP Criteria and Principles handbook.) The differences between the top three scores in Figure B is only .18 of a point, and the difference between the top and the bottom scores is only .7. This clearly indicates that LCC believes that all of the AQIP processes are important to the institution. Conversation Day will help identify what everyone at LCC believes is most important.

Close scores in Figure C tell a similar story, although here, one defining principle stands out – PEOPLE, a respect for and a willingness to invest in the institution's

people.   The importance of this principle to LCC is further supported when data are examined across staff types and years of longevity.   PEOPLE – their importance to the organization and the importance of valuing them as individuals and as members of a learning community - is the only principle viewed by all staff types and all groups of employees based on longevity that is listed in the top three most important principles by all groups.   The top 20 items listed in Appendix C and the fact that the criterion Valuing People also appears as one of the top two most important criteria reinforces LCC's commitment to, and the importance of, its people.

FIGURE B: Importance of Major Processes (AQIP Criteria) to LCC Employees

Importance of Process Groups

Process Group	Average Importance Rating
Helping Students Learn	5.74
Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives	5.29
Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	5.35
Valuing People	5.81
Leading and Communicating	5.88
Supporting Institutional Operations	5.99
Measuring Effectiveness	5.54
Planning Continuous Improvement	5.56
Building Collaborative Relationships	5.61

Average Importance Rating

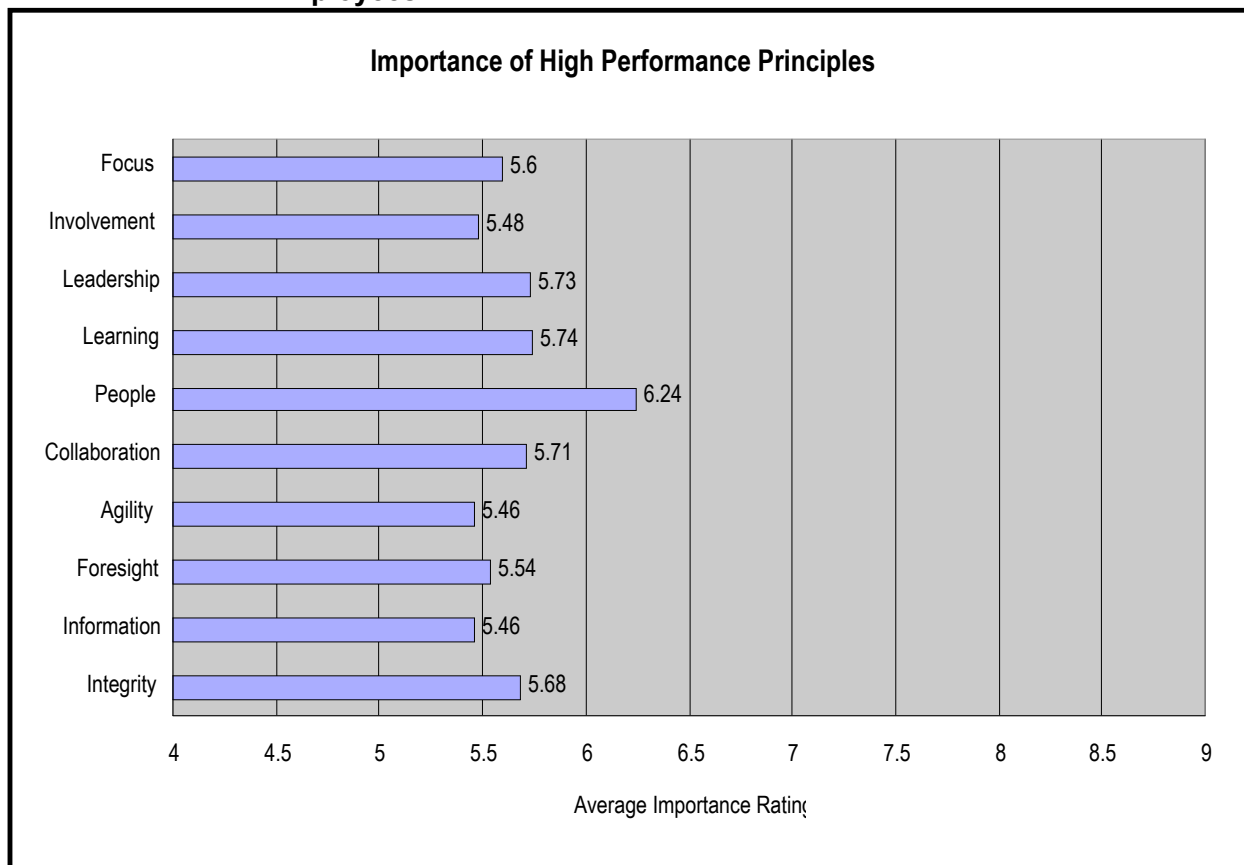**Rating Scale:** 9 = high importance 1 = low importance

As you think about LCC's mission and vision--what it says it does for students and other stakeholders--you may want to ask questions such as these:

♦ Which processes, if improved, will do the most to enhance LCC's visibility, quality, and reputation?

♦ Which of the processes, if done exceptionally well, would most enhance teaching and learning? Most benefit or add value to your work?

In Figure C below, the three Principles rated the highest by LCC employees were People, Learning, and Leadership, however you will see two are very close while People stands out from the rest. Patterns from the written comments on the survey, however, suggest questions LCC employees might ask themselves in relation to the criterion Valuing People. Clearly, LCC employees feel that it is important that people are empowered to do their work and that two-way

communication is clear and consistent. The survey's written comments suggest that additional training and/or orientation or information sharing for employees would be beneficial for all. What processes or format for systematic information sharing will assist employees in feeling more informed and prepared to do their best work for Lamar CC?

FIGURE C: **Importance of Ways of Thinking and Working Together (AQIP Principles) to LCC Employees**

Importance of High Performance Principles

Principle	Rating
Focus	5.6
Involvement	5.48
Leadership	5.73
Learning	5.74
People	6.24
Collaboration	5.71
Agility	5.46
Foresight	5.54
Information	5.46
Integrity	5.68

Average Importance Rating

Rating Scale: 9 = high importance 1 = low importance

Lamar Community College employees highlight several themes within their written comments which might be examined more closely by the institution. The comments present a desire to develop robust:

♦ Internal communication structures

♦ Decision-making processes

♦ Follow-through and feedback loops

♦ Customer service skills.

These themes represent elements of an institutional culture which are extremely important to the college's employees, and there is a high degree of internal consistency within employee groups as to the importance and performance of those items listed in the top ten in both areas.. What steps can employees take to develop a college culture more open to the sharing of divergent views? How can the work of college committees be strengthened in the roles they play in

decision-making across the institution? What format for systematic communication will assist employees in feeling more connected to the college?

What do the Results Mean?

Your next conversations would ideally zero in on (a) those things so important about LCC that no matter how much you change in the future, you hope to preserve, and (b) those differences among you that are important enough to warrant further discussion.

1. On what priorities do staff agree broadly and deeply? What differences in priorities, if any, do you think are potentially significant?

2. What do your collective priorities say about the assumptions held by the employees of LCC?

3. What would students say are *their* peak experiences? What would students say *they* most value most about LCC?

4. What changes in way you think and work together would make it possible to create an environment that makes peak experiences part of day-to-day work?

CONVERSATION TWO

WHAT IS DONE WELL RIGHT NOW
AT LAMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

Key Questions

This section discusses your perspectives on what LCC already does well:

♦ **What unique strengths do you bring to LCC? Are they being tapped and used to their potential?**

♦ **What processes does LCC do well right now? What are the best aspects of LCC's culture--the way you work as a college?**

♦ **Do you do well what matters most to do?**

What is Done Well at LCC Right Now?

Table 4 below provides the top ten statements capturing areas that you collectively agree are done well already at LCC.

