Northland Pioneer Community College

RESULTS FOR DISCUSSION
Vital Focus Constellation

January 2008
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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 Northland Pioneer 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. In this report, you will see results for individual statements AND results by process group. You may see references to the Commission’s Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP, the alternative accreditation process), for it is AQIP that formally uses these process groups and principles.
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 Process Group. In addition, the statement is linked to the high performance principle Focus, a mission and vision driven by students’ and other stakeholders’ needs.

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 NPCC,
♦ What you agree is already done well at NPCC, and
♦ What specific proposals for action you collectively agree would make a significant difference at NPCC.

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 Process Groups and High Performance Principles

Throughout this report, you will find references to process groups and principles of high performance.

Each Process Group covers a set 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 Process Group (group of processes) and one High Performance Principle.
INFORMATION ON WHO COMPLETED THE CONSTELLATION SURVEY

Survey Components: 85 Item Statements and General End Questions
- 66 Standard Item Statements
- 14 Customized Statements
- 5 General End Questions

Participants: 264 NPCC employees

FIGURE A: Constellation Participants by Employee Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constellation Respondents</th>
<th>Adjunct Campus Faculty</th>
<th>Adjunct Center Faculty</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Office Staff</th>
<th>Campus &amp; District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Faculty</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Staff</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1: Participants by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2: Participants by Longevity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Longevity</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or fewer years</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Northland Pioneer Community College — those day-to-day ways of operating and those cultural aspects that you collectively agree matter most.

♦ Are you doing what you think matters most for NPCC’s students and other stakeholders?
♦ Is what you do, what matters? Do you agree about what matters most?
♦ What ways of thinking and working together are important to you and to the continued success of NPCC?

What Matters Most at NPCC 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 NPCC Employees Agree Are Most Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement: What matters most?</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>% Responding</th>
<th>% Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NPC intentionally promotes excellence in teaching.</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>NPC trusts employees to do their work effectively.</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>89.69</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NPC makes certain that students acquire the knowledge and skills required by their academic programs before awarding them credentials.</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>NPC’s core values stress the centrality of learning.</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>88.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When making institutional decisions, administrative personnel consider the impact on students and learning.</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>NPC’s basic education or developmental offerings effectively prepare students for courses and programs.</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>88.55</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Administrators communicate a clear vision for NPC’s future.</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>89.69</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>NPC has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>87.02</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employee have a shared understanding of NPC’s educational goals for students.</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rating Scale: 9 = high importance 1 = low importance  Rank ordered most important first.
Results
What matters most? Standing out as most important (score 7.01) is promoting excellence in teaching. A number of statements relate to Northland Pioneer College’s commitment to student learning and effective processes to support learning. A high priority of the institution is effective processes to lead and communicate a clear vision, instill trust and have employees share an understanding of the educational goals.

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 Process Groups and the Principles of High Performance. Figures B and C show your opinions on the importance of the processes and principles:

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

Results
Figures B and C present your importance results grouped by major institutional processes. Although the difference between the scores is not great, across all results for all statements, you rate 3 major process groups most important:

♦ **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.

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

♦ **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.

(See quick definitions of these at end of this document.)
FIGURE B: Importance of Major Process Groups to NPCC Employees

As you think about NPCC’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 NPCC’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?

When your importance ratings for all statements are categorized by the Principles of Higher Performance (see Figure C), again the differences are not great but similar themes surface as most important:

- Support for student learning
- Investing in people
- Integrity in institutional processes

Notes

Questions
There is consensus that planning continuous improvement is valued and input and feedback from participants should be sought out and used for effective planning and decision making.

**What do the Results Mean?**

Your next conversations would ideally zero in on (a) those things so important about NPCC 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 would students say are *their* peak experiences? What would students say *they* most value most about NPCC?
3. 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 NORTHLAND PIONEER COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

Key Questions

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

♦ What unique strengths do you bring to NPCC? Are they being tapped and used to their potential?
♦ What processes does NPCC do well right now?
♦ What are the best aspects of NPCC’s culture--the way you work as a college?
♦ Do you do well what matters most to do?

What is Done Well at NPCC Right Now?

