Category 5 – Leading and Communicating

5P1 – Organizations Mission and Vision
The current mission, vision, values statements of the college were established during a summit of college employees, students and community members in 2004. All employees have a copy and conference rooms throughout campus have a framed copy hanging on the wall. The mission statement is still current, although there has been discussion recently among members of the board of trustees, the president, and members of the college's administrative team on a potential revision to make the mission statement shorter with more impact. The mission was reviewed by the president at convocation of all employees in 2010. Some board members have submitted recommendations for a new mission statement.

The college is at a point in time where it needs to determine if a major summit meeting needs to be scheduled to review the mission, vision, and values. A driver for this action would be if the college had to change its mission because of major budget reductions. Kirtland’s preferred method of reviewing the mission statement is to invite as many stakeholders as possible to a summit. The president is facilitating discussions about the mission.

5P2 – Leadership Direction that Align with Mission, Vision and Values
The president uses the strategic plan (http://www.kirtland.edu/about/documents/Strategic-Plan-Executive-Summary.pdf) and works with the college administrative team to develop yearly operational plans to set directions that align with the mission, vision, and values of the organization. Also, department and division goals and plans are expected to align with the college operational plan. The strategic plan is developed at a stakeholders’ summit every three years. The yearly operational plan is developed with the following steps:

- A retreat of the college administrative team is conducted to review the strategic plan and discuss goals and measurable action plans that will accomplish the mission.
- Using notes from the retreat, the president composes a document that is reviewed by administrators and specific operational goals are developed.
- The members of the board of trustees review the operational goals, provide input, and suggest action projects and goals that can be added to the document.
- College administrative team members are assigned to each goal and they, in turn, select a team to help accomplish the goal. They may also create division plans and goals that conform to the college operational plan.
- The action plans are written to be measurable and commit the college to high performance.
- The operational plan is presented to employees and is evaluated at the president’s cabinet.

The 2011-2012 Operational Plan is attached in Appendix A.

In addition to the above process, the evaluations of the administrative team reflect their accomplishment of the operational plan. Other planning processes including the budget plan, AQIP action projects, and assessment plan are expected to flow from the strategic and operational plans.
5P3 – Accountability to Students and Stakeholders
Kirtland leadership strongly believes the themes of the strategic plan represent the preferred future direction of the college and that it will better position the college in its educational markets.

The mission and strategic plan were created after all employees joined together, along with students and members of the community to create the strategic themes in the plan. There was considerable input from all stakeholders in both processes.

The yearly operational plan flows from the strategic plan. The college employees collects strategic information from constituents including standing advisory committees, ad hoc advisory committees, employee teams, surveys, citizens at informal meetings, and when employees become part of the communities they serve.

Kirtland currently has representatives on nearly all school boards in the district it serves, in a large portion of the service clubs in existence in the area, and has representatives or connections to a large number of other agencies where it gathers information about the needs of its service area.

The student senate is a vital part of the communication system with students. In addition, the college informally gathers information from citizens enrolled in community education courses.

5P4 – Seeking Future Opportunities While Focusing on Students and Learning
Kirtland instructional administrators and president believe it is essential that the organization seek future opportunities to improve student learning and academic programming and do so in the following ways:

- Employees are encouraged to become members of community networks to identify opportunities. For example, the president is a member of the Mercy Hospital Grayling Board of Directors where he gathers information about the medical facilities in northern Michigan.
- Employees are provided professional development funds through the human resources department and through department funding. In the past academic year, approximately $65,000 was invested on professional development in this small college. These professional development efforts work towards betterment of the college and improved retention of students, as a couple of examples.
- Staff members of occupational programs meet regularly with advisory committees to gain ideas and explore opportunities for our students as well as new programming.
- New programs are developed and implemented using a standard process outlined in the program review model (1P14). This includes ad hoc advisory committees made up of practicing professionals.
- The Board of Trustees attends leadership sessions offered by the Michigan Community College Association and the Association of Community College Trustees.
- Employees are hired from outside the college district and bring new ideas and processes to the college.
- Kirtland’s budget supports employee membership in professional associations.
- Kirtland employees are part of state organizations and committees.
• The president provides reports to county commissioners and gives speeches to all civic organizations who request his presence. In the past year, this resulted in approximately 25 speaking engagements.