TABLE 4: Areas of Work LCC Employees Agree Are Done Well

Item	Statement: What is done best currently?	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	% Responding	% Don't Know
43	Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.	5.63	2.88	94.44	9.41
41	Appropriate maintenance ensures that both facilities and equipment can be used effectively.	5.48	2.25	93.33	5.95
74	Lamar Community College has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.	5.24	2.63	93.33	9.52
48	Lamar Community College ensures that students have easy access to the people and services they require to be successful.	5.23	2.64	91.11	8.54
32	Lamar Community College trusts employees to do their work effectively.	5.22	2.61	95.56	6.98
30	Lamar Community College's hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.	5.15	2.56	95.56	5.81
79	Students have convenient access to the information and resources necessary to support their learning.	5.05	2.48	91.11	10.97
40	Administrators ensure that employees have the resources they need to do their work.	5.02	2.06	93.33	2.38
42	Support services harmonize with LCC's focus on education and learning.	4.84	2.56	94.44	11.76
13	Lamar Community College has processes to ensure that students are prepared for the programs and courses in which they enroll.	4.8	2.6	95.56	13.95

Rating Scale: 1 = currently not done well 9 = currently done well

Results

As with Table 3, there are high response rates in Table 4 as well. Interestingly, the standard deviation, or difference in raw scores across the campus is wide. You will want to discover the reasons for the wide variation in opinions across campus as to what is currently done best, Also interesting is that seven of the items in Table 3 as being among the 10 most important items for LCC also appear in Table 4, showing that in many ways LCC is doing well what matters.

Observed Accomplishments. The items listed in Table 4 regarding things currently done well at Lamar Community College, can be supported by examining the written comments. Several service and academic areas are highlighted in these comments as areas which have already established some type of improvement cycle:

- ♦ Enrollment Services
- ♦ Support Services for At-Risk Students
- ♦ Recruitment
- ♦ ESL
- ♦ Horse Training Management
- ♦ Agriculture
- ♦ Nursing
- ♦ Cosmetology

Clearly these service and program areas have discovered good practices which might be used in other areas of the institution to establish continuous improvement processes.

Relating LCC Strengths to Institutional Processes and Principles

Figures D and E relate your performance ratings to the process groups of AQIP Criteria and the traits in the AQIP Principles of High Performance (see end of this document for a list and brief definitions). The figures address the questions, "How strong are LCC's processes?" "How evident are the principles of high performance in LCC's operations?" and "Do we agree across staff on what processes and principles are done well?"

Figures D and E below relate your performance ratings to the process groups (AQIP criteria) and the traits in the AQIP principles of high performance (see end of this document for a list and brief definitions). The figures address the questions, "How strong are LCC's processes?" and "How evident are the principles of high performance in LCC's operations?"

The same two criteria that were most important (previous chapter) also emerge as high performance areas, **Supporting Institutional Operations** and **Valuing People**.

While there appears to be little difference in the scores between the items listed in Figures D and E, it is interesting to note that, again, the process of "valuing people" and the "people" principle clearly come to the top of these performance charts. LCC's employees agree that they are the areas of the institution where performance is the strongest.
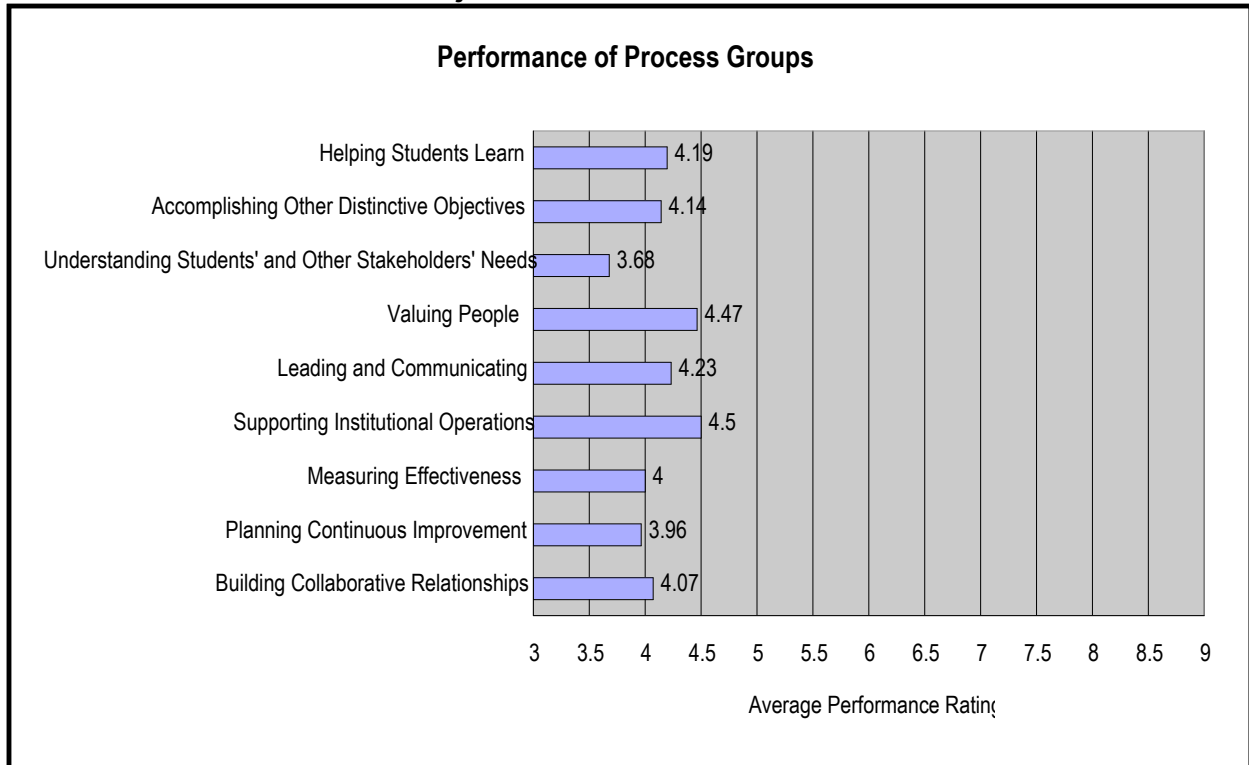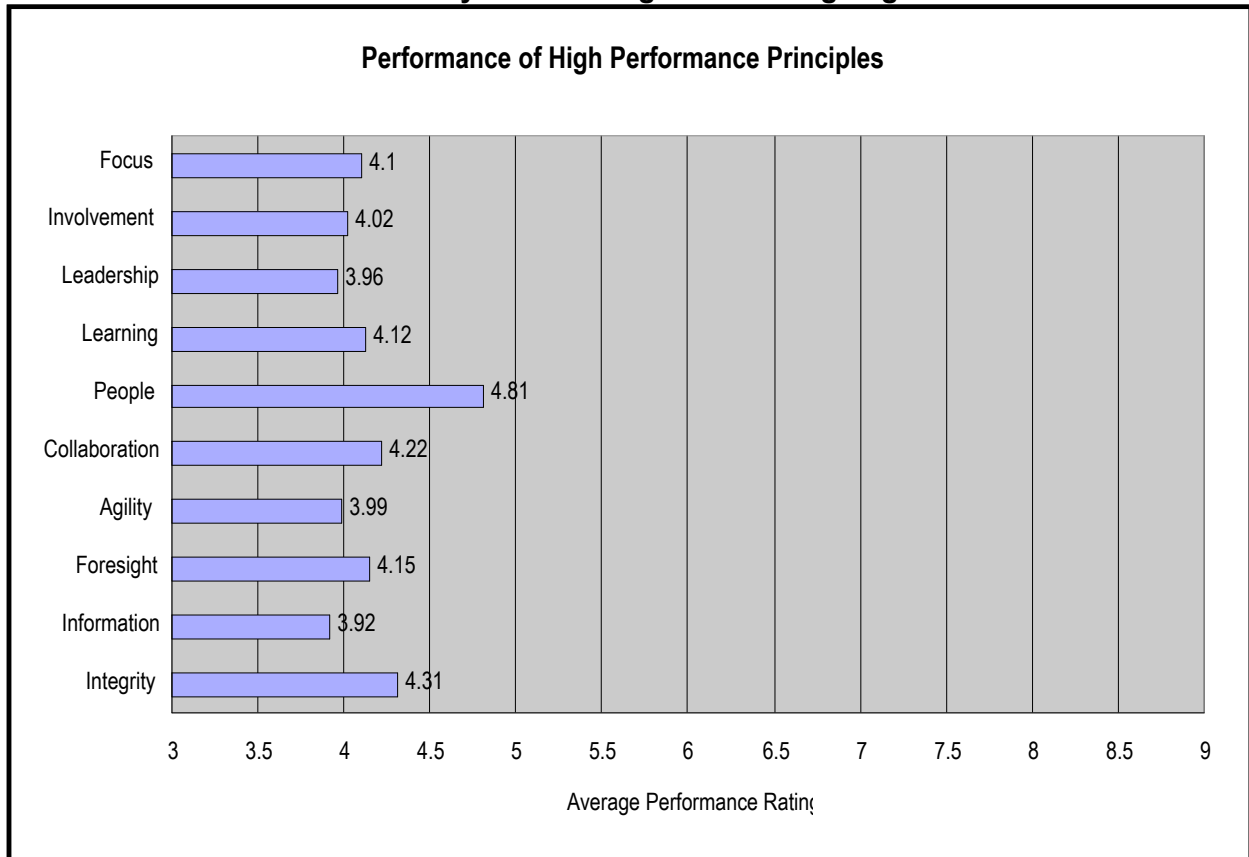
FIGURE D: Performance of Major Processes