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement: What is done best currently?</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>% Responding</th>
<th>% Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>NPC trusts employees to do their work effectively.</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>88.93</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>NPC has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>87.02</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NPC intentionally promotes excellence in teaching.</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NPC makes certain that students acquire the knowledge and skills required by their academic programs before awarding them credentials.</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>NPC’s core values stress the centrality of learning.</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>89.69</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>NPC’s basic education or developmental offerings effectively prepare students for courses and programs.</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When making institutional decisions, administrative personnel consider the impact on students and learning.</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employee have a shared understanding of NPC’s educational goals for students.</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>NPC has processes to ensure that students are prepared for the programs and courses in which they enroll.</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>94.27</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>NPC’s hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>90.46</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rating Scale: 1 = currently not done well 9 = currently done well
Results
As in “What matters most?” trusting employees to do their work effectively, having effective leadership and processes to support learning, stand out from all the statements. Making certain students acquire appropriate knowledge and skills, and having well designed programs and services are priorities. It is obvious there is agreement on what is being done well and what matters most. Eight of the statements rated as “being done well” also appear in what matters most.

Relating NPCC Strengths to Institutional Processes and Principles
Figures D and E relate your performance ratings to the Process Groups and the traits in the Principles of High Performance (see end of this document for a list and brief definitions). The figures address the questions, “How strong are NPCC’s processes?” “How evident are the principles of high performance in NPCC’s operations?” and “Do we agree across staff on what processes and principles are done well?”

FIGURE D: Performance of Major Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Group</th>
<th>Average Performance Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping Students Learn</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing People</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading and Communicating</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Institutional Operations</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring Effectiveness</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Collaborative Relationships</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rating Scale: 9 = high importance 1 = low importance
The overall results support conclusions one could draw from the top 20 statements about what you do best. Performance ratings (see Figure D) for the Process Categories are highest for Helping Students Learn, Leading and Communicating, Valuing People and Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives. A very important observation is that there is very little difference in the average scores among any of the processes and the scores are low compared to other institutions. This suggests there are no major areas of concern but people are open to and value improvement.

**FIGURE E:** Performance of Ways of Thinking and Working Together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance of High Performance Principles</th>
<th>Average Performance Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresight</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Relating Importance and Performance: NPCC’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.
However, a richer view is possible by using a formula to relate the high performance scores to both the high importance scores and the high response rates. The outcome is a Strength or Capacity Score (Sigma score) that defines those areas that you indicate are both high in importance and currently done well.

The high performance principles rated most high are:
- Being Learning Centered
- Integrity in Operations
- Collaboration
- Investing in People

Learning, Integrity, and People were in the top 3 of Figure C. The agreement between what is important and what you do best is congruent.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement: What are the strengths?</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>Responding on Importance</th>
<th>Performance Mean</th>
<th>Responding on Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>NPC trusts employees to do their work effectively.</td>
<td>9.46</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>88.93</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>88.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NPC intentionally promotes excellence in teaching.</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>96.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NPC makes certain that students acquire the knowledge and skills required by their academic programs before awarding them credentials.</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employee have a shared understanding of NPC’s educational goals for students.</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>96.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>NPC has processes to ensure that students are prepared for the programs and courses in which they enroll.</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>94.27</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>94.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When making institutional decisions, administrative personnel consider the impact on students and learning.</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>96.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>NPC’s core values stress the centrality of learning.</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>89.69</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>89.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>NPC has effective policies that ensure responsible conduct.</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>87.02</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>87.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>NPC’s basic education or developmental offerings effectively prepare students for courses and programs.</td>
<td>7.63</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>86.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>NPC’s hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>90.46</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>90.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Not surprisingly, the statements rising to the top in terms of strengths are aligned to those being done best in table 4. Alignment with “What matters most” is very strong. All 10 statements are the same in Tables 4 and 5. Excellence in teaching, focus on learning, and effective processes are obvious.
Figure F reveals Northland Pioneer College's strong focus on Helping Students Learn, Leading and Communicating, Valuing People and Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives. This particular analysis which considers all the questions in the Constellation is one of the most effective ways of highlighting such strengths. Helping Students Learn is clearly the highest score. Themes of Learning, Integrity and People are also highlights of Figure G.