5P5 – Decision Making Processes

Decisions at Kirtland are made by the president, the college administrative team, supervisors, and teams created to lead and make decisions on certain issues or problems. The board of trustees is a dynamic group who sets policy for the college.

Decision-making is being pushed down to the lowest level by flattening the organizational structure and creating quality circles. Teams are created to make recommendations to the college administration. Teams are created as needed and the writing of team charges or charters is encouraged. Supervisors have been trained on working within a team structure during the 2009-2010 academic year. The college will continue to provide training as needed for new employees.

The AQIP Joint Strategy Forum team, consisting of members who have been trained at AQIP Strategy Forums, acts as the steering committee for all AQIP action projects. They identify teams of people to work on each action project.

The Curriculum and Instructional Committee, consisting of faculty chairpersons, student service staff, and instructional support staff, is charged with creating and delivering a curriculum within guidelines established by accrediting agencies, board policy, and the committee itself. The Instructional Council, which has a very similar membership, is charged with making decisions on the academic operations of the college. A classification committee makes decisions on the employment classifications of the employees.

The Target Specific Problem Solving (classified non-union staff) and Target Specific Bargaining (union faculty and staff) teams are involved in making and carrying out decisions. Each Target Specific team has representatives from their memberships and college administrators. These groups are comprised of specific employee categories and deal with issues primarily related to their groups, though the recommendations from these groups often affect the greater College.

The president has provided training and discussion on the concept of a loosely-coupled organization. The goal of this effort is to create a culture more accepting of teams, collaboration, and data collection.

5P6 – Use of Information and Performance Results in Decision Making Processes

Guiding principle #2 states “We strive for consistent use of appropriate data in all decision making.” The Institutional Research department at Kirtland provides data for decision making processes. Additionally, the chief financial officer regularly assembles data on the financial condition of the college. Data are used in the budget building process, in the program review model for academic programs, employee benefit determinations, etc.

Survey information is found on the college website http://www.kirtland.edu/about/institutional.htm. Employees have access to the college’s administrative software and InfoMaker software used to perform inquiries of data stored on the administrative system. Employees have access to state and federal information including (Integrated Post Secondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) and Activities Classification System (ACS), a state source of financial information.
Both Target Specific Bargaining and Target Specific Problem Solving labor relations processes are data driven. After a problem statement comes to the groups, data needed to solve the problem are identified and collected by a team consisting of one administrator and one faculty or staff. After the data are collected, the solution to the problem is mutually agreed upon based on that data.

Historical enrollment data is studied and used to help determine the number of course sections to offer, when to offer the courses and what method of delivery to use. This method of decision making has resulted in increasing the average class size which only starts to address the issue of Kirtland having the highest cost per contact hour of all community colleges in the state. Data are also collected and reported in the in-house program review model, as well as the Program Review for Occupational Programs that is used in conjunction with the requirement of the Carl D. Perkins Grant.

5P7 – Communication Among Levels and Units of the Institution

Kirtland has and is having conversations about communications, up and down, and side to side of the organizational chart, a loosely coupled organizational concept. Administration believes that there is a need for improvement in this area but does not have benchmark comparisons with other colleges. It is in the process of conducting conversations to determine the cause and cure for this concern. Two methods the president has chosen to improve communications within the organization structure include discussing the issues in meetings and flattening the organizational structure.

The main avenues for communication, up and down and side to side, in the levels of the organizational chart include:

- Minutes of the College Administration Team (CAT) meetings are electronically distributed to all employees. Because this team is considered an important decision-making body of the college, the minutes are read by a high percentage of employees and board members, as evidenced by the fact that if the minutes do not get circulated then people start asking about them.
- The president hosts informal meetings entitled “Coffee with the President.” They are a source of information and discussion to all attendees at the sessions. The president also facilitates round-table discussions on specific topics of concern and regularly produces newsletter-type documents on major areas of concern on campus.
- Convocation is conducted at the beginning of each semester and provides information to all employees in attendance on what is happening at the college and the future direction the college may be heading.
- Informal and formal electronic messages are an important delivery tool for information.
- The Board of Trustee meetings and the board information packet and agenda are important sources of information to employees and citizens. Agenda’s are distributed electronically to all employees and approved minutes are posted on the college’s website.
- College committees consist of members of different departments. Traditionally representation on teams is distributed between the Roscommon campus and the MTEC site.