Performance of Process Groups

Process Group	Rating
Helping Students Learn	4.19
Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives	4.14
Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	3.68
Valuing People	4.47
Leading and Communicating	4.23
Supporting Institutional Operations	4.5
Measuring Effectiveness	4
Planning Continuous Improvement	3.96
Building Collaborative Relationships	4.07

Average Performance Rating

FIGURE E: Performance of Ways of Thinking and Working Together

Performance of High Performance Principles

Principle	Rating
Focus	4.1
Involvement	4.02
Leadership	3.96
Learning	4.12
People	4.81
Collaboration	4.22
Agility	3.99
Foresight	4.15
Information	3.92
Integrity	4.31

Average Performance Rating

Not only are the college's people important to the institution, valuing its people and focusing upon the expertise they bring to students is something LCC does well. Relative to the other performance processes, "Valuing People" and "Supporting Institutional Operations" are the two processes employees believe are performed best by LCC. Likewise, the principles of "People" and "Integrity" rank the highest.

An important observation, however, is that there is very little difference in the average scores among any of the processes and high performance principles, and the scores are relatively low compared to what has been seen in other institutions. Based on the comments in Appendix C, along with the scores across all these areas, it appears that LCC is open to, and believes in, continuous improvement opportunities

Relating Importance and Performance: LCC's Strengths

What are your strengths if performance scores (things you do well now) are related to importance scores (what matters)?   In earlier tables in this report, the performance and importance ratings are presented separately based on the averages of all the ratings. The results offer a sense of what things are important and another sense of what is done well. Table 5, below, however, uses a formula to relate the high performance scores to both the high importance scores and the high response rates.

TABLE 5: Areas LCC Employees Agree Are High Priority and Done Well

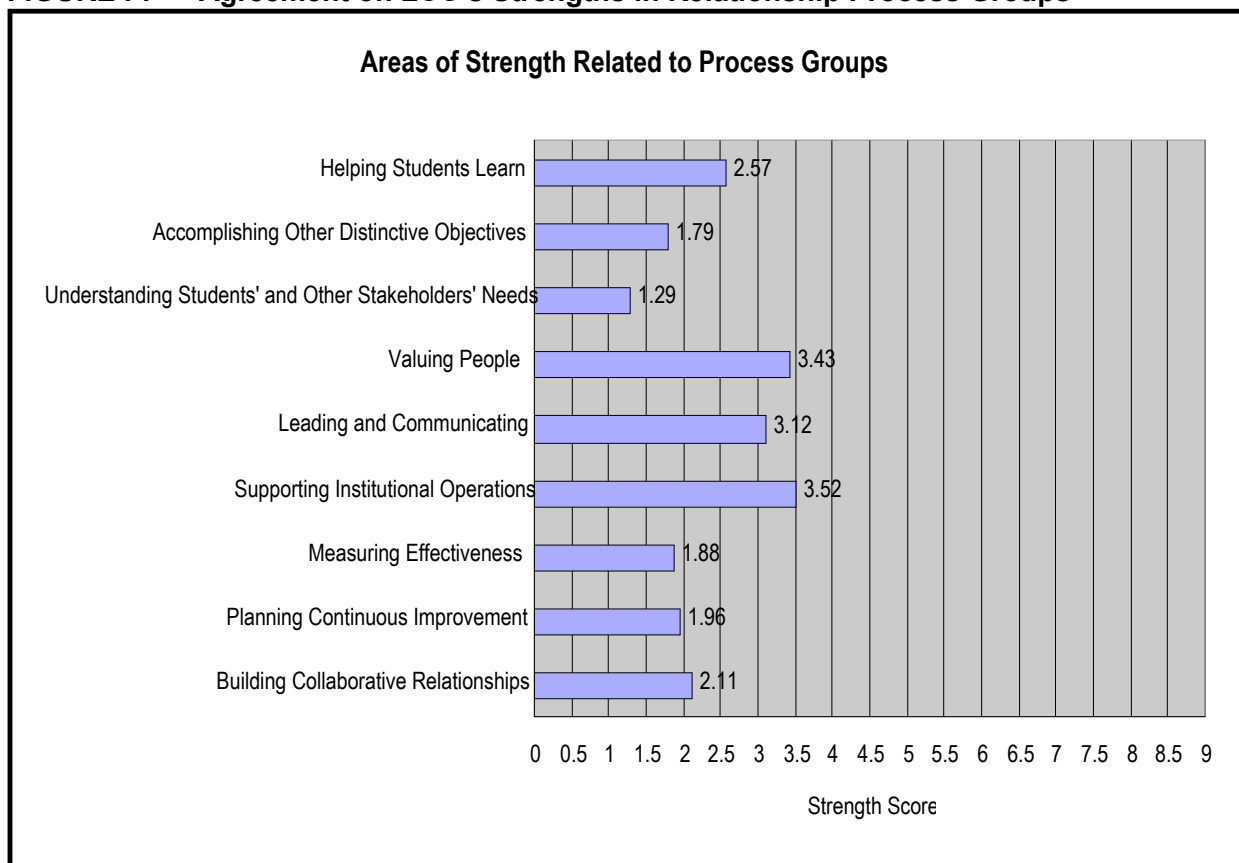| Item	Statement: What are the strengths?	Strength Rating	Importance Mean	% Responding on Importance	Performance Mean	% Responding on Performance
43	Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.	7.21	6.95	94.44	5.63	94.44
41	Appropriate maintenance ensures that both facilities and equipment can be used effectively.	6.87	6.49	93.33	5.48	93.33
40	Administrators ensure that employees have the resources they need to do their work.	6.13	6.39	93.33	5.02	93.33
30	Lamar Community College's hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.	5.96	6.52	95.56	5.15	95.56
32	Lamar Community College trusts employees to do their work effectively.	5.9	6.52	95.56	5.22	95.56
74	Lamar Community College has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.	5.63	6.48	93.33	5.24	93.33
48	Lamar Community College ensures that students have easy access to the people and services they require to be successful.	5.52	6.56	91.11	5.23	91.11
79	Students have convenient access to the information and resources necessary to support their learning.	5.22	6.48	91.11	5.05	91.11
81	Its employees have the skills, knowledge, and & abilities to improve LCC's effectiveness in the future.	5.12	6.59	93.33	4.75	93.33
34	Administrators communicate a clear vision for LCC's future.	5.03	6.59	94.44	4.68	94.44

Formula Scale: Higher rating = Area of greater strength or capacity

Not surprisingly, the statements rising to the top in terms of strengths area almost identical to those seen as being done best in Table 4. Alignment with what matters most is very strong, nine of the ten statements of importance are also items done well. No other criterion appears as frequently as Criterion 6, **Supporting Institutional Operations**, in Table 5. Clearly, employees have prioritized processes in this criterion as important and done well.