**Do Results Vary by Staff Type?** Figure F identifies Helping Students Learn and Leading and Communicating as the college's strengths in the Process Groups. These noted strengths are consistent with the college's previously identified strong performance areas in Figure D. All employee groups agreed that Helping Students Learn was the number one process strength for the college; all employees except Adjunct Center faculty agreed that Leading and Communicating was the college's second strength. Adjunct Center Faculty saw Valuing People and Understanding Student and Stakeholder Needs (tie) as the college's second strength. Overall, in the Process Group their is a high level of employee group agreement on the process strengths the college has.

**Notes**

**Questions**
In Figure G, Learning, People and Integrity are the highest rated strengths in the Principle of High Performance category. All employee groups agreed on these three as the top three college strengths in the Principles category. This high level of agreement across all employee groups speaks to commonly held principles in action at the college.

**FIGURE G: Agreement on NPCC Strengths in Principles of High Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Strength Related to Principles of High Performance</th>
<th>Strength Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>5.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresight</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Discussing the Themes

After Conversation Day, you will need to prioritize areas for action.

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

2. What core strengths would you most like to add to NPCC? How would they improve the institution? 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 NPCC—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 NORTHLAND PIONEER IF ACCOMPLISHED?

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

♦ Among all the work possible, what 3 - 4 things would all of you agree matters most to do now at NPCC?
♦ 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 NPCC that will keep it successful in the future?
♦ What are the most enlivening and exciting possibilities for NPCC? 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 NPCC 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 NPCC 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 NPCC Employees Agree Are High Priority But NOT Done Well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement: What are gap areas?</th>
<th>Opportunity Rating</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>% Responding on Importance</th>
<th>Performance Mean</th>
<th>% Responding on Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Accounting policies and procedures are clearly and consistently followed.</td>
<td>19.91</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Departments/areas have the data and information they need to make improvements.</td>
<td>18.64</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>85.88</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>85.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Enrollment processes effectively recruit and admit students.</td>
<td>18.47</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>86.26</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>86.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Budgeting processes ensure resources are effectively allocated.</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>88.55</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>88.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>The processes for gathering and analyzing data serve the needs of employees and departments/areas effectively.</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>86.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>88.93</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>88.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Communication occurs effectively up, down, and across different units of the organization.</td>
<td>18.31</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>86.26</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>86.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>NPC has effective processes to determine the training needs of employees.</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>86.26</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>86.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Employees share a vision of what NPC will be like in the next 5-10 years.</td>
<td>18.09</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>87.02</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>87.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>NPC builds relationships with other educational institutions and with employers that depend on the college to provide them with students and graduates.</td>
<td>18.09</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>85.88</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>85.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 NPCC.

- 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.”

The areas identified as highest priority but also identified as not done well include processes, policies and procedures in budgeting/accounting, gathering and analyzing data, technology as current and ongoing campus wide communication. The level of agreement on these areas is seen more clearly in Figure H where the comments agreed upon fall into the process groups of Supporting Institutional Operations, Measuring Effectiveness and Planning Continuous Improvement. These three Process Groups are the college's areas for greatest improvement and impact for positive change.

**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 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 NPCC?
- What, if accomplished, would make a significant difference at NPCC?
Results

The three Process Groups ranked highest, that are, having the greatest potential for improving employee perception of the college are Supporting Institutional Operations, Planning Continuous Improvement and Measuring Effectiveness; Building Collaborative Relationships ranked a very close fourth. This ranking is common across all employee groups with the note that Administration employee group identified Valuing People as a process of greater impact than Building Collaborative Relationships. This ranking can be interpreted as Administration focus on internal stakeholders. An additional observation of the ranking in these areas is that regardless of employee longevity, the same views were commonly held as to the three areas needing focus and improvement.

♦ Supporting Institutional Operations 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.
♦ **Planning Continuous Improvement** examines your institution’s planning processes and how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision.