The administration makes every effort to disseminate accurate and timely information so that employees do not have to rely on informal “grapevine” communication that can often times be incorrect and tainted with personal views.
5P8 – Communication of a Shared Mission, Vision and Values
The college president communicates the value of a shared mission in all college communications and attempts to reinforce it in formal and informal meetings. Senior leaders at Kirtland communicate the importance of the mission, values, and vision at their department meetings and at other informal opportunities. Employees are encouraged to visit other colleges to learn best practices.

The college maintains programs that emphasize high performance. The Quality Matters Program (1P12) infuses quality into online courses. The AQIP action project on Quality Initiatives (4P6) emphasizes quality throughout the college. The college has recently started discussion on the creation of Centers of Excellence in programming.

5P9 – Development of Leadership Abilities
Leadership abilities are encouraged through the evaluation process and with the use of extensive professional development. Being a small college, senior administrators routinely rotate participation in committees and seek out employees who have not always participated in teams and for leadership roles. Every employee is expected to perform a role beyond their job description.

Kirtland routinely provides workshops for individuals to enhance leadership abilities. For example, three workshops on working in teams and using data was provided to employees. All employees were asked and invited to attend budget development workshops with the president and chief financial officer causing them to learn more about establishing financial priorities. Employee convocation provides information to all employees about various topics, sometimes about leadership. The AQIP process at Kirtland requires employees to become part of teams and to accept roles in team leadership. The college administrative team has been expanded to include more individuals outside college administrators.

Most communications that share leadership knowledge, skills, and best practices are communicated informally throughout the college. The college makes an effort to enhance informal learning using digital technology. For example, the college now uses Google Applications to create documents. This software allows immediate sharing of various documents. The college’s operational plan was created using this process where administrators could watch other key ideas and actions projects on the document in “real time.” This creates a culture of leadership development. Employees share their calendars on Google.

Membership on search committees is rotated and involves many employees. When possible, interim positions are filled with current employees providing them leadership opportunities. All employees have the opportunity to participate in computer training. The most recent has been the use of Google applications to communicate and create teamwork.

5P10 – Leadership Succession
As a routine, individuals are cross-trained to provide backups for each position. For example, the financial controller has the ability to perform any of the functions in the accounting office. All members of student services department at the M-TEC site can perform each other’s duties and do on a daily basis.

The president of the college has begun the work of creating a succession plan for the office of president. This document contains a listing of the recommended steps to fill the position, an expanded listing of jobs the president and his/her staff complete on a monthly basis, a listing of
possible interim candidates for the position, a listing of search consultants for the position, and so forth. This plan needs to be expanded to all positions in the college.

Future leaders are provided professional development, thus preparing them for positions higher in the organizational chart or positions they prefer. Individual evaluations identify career goals and career tracks along with recommended educational preparation. Temporary positions, like faculty chair, provide leadership development and routes for succession to more senior positions.

5R1 – Measurements of Leading and Communicating
The college gathers information from the following surveys that indicate performance in leading and communicating (3R1):

- The Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Community College Faculty Survey of Engagement is completed every three years and provides information on communication and leadership in the classroom. By design, it communicates information about the college’s performance as compared to other colleges.
- A survey of Great Places to Work For has provided the college the opportunity for discussion about leading and communicating. Follow-up surveys will be conducted with the goal of identifying specific tactics to improve communications and relationships between groups of employees.
- A survey evaluating the president is conducted every two years by the president to gather information about communication and leadership.
- Evaluative surveys of senior leaders provide leadership opportunities in the areas of communications and leadership. These surveys are used in individual performance evaluations.

Most survey information collected is analyzed by the Director of Institutional Research and the college administrative team and discussions are conducted with all constituents and stakeholders and made available on the website.