Results

Figure F shows the strength of LCC's **Support for Institutional Operations**, with secondary strengths in **Valuing People** and **Leading and Communicating**. This particular analysis considers all of the questions in the Constellation and is one of the most effective sways of highlighting such strengths. It should be noted, however, that none of the strength scores is very high. This results from the relatively low average scores for What Matters Most and What is Done Well.
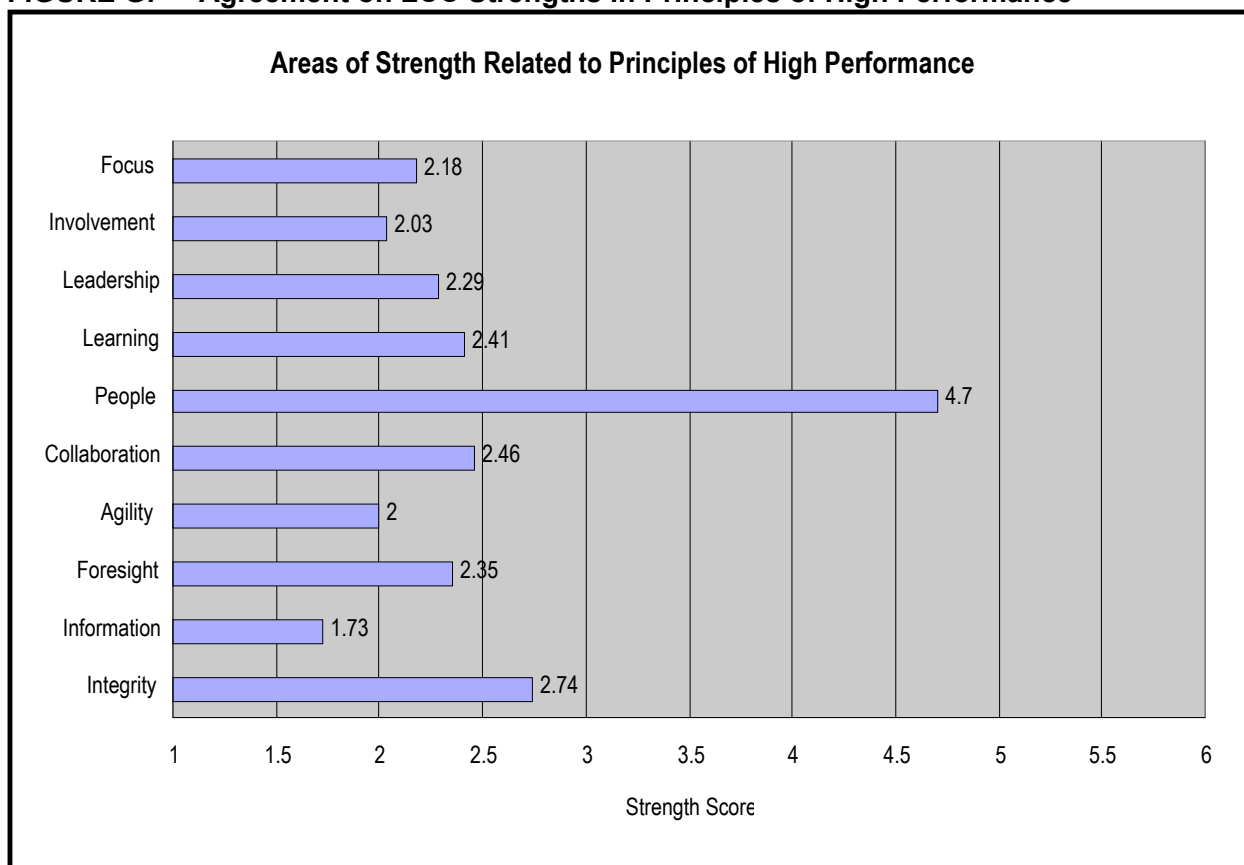
FIGURE F: Agreement on LCC's Strengths in Relationship Process Groups

Areas of Strength Related to Process Groups

Process Group	Strength Score
Helping Students Learn	2.57
Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives	1.79
Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	1.29
Valuing People	3.43
Leading and Communicating	3.12
Supporting Institutional Operations	3.52
Measuring Effectiveness	1.88
Planning Continuous Improvement	1.96
Building Collaborative Relationships	2.11

Scale: Capacity/Strength score derived from formula relating importance scores, performance scores, and response rates of all staff on individual items relating to AQIP Criteria.

Examination of how various staff groups ranked the two strongest processes and principles may provoke some interesting questions for LCC employees. Examination of Figures F and G indicate that the institution's greatest process strengths lie in "Supporting Institutional Operations and "Valuing People."

FIGURE G: Agreement on LCC Strengths in Principles of High Performance

Areas of Strength Related to Principles of High Performance

Principle	Strength Score
Focus	2.18
Involvement	2.03
Leadership	2.29
Learning	2.41
People	4.7
Collaboration	2.46
Agility	2
Foresight	2.35
Information	1.73
Integrity	2.74

Strength Score

Scale: Capacity score derived from formula relating importance scores, performance scores, and response rates of all staff on individual items relating to AQIP Principles

Notes
Questions

Do Results Vary by Staff Type?

When you take time to review the appendices (a companion report that is used after Conversation Day), you'll find that only the Adjunct Faculty did not place "Supporting Institutional Operations" in the top three process strengths, and only Administrators and employees with 11-15 years of experience at LCC missed doing so for "Valuing People."

In relation to the top two principles, "People" and "Integrity", the Classified Staff, the Administrators, employees with 6-10 years of experience and employees with 5 or fewer years of experience did not include "Integrity" in the top two principle strengths. All other staff groups did so. As mentioned earlier in this report, ALL employee groups and ALL longevity groups selected the "People" principle as one of the top three strengths for the institution. In fact, all staff types and longevity groups except employees with more than 15 years experience rated "People" as the TOP principle strength. The employees with more than 15 years of experience ranked "People" as the second highest strength, with "Learning" being listed first.

Also noteworthy with Figures F and G is the fact that, again, the overall scores are relatively low in comparison to other institutions. However, the relative ranking of the processes and the principles is not dissimilar. Most institutions

rank "People" and "Valuing People" among their strongest three principles and processes.

Discussing the Themes

After Conversation Day, you will need to prioritize areas for action. You might decide as an institution that you want most to build a new (or expand a current) core strength--or that you want to use a strong process already working well as a model for other work at LCC.

1. How did the strengths you have develop? What made them possible to become strengths--recognized as such by LCC employees?

2. What core strengths would you most like to add to LCC? How would they change the institution, its processes, and its culture? How would they benefit students?

3. Think of one area you hold in very high esteem and that you think distinguishes itself from what is typical at LCC--for the way it operates (not for its people, but for the way it operates).   What about the way it operates distinguishes it as high quality? Can those same characteristics be applied to other processes?

4. Which process in your own area or in which you regularly participate is most effective? What makes it so?

CONVERSATION THREE

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT LAMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE IF ACCOMPLISHED?

Key Questions

This section asks you to discuss what would make a significant difference at LCC if accomplished.