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

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 NPCC in the next few years AND have longer term impact that benefits NPCC and its students?**

**Results**

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Opportunity Related to Principles of High Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scale:** Opportunity/Delta score derived from formula measuring difference among importance scores, performance scores, & response rates of all staff on individual items relating to THE Principles.
The Areas for Greatest Impact related to Principles of a high performing institution include Involvement, Agility and Foresight with Information as a very close fourth. Of the six employee groups, only Adjunct Campus Faculty identified Information as having greater impact than Involvement, Agility and Foresight. Full-time faculty also identified this principle as very important/high impact. By employee longevity, those with over 15 years and those with 5 or fewer years tended to share the same ranking/rating.

The college is poised to use the identified principles as guides in its ongoing work in reviewing processes and systems for positive impact as well as in review and reflection for its next accreditation cycle. The institution needs to reflect on how it might convey to employee groups its use of the principles of Agility, Foresight and Involvement. How will employees be able to perceive that these principles are in play?

Working on any of the most important High Performance Principles is likely to have a positive impact on the Principles identified!

Do you agree on what areas would make a difference?

Figure H1 and I1, in the appendices, may provide important windows into some differences between the groups who completed the Constellation. It will be important to discuss the differences throughout the campus Conversation Day.

♦ What are the underlying issues and processes that lead to need for focused attention surrounding planning continuous improvement and valuing people?
♦ What will it take to improve the involvement of everyone in new processes that take advantage of Quality Improvement principles to best prepare for the future?
♦ Since the overall mood seems to be quite positive and even across the Principles and Characteristics, how will you “drill down” to find those specific areas that should be addressed now to get the biggest impact?

Discussing the Themes

Of course, all processes can always be improved, and you, individually, may be able to identify 15 or 20 areas to make a difference. However, the purpose of this survey is to help you discern among the galaxy of all the possible ways to improve, those three or four opportunities that hold the greatest potential to create a significant difference across the institution as a whole. What immediately comes to mind when asked, “If NPCC had resources to make only one big change, improvement or innovation, it should be ________________.”
Baseline Performance

One final perspective from the Constellation is a baseline of NPCC’s performance and importance in relationship to all of the Process Groups 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 Process Groups; Figure K illustrates the baseline against the cultural characteristics in the Principles of High Performance.

FIGURE J: Baseline Performance Chart: Process Groups

Current Quality Culture Related to AQIP Criteria

- Helping Students Learn
- Accomplishing Distinctive Objectives
- Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs
- Valuing People
- Leading and Communicating
- Supporting Institutional Operations
- Measuring Effectiveness
- Planning Continuous Improvement
- Building Collaborative Relationships

Importance vs. Performance
Results

There appears to be a gap between importance and performance relating to Understanding Students’ and Other Stakeholders’ Needs and Supporting Institutional Operations.

Helping Students Learn and Leading and Communicating are high priorities and are done well.

♦ How would you hope the picture changes after NPCC has accomplished the three wishes of the previous section?

♦ What will you commit to for NPCC over the next 3-5 years?
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 NPCC’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 NPCC’s priorities, strengths, and greatest opportunities for making a significant difference and you have defined provocative propositions or recommendations for making a difference at NPCC 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 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 NPCC 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.)

Next Step 3: Develop Priorities as Part of Strategic Planning

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 NPCC, 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.

**Note on Strategic Planning.** NPCC is continuing to develop its strategic plan. After Conversation Day, you will be involved in using the recommendations from Conversation Day to prioritize what you will accomplish through your strategic plan.

**Next Step 4: Determine Evidence for Self-Study**

Both the Constellation results and the information you generated at Conversation Day are rich with evidence for your self-study. For example, in the second discussion of Conversation Day, you identified areas of recent accomplishment and strength. These areas potentially serve as evidence of fulfillment of one or more Criteria for Accreditation. Further, your quick fixes, when accomplished, may also provide evidence, as do your recommendations, for they demonstrate that you’ve identified what you most need to improve.

**Next Step 5: Foundation for Continuing Efforts to Assess and Improve Student Learning**

Many institutions conducting Vital Focus are doing so to prepare for entry into AQIP or into the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. Conversation Day and your recommendations undoubtedly include suggestions for what would make a significant difference in what and how well your students learn what you intend for them to learn. These ideas are again both evidence for self-study, as well as ideas for action whether as an Academy participant or as part of your strategic plan.
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.

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.