5R2 – Performance Results for Leading and Communicating
In general, the college administrators believe that the college is improving in leading and communicating processes and systems. There is concern that many processes are not written and therefore are more verbal than desired. This is characteristic of small rural colleges.

Survey information about leadership and communications indicates that:

- Employees feel that relations between staff and faculty need to be improved for more effective leadership. (Great Colleges survey)
- Leadership of the college is criticized for being unfair. Further analysis of this information is upcoming. The current hypothesis is that the perception of salary classification is of concern to staff members. (Great Colleges survey)
- There is less respect than desired between different groups of employees. More information needs to be collected to analyze this data. Discussions with employees leads administration to believe that there is a rift in relationships between faculty and staff. (Great Colleges survey)
- Professional development opportunities for employees are excellent. (Great Colleges survey)
- The compensation and benefits of employees is excellent. (Great Colleges survey).
• The majority of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with the level of involvement in decision-making. (2007 fall employee survey)
• The majority of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with the level of involvement in setting campus priorities and planning processes. (2007 fall survey)
• The majority of employees are satisfied or very satisfied regarding the effectiveness of the various AQIP committees. (2007 fall survey)
• The majority of employees feel like they are part of the KCC team. (2007 fall survey)
• The majority of employees feel like the AQIP process is working at KCC. (2007 fall survey)
• The majority of employees feel they have support for innovation. (2007 fall survey)
• 74% of students indicated they use the college website to gather information. (2009 student survey)
• 38% of students indicate they communicate with the college using its Facebook site. (2009 student survey)
• 43% of students indicate they communicate with their instructors often or very often. (2010 Community College Survey of Student Engagement)
• 31% of students indicate they communicate with their instructors often or very often about career plans. (2010 Community College Survey of Student Engagement)

5R3 – Comparison of Results with Other Institutions
Recent results from the April 2011 Great Colleges to Work For survey shows a significant drop in the percent of positive (Strongly Agree or Agree) responses to questions related to Senior Leadership and Faculty, Administration & Staff Relations. Kirtland’s percents are around forty-one percent and the benchmark cohort of other like size colleges in the nation is around sixty-seven percent. Kirtland’s percent on those same dimensions were around fifty-seven percent in the April 2010 survey. The decline might well be the result of significant budget cuts in the spring of 2011 and the loss of seven personal positions.

5I1 – Recent Improvements
Kirtland’s current efforts to improve leading and communicating have been comprehensive only in regard to using quality circles/teams as a method of organizing. It has made inroads into creating leadership opportunities for employees, but this is not systematic. Some research on this has been conducted but it is limited.

A listing of recent improvements in leading and communicating include:

• Leadership workshops were provided to nearly all employees to improve their ability to work as a team in the AQIP process.
• The use of data is emphasized and the college culture is improving on the use of data in decision-making. A workshop was provided to employees and team leaders to help them use data in team discussions.
• Leadership workshops are being provided by the president to help employees understand the importance of communications and to understand their role in communications in the organizational chart.
• Strategic planning and operational planning are, for the most part, institutionalized at Kirtland.
• Evaluations of employees include data collection and discussion of improvement in communications and leadership.
• Professional development is well established and routine at Kirtland and is a frequent topic of discussion in employee evaluations.
The college website is a source of information for plans and changes in communications. Informal communications using digital technologies have been improved. The college has entered into the realm of computing in the “cloud” and is now discussing how faculty teach and students learn in the “cloud.”

### 5I2 – Selection of Specific Processes to Improve

The college administrative team performs a major role in selecting specific processes to improve. This team represents all parts of the college and is responsible for keeping the lines of communication flowing in both directions. This team discusses and sets targets for improved performance formally in the yearly operational plan. The strategic planning process is also a mechanism for identifying changes in leading and communications processes. Other college teams review leadership processes and performance. For example, a team of software module managers reviews processes for the use of administrative software.

The Board of Trustees, in informal and formal methods, provides input to processes of leading and communicating. The president has been discussing the culture of bottom up decision-making using teams as a method of improving communications. The college has flattened its organizational structure in Student Services to make it more responsive to change and improved communications.