♦ **Among all the work possible, what 3 - 4 things would all of you agree matters most to do now at LCC?**

♦ **What would you most like to do new or differently in your own work? What are the most enlivening possibilities for your own work?**

♦ **What three wishes do you have for LCC that will keep it successful in the future?**

♦ **What are the most enlivening and exciting possibilities for LCC? For student learning?**

Finding Common Agreement on the Difference to Make

The tables and figures below identify those items that you agree are important, but not done well or as well as you'd like at LCC right now. By identifying what you consider important yet poorly done, this part of the report bubbles up those areas that if improved or enhanced would make a significant difference to the area, to the whole institution, and in some way, to your own work. The provocative propositions for improvement you define using this data will become the source for discussions after Conversation Day and eventually a few will emerge as the focus for action.

Suspending the "Jump to Solutions" Mindset

CAUTION.   It is easy to focus immediately on those areas with "low performance" scores and to devise ways to fix them. It's also easy just to identify within your current strategic plan the areas that seem to fit this data.   These are not the purposes of this report -- there will always be things to fix, and you can continue to fix them without ever making a significant difference or revamping a process systemically for an institution-wide impact. Although part of your Conversation Day may also include "Quick Fix" recommendations, the goal is big impact opportunities.

What you are looking for are not things to fix or goals already set, but rather opportunities for making a significant difference at LCC as a whole and touches everyone's way of doing work. **Before jumping to action, take time to define the difference you want to see — the big results.**

TABLE 6:   Areas LCC Employees Agree Are High Priority But NOT Done Well

Item	Statement: What are gap areas?	Opportunity Rating	Importance Mean	% Responding on Importance	Performance Mean	% Responding on Performance
70	Advising processes work effectively to get students in appropriate courses and programs.	19.56	5.95	92.22	3.69	92.22
77	Communication occurs effectively up, down, and across different units of the organization.	19.48	6.21	93.33	3.86	93.33
78	Enrollment processes effectively recruit and admit students.	19.31	6.3	93.33	4.14	93.33
69	The faculty and staff feel they are in a partnership with administrators.	19.12	5.64	92.22	3.52	92.22
52	Lamar Community College regularly assesses whether students achieve program and course goals.	18.7	5.65	93.33	3.76	93.33
73	It is easy for those we serve to get their questions answered.	18.48	6.4	91.11	4.46	91.11
44	Budgeting processes ensure resources are effectively allocated.	18.36	5.43	94.44	3.66	94.44
60	Lamar Community College allocates resources effectively in support of its plans and future goals.	18.32	5.46	93.33	3.73	93.33
47	Student needs are identified regularly so that appropriate support services can be provided.	18.3	5.66	91.11	4.12	91.11
65	Lamar Community College builds effective relationships among faculty, staff, and administrators.	18.24	5.89	93.33	3.94	93.33

Formula Scale: (0 - 40+) Higher rating = Area of greater opportunity for impact on culture. (Rank ordered, greatest opportunity first)

**Notes
Questions**

Results

Table 6 shows the ***difference scores***, not just the lower performance averages. Difference scores are those combined scores of high importance with low performance that "bubble up" the areas of great opportunity. Difference scores can be as high as 45 or 50; scores of 18 - 25 are more common.

As you look at Table 6:

- ♦ **Which statements resonate, really "strike home" for you?**
- ♦ **Which item(s) do you "skip by" and don't draw you? Why?**

The comments in the full report will further define what you desire to see strengthened at LCC.

- ♦ **Among all the opportunities, what do you improve first?**
- ♦ **Which opportunities are important enough that you and other staff will collectively commit to, take responsibility for, and engage in accomplishing them?**

In Table 6 and in Figures H and I below, the percentage of those who responded to each statement becomes important. The higher the response rate, the more collective and widespread is your staff's agreement on the issue; the lower the response rate, the fewer staff who were unable to respond, who may not be knowledgeable about the topic, or who may not have an opinion. Difference scores go up when the percentage of those responding goes down because there exists a potentially greater opportunity for learning in the area or for understanding what you don't know about as a whole college.

The higher the score, the more potential opportunity to make a significant difference systemically, not simply by fixing the immediate issue or reacting to the strongest negative. Because the difference score relates two means (importance and performance), it distinguishes from all the possible opportunities you might focus on those that you agree have the "biggest bang for the buck."

Results from Table 6 indicate that, like results earlier in this report, the statements employees believe are of high priority but not done well cross many of the AQIP criteria (1,3,5,6,7, 8, and 9). There are two criteria represented by multiple statements in the table that emerge as areas for potential improvement: "Building Collaborative Relationships" and "Supporting Institutional Operations." Collectively, you are stating that LCC might exist to strengthen the institution in these areas.

Employees might note that two of the statements in Table 6 with the highest opportunity ratings relate to themes found within the Constellation Survey's written comments. Comment number 77 relates to effective communication, and number 69 refers to a partnership between all members of the LCC community. Employees' written comments suggest opportunities for improvement in institutional communication between and among all employee groups.

Relating Process Groups and High-Performance Principles

Like the other tables in this report, Table 6 presents items individually, and an overemphasis on single items can lead to over scrutinizing of the specific data or of the individual topic, or worse, to jumping to solutions for the individual item versus seeing the broader opportunity behind it. The intent of this report is to generate conversations that surface the patterns and themes across the survey results. Figures H and I relate the difference or opportunity scores from all responses to all statements to the AQIP Criteria (process groups) and Principles of High Performance.

Figures H and I address these questions:

- ♦ **Which groups of processes hold the greatest opportunities to make a difference?**

- ♦ **What Principles common to high-performing institutions do you collectively wish to see more of at LCC?**

- ♦ **What, if accomplished, would make a significant difference at LCC?**

FIGURE H: Common Agreement on LCC's Processes for Greatest Impact

Areas of Greatest Opportunity for Impact Related to Process Groups

Process Group	Priority Opportunity Score
Helping Students Learn	17.32
Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives	16.68
Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs	17.34
Valuing People	16.63
Leading and Communicating	17.3
Supporting Institutional Operations	17.34
Measuring Effectiveness	17.69
Planning Continuous Improvement	17.64
Building Collaborative Relationships	17.7

Priority Opportunity Score

Scale: Opportunity/Delta score derived from formula measuring difference among importance scores, performance scores, & response rates of all staff on individual items relating to AQIP Criteria.

Results

Figure H displays, in graph form, the relationships between the items on Table 6 and the AQIP criteria mentioned earlier. Three process groups related to key AQIP criteria emerge somewhat as areas of opportunities for change and positive impact.

- ♦ **Planning Continuous Improvement,** processes that examine how your planning processes, strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision.

- ♦ **Building Collaborative Relationships,** processes that examine your institution's relationships and partnerships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission.

- ♦ **Measuring Effectiveness,** how you collect and use data effectively to manage activities and drive change and improvement.

All four employee groups listed one of these three criteria as the area of greatest opportunity for Lamar. The full-time faculty and the administrative staff identified **Measuring Effectiveness** as their number area of improvement, while the adjunct faculty identified **Planning Continuous Improvement** and the classified staff identified **Building Collaborative Relationships**.

It should be noticed that the range of opportunity scores is small, which suggests no one or two AQIP criteria as more problematic than others and that people don't see major problems in processes. There are strengths, as well as room for improvement in all areas, as evidenced by the Supporting Institutional Operations criterion appearing in the table for What Matters Most, the table for What is Done Well and finally, the table for the Greatest Opportunity.
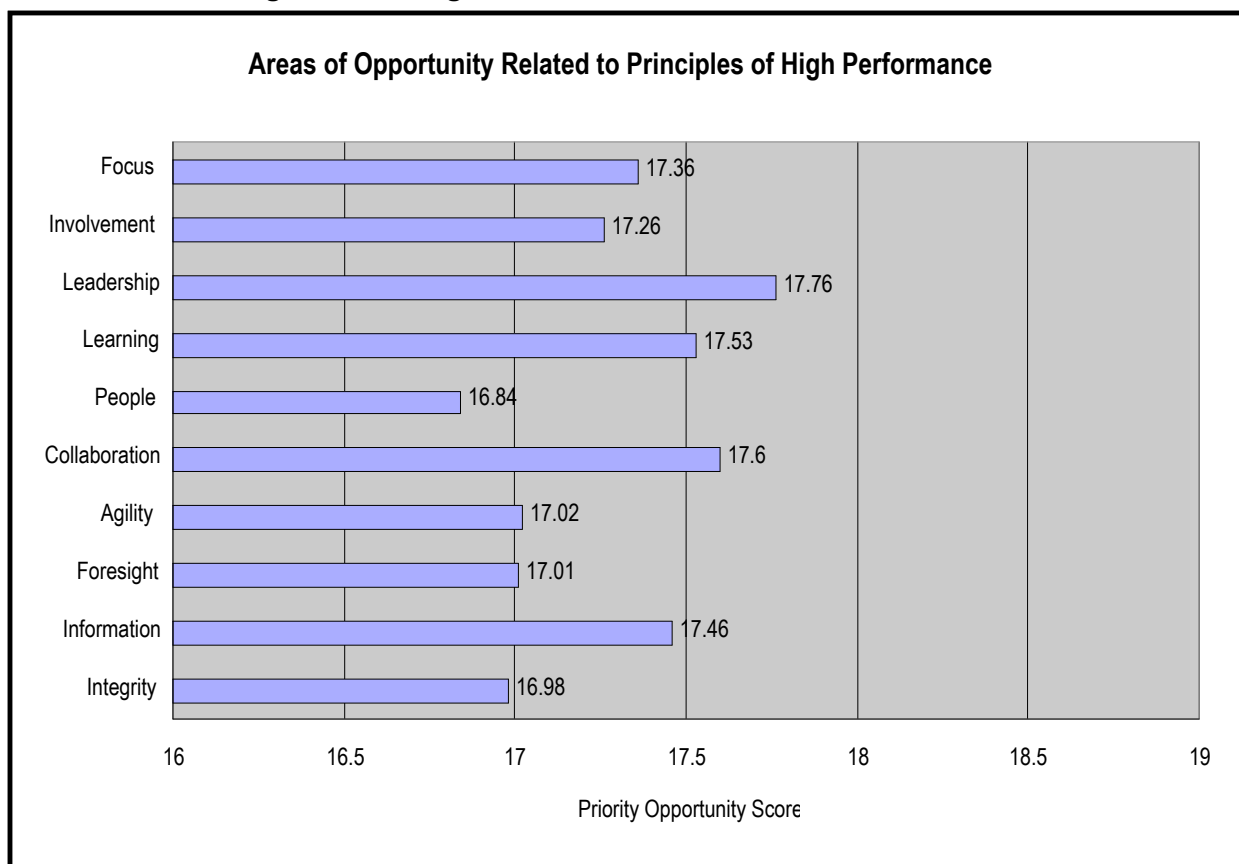
The core questions are:

♦ **What should become the focus for projects that make a real difference and have institution-wide impact?**

♦ **What really would make a significant difference at LCC in the next few years AND have longer term benefit to LCC and its students?**

Results

Whereas Figure H focuses on the processes, Figure I focuses on the ways you think and work together at LCC; i.e., the Principles of High Performance.

FIGURE I: **Common Agreement on LCC's Areas for Greatest Impact in Developing A High-Performing Institution**

Areas of Opportunity Related to Principles of High Performance

Principle	Priority Opportunity Score
Focus	17.36
Involvement	17.26
Leadership	17.76
Learning	17.53
People	16.84
Collaboration	17.6
Agility	17.02
Foresight	17.01
Information	17.46
Integrity	16.98

Priority Opportunity Score

Scale: Opportunity/Delta score derived from formula measuring difference among importance scores, performance scores, & response rates of all staff on individual items relating to AQIP Principles.

Culture and performance are related. Figure I provides an interesting view of your perspectives on LCC in relationship to the groups of processes identified as areas for making a difference.

The three Principles for High Performance Institutions that seem to stand out as opportunities for impact are:

♦ **Leadership**, leaders and leadership systems that support a quality culture,
♦ **Learning,** a learning-centered environment, and
♦ **Collaboration,** collaboration and a shared institutional focus.

All employee groups, regardless of years of longevity, list the principle of Leadership in their top three criteria for having the greatest growth potential. This principle also appeared in comments associated with constellation statements and responses to the general questions at the end of the survey. Of course, working on any of the most important High Performance Principles is likely to have a positive impact on the AQIP Principles identified. However, several interesting questions emerge:

♦ **Why do these cultural characteristics bubble up as the best areas for significant impact, change, or improvement?**

♦ **How will you cultivate Leadership, Learning and Collaboration?**

♦ **If you set up action projects to improve processes in key areas above, how might you do so to improve your ability to collaborate, your ways of involving people, or information at your institution?**

Do you agree on what areas would make a difference?

Collectively, all employee groups identified **Planning Continuous Improvement, Building Collaborative Relationships** and **Measuring Effectiveness** as the top three groups of processes for making a difference. Further, **Leadership, Learning, and Collaboration** were collectively identified as the principles offering the greatest opportunity for impact. The written comments add another priority across the board: the importance of LCC working to improve its flow of information throughout the institution.

Review of the Appendices after Conversation Day will show that those with 5 years or less see **Helping Students Learn** as the number one criterion, those with 6-10 years at the college see **Supporting Institutional Operations** as the number one criterion, those with 11-15 years identify **Building Collaborative Relationships** first and those with over 15 years of history with the institution see **Leading and Communicating**.

Discussing the Themes

What immediately comes to mind when asked, **"If LCC had resources to make only one big change, improvement or innovation, it should be _____."**

1. What do the results say about the three or four opportunities you believe LCC should pursue?

2. What one change could you make in your own work that would have the largest beneficial impact on others' work? On helping students learn?

NEXT CONVERSATIONS

COMMITTING TO CONVERSATION
ACTING ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

Baseline Performance

One final perspective from the Constellation is a baseline of LCC's performance and importance in relationship to all of the AQIP Criteria and Principles. Figure J and K each show two lines: one for importance ratings and one for performance ratings. Whereas Figure J presents the baseline against groups of processes in the AQIP Criteria; Figure K illustrates the baseline against the cultural characteristics in the AQIP Principles of High Performance.

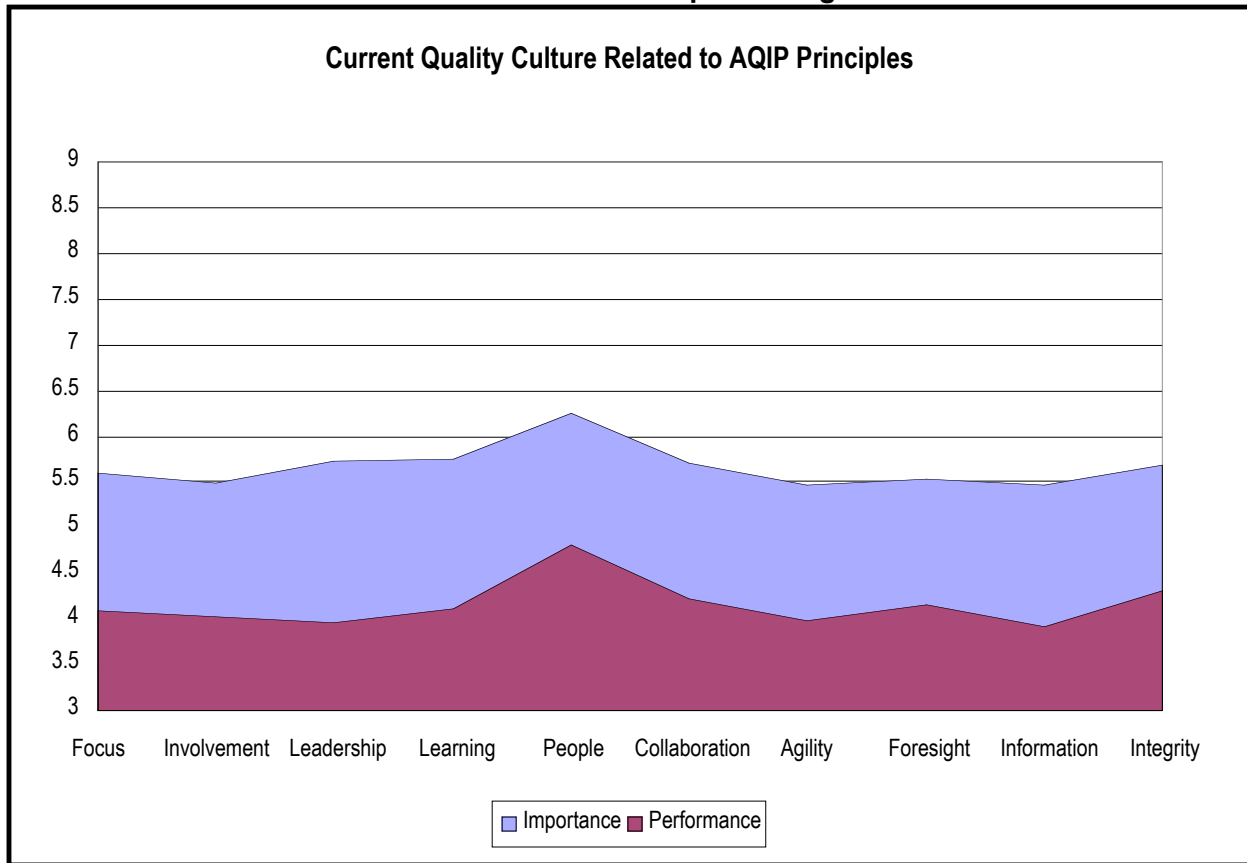**FIGURE J: Baseline Performance Chart: Process Groups**

Current Quality Culture Related to AQIP Criteria
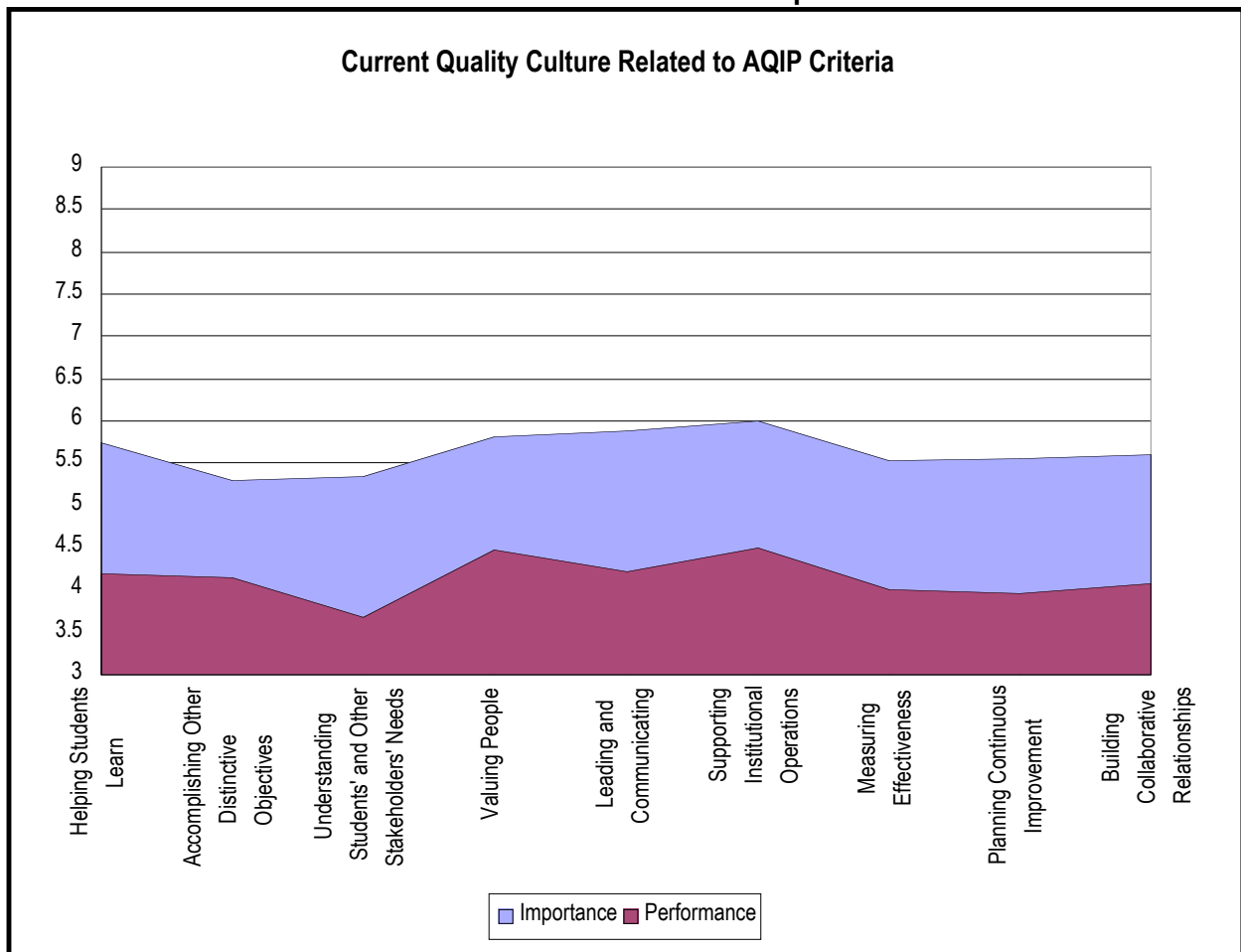
FIGURE K: Baseline Performance Chart: Principles of High Performance

Current Quality Culture Related to AQIP Principles

Results

The findings in Figures J and K are consistent with other data. Figure K illustrates and supports the earlier findings relating to the principles of "Leadership" and "Information". The largest gaps between LCC's performance ratings and its importance ratings occur in these principles. LCC faces a unique challenge: How do the institution's leaders engage the college community in addressing one of its most critical opportunities for growth – leadership itself?

Written comments on the Constellation Survey particularly support the importance/performance gaps in "Leading and Communicating" and "Leadership".

- ♦ **How would you hope the picture changes after LCC has accomplished the three wishes of the previous section?**
- ♦ **What will you commit to for LCC over the next 3-5 years?**

NEXT STEPS

SETTING UP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
AT LAMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Turning Conversation to Action

Spurring rich discussions that lead to action is the primary purpose of Vital Focus. Through the sequence and succession of conversations, a clearer and clearer picture should emerge of LCC's three or four highest priority opportunities for making a significant difference right now. At this point in the Vital Focus process, you have surfaced your collective views on LCC's priorities, strengths, and greatest opportunities for making a significant difference and you have defined provocative propositions or recommendations for making a difference at LCC right now.

What are the Next Steps in Vital Focus?

Next Step 1: Create your Conversation Summary Report and Compile Additional Data from Other Audiences

This Constellation Results Report is not the final report; it is just the first part. Shortly after Conversation Day(s), your AQIP Facilitator will work with you to create the full **Conversation Day Summary Report**. This report serves as the foundation for the next discussions.

The **Conversation Day Summary Report** *will include*:

♦ Your conclusions and recommendations for action from today's conversations, including any quick fix items you identified; and

♦ Observations from your Facilitator on the data and the conversations.

The **Constellation Appendices and Comments** *are*:

♦ Charts that that provide **data from the Constellation broken out by staff type and by longevity**, and

♦ **Comments** you throughout the survey.

THE COMMENTS IN PARTICULAR should be organized to provide information that deepens your understanding on the priorities and why. In addition, the comments will surface **any sharp differences or issues that are such barriers to taking action that they need to be discussed.**

ADDITIONAL DATA FROM STUDENTS, EMPLOYERS, INSTITUTIONAL SURVEYS, etc., is also critical to making sure that when you prioritize your recommendations for action that you take seriously the views of your students and other stakeholders, your mission and vision, and the current trends and contexts in which LCC is operating.

Next Step 2: Hold Prioritization Conversations

After Conversation Day, you need to take the many recommendations from Conversation Day, the quick fixes, and the additional data and use them to talk about what the top 8-12 priorities for action really are. Most colleges do this by:

♦   First, asking all employees to rank or comment back on or attend a prioritization discussion (or two) to review the Conversation Day Summary Report and its comments and to forward what they see as the top priority 5-7 recommendations and 8-10 quick fixes. In large institutions, this ranking is often done on line and ***often includes other stakeholders*** (students, advisory groups, board, adjunct faculty, etc.). Sometimes, institutions repeat a mini-Conversation Day (2-3 hours) with students and advisory groups as well. (Done within two to three weeks of Conversation Day)

♦   Second, creating a basic set of criteria for prioritizing recommendations. The facilitator often assists in this process AND it is important that the criteria are open for individual groups to add to in their discussions. (Done at the same time as the ranking process above.)

♦   Third, identifying the top 10 - 25 recommendations and top 25 - 30 quick fixes (some of which may not be quick fixes) from the ranking process and then holding a series of prioritization conversations across standing groups and committees which use the additional data and the criteria to rank order these until there emerges a top 6-10. ***These become the top priority recommendations--forwarded for further exploration and potential action.*** (NOTE: Often the quick fixes are dealt with differently at each institution and many institutions don't choose to identify quick fixes.) (Done within 6-10 weeks of Conversation Day.)

Note on Strategic Planning. LCC may have many goals in its strategic plan. This process does not intend to derail your strategic goals. Instead, it identify within your goals the 3 - 4 action projects that collectively will serve as the basis for your participation in AQIP and will impact broadly the culture and systems of LCC. You may also use Vital Focus to evaluate your strategic plan and to update it with new projects derived from the process.

Next Step 3: Hold Development Discussions to Arrive at 5-6 Potential Action Projects and Knowing your Top Three--DO QUICK FIXES

Once you have your top 8-10 recommendations, you are ready to explore each more fully...developing them enough to see if they are among the top 3-4. Most colleges do this by:

♦   First, gathering cross-functional groups of people--some of whom are directly responsible for or directly involved in the work or process that is the focus of the recommendation and others who are interested and who are more external to the process or area--to discuss what they see as the top two or three of the priorities. Having a cross-functional group of different types of employees from different areas of the college really increases the creativity of the ideas and the outcomes. (Usually takes 2-3 one-hour meetings if data is easily usable.)

♦ Second, having a steering group review the results of the development discussion, the common choices, and then proposing what will be the 5-6 action projects to take to the Strategy Forum AND the top three that will be the focus of the Strategy Forum.

♦ Third, holding large open forums and web forums to propose and take feedback on the top 5-6 and priority 3 AND TO DISCUSS PROGRESS ON QUICK FIXES. *Note: Often colleges immediately identify 3-5 quick fixes that can just be done--and they are done. Period...and progress begins on the others.*

What constitutes a good action project? Among all you will do, these 3 - 4 efforts should be challenging, packed with learning opportunity for LCC, and be those that collectively the broadest group of staff supports and has chosen.   It is quite likely that the action projects may logically fall into goals of your strategic plan. What sets these action plans apart from other goals and action plans you may have is their collective definition and support by your college as a whole. In addition, they, along with the Systems Portfolio required 3-4 years after working on the AQIP action projects, are the broad process improvement projects that will serve as the focus for your continued accreditation. More information on action projects can be found at www.aqip.org.

Next Step 4: Write your Strategy for Action and Hold Conference

This is the last step in Vital Focus and the first step in full participation in AQIP. When you have reached consensus on the 5-6 Action Projects, you are ready to write your Strategy for Action, which will be reviewed by your Vital Focus Facilitator and eventually by other institutions as you plan to attend a Strategy Forum. In one short document, your Strategy for Action captures your learning from Vital Focus and prepares you to attend the Strategy Forum.   In fact, it is the document required of all institutions attending the Strategy Forum. (Done within a month of the Strategy Forum--and preferably no more than six months after beginning Vital Focus.)

Your Strategy for Action will be 10 -12 pages long and include:

♦ Institutional Facts and Context

♦ Your Present and Your Future Environment

♦ Your Action Project Worksheets

IMPORTANT: Do NOT CREATE PERFECT or GET OVERLY ATTACHED to your action projects. SEE THE STRATEGY FORUM AS TAKING YOUR DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT action projects and providing you with the feedback you need to really finalize them.

Note: You can find directions and the report requirements for your Strategy for Action on the AQIP webpage, www.aqip.org. Use the Jump Menu to go to the Strategy Forum page and click on any active Strategy Forum dates and the required documents, including the Strategy for Action, will be listed.

IMPORTANT: You should disseminate your Strategy For Action Workbook widely to all staff who participated in Conversation Day and other discussions.

IMPORTANT: You should set up a POST-Strategy Forum meeting(s) and communications with all staff to communicate the feedback on your action projects and to get feedback from staff on the best revisions and approach to the Forum feedback. (Sometimes this is done by just the Steering Committee.)

Options for Concluding Vital Focus

You may choose to conclude Vital Focus before the Strategy Forum, holding the final phone conference with Commission Staff and your Facilitator.

You may also choose to conclude Vital Focus AFTER the Strategy Forum--you can even bring your Facilitator back to campus to help you work through the feedback and to integrate the action projects into your work. The benefit of this latter approach is that your staff do not see the action projects as final going into the Strategy Forum and tend to see the feedback from other institutions as key to the final revision of these action projects.

Future Steps:

Can you repeat Vital Focus in the future? Yes. It is often used in preparing the final portfolio or as a means for interpreting the next priority projects from the portfolio--or even as a basis for the portfolio conversation process.

You may choose to do Vital Focus on your own or in conjunction with the Commission. AQIP's goal is to build your internal and external ability to turn conversation to action, not to make you dependent on a process or a facilitator.

If you do repeat Vital Focus, AQIP recommends that you replace Constellation (an entry survey) with **Examiner**, a tighter, more advanced survey from which you can get comparative results from other institutions.

AQIP CRITERIA & PRINCIPLES OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

Note: In-depth information on the Academic Quality Improvement Program, its processes, and its services can be found at **www.aqip.org**.

AQIP CRITERIA (PROCESS GROUPS)

Helping Students Learn identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations and is the priority of any institutional analysis. It 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.

Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution's major objectives, that complement student learning, and that fulfill other portions of your mission.

Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs.

Valuing People explores your commitment to the development of your faculty, staff, and administrators since the efforts of all are required for institutional success.

Leading and Communicating addresses how your institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment.

Supporting Institutional Operations addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.

Measuring Effectiveness examines how your institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement.

Planning Continuous Improvement examines your institution's planning processes and how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision.

Building Collaborative Relationships examines your institution's relationships and partnerships--current and potential--to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission.

AQIP PRINCIPLES OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

Focus: A mission & vision driven by students' and other stakeholders' needs.

Involvement: Broad-based faculty, staff, and administrative engagement and participation.

Leadership: Leaders and leadership systems that support a quality culture.

Learning: A learning-centered environment.

People: Respect for and willingness to invest in people (faculty, staff, administration).

Collaboration: Collaboration and a shared institutional focus.

Agility: Ability, flexibility, and responsiveness to changing needs and conditions.

Foresight: Planning for innovation and improvement.

Information: Fact-based evidence-gathering and thinking to support analysis and decision-making.

Integrity: Integrity and responsible institutional citizenship.