Category 8 – Planning Continuous Improvement

8P1 – Key Planning Processes
The planning processes at Kirtland can be characterized as consistent with that of other colleges but at the same time special to employees because of their involvement. Examples of planning processes include:

- A strategic planning summit conducted approximately every three years. The last planning session was conducted September 2008. The next strategic planning summit is scheduled for January 2012.
- Development of an annual operational plan that flow from the strategic plan. This includes measurable action projects to complete the strategic plan.
- AQIP Action Project planning management of AQIP action projects by a steering committee.
- Budget planning for the entire college.
- Annual instructional program review to assess the viability of existing programs and a structure for investigating new programming.
- Facilities Master Plan conducted by an outside consultant every 5 years.

The strategic planning summit meeting is conducted approximately every three years to create a strategic plan. The summit includes all employees, members of the board of trustees, students and citizens. At this time, Appreciative Inquiry is the preferred model for conducting the meeting because of its focus on visioning, mission achievements, new or innovative targets and environmental developments apparent to individuals or small groups. Institutional effectiveness data useful for planning as well as futuristic information is incorporated into the planning at all levels.

A campus operational plan is developed each year to implement the strategic goals. A draft operational plan is written at a leadership retreat or at another appropriate meeting. The goals are written to include a suggested method to measure completion or success. Each goal is assigned to at least one college leader who is responsible for recruiting other employees to help complete the goal. Appendix A is an excerpt from the 2011-2012 Operational Plan and Administrative Objectives. The operational plan includes three levels: strategic goal, operational objectives with success measures and assignment, and action plan to accomplish the goal. The Operational Plan and Administrative Objectives are shared with the Board of Trustees for their input. Table 8a gives a graphic representation of the process.

The progress towards completion is evaluated by the College Administrative Team on a periodic basis throughout the year. The plan is used by campus leadership to create a budget and to guide the activities of the college as it moves in a strategic direction.
Table 8a

### Strategic Focus

**8P2 – Selection of Short- and Long-Term Strategies**

The college utilizes committees and teams to select short term strategies. The College Administrative Team (CAT) meets weekly to discuss current issues of individual departments. Minutes from the CAT meetings are disseminated to all employees. Other teams, such as the Instructional Council (IC) and Curriculum and Instruction Committee (CIC), meet monthly to deal with academic planning. Every department on campus meets regularly (usually monthly, sometimes weekly) to determine the direction for that department.

Long-term strategies of the college are the result of the Strategic Planning Summit and the Operational Plan as outlined in 8P1. More specifically, the Appreciative Inquiry methods involving all employees and other stakeholders such as board members, students, business and education partners at the summit determine the long-term strategies of the college.

Understandably, the budget building process of examining fluctuating revenue sources and increasing costs plays a role in determining the direction the college is going in the future.

The Joint Strategy Forum team is responsible for identifying new AQIP Action Projects and tracking their progress. The team consists of members who have participated in the two AQIP Strategy Forums that Kirtland has been involved in. They identify action projects through surveys and word of mouth.
8P3 – Development of Key Action Plans
Operational plans are developed by the College Administrative Team in a retreat using the Strategic Plan as the over-arching structure. The plan is then published as a shared Google document for college leaders to flesh out individual action plans associated with each objective. The objectives are written in measurable terms (Appendix A).

8P4 – Coordination and Alignment of Planning Processes
The outcome of the Strategic Planning Summit is published in an Executive Summary and widely distributed around campus and on the website www.kirtland.edu/about/institutional.html. The board approves the Executive Summary report at a public meeting.

The Operational Plan is shared with the Board of Trustees for their input. The board is encouraged to provide their own goals and work with the president in aligning them to the college’s Strategic Plan. It is the role of the board to reflect the communities’ thoughts, feelings, and attitudes.

The Operational Plan (8P3) is developed by the leaders of the college and the people that report to them through the use of a shared Google document. All employees have ready access to the document.

8P5 – Defining Objectives, Selecting Measurements, and Setting Performance Targets
Every AQIP Action Project is required to fill out a Team Charter document that outlines the purpose of the action project, the team members, the expected completion date, meeting times and dates, any training requirements, measurements of success and celebration suggestions. The Joint Strategy Forum team tracks the progress of all AQIP Action Projects.

The creation of the Team Charter document is an outcome of continuous quality improvement training all senior leadership and supervisory staff participated in. All employees have been trained in the Plan-Do-Study/Check-Act cycle along with flow charting techniques. The question of “How do we know if we are successful?” helps to reinforce the need for selecting measurements and performance targets.

8P6 – Setting Strategic Direction with Current Resources and Future Needs
In today’s economy of shrinking revenue sources and increasing costs, Kirtland’s leadership has decided to take an aggressive approach in finding new programming, new methods of instructional delivery, as well as expanding locations to counter the effect of declining revenues. The appropriate new programs will bring new students to the college, improved methods of delivery in online and active learning classrooms will make Kirtland a desirable place to learn, and expanding our offerings into surrounding communities will make our courses more accessible to new students. The process for investigating new programming is described in 1P3.

This philosophy is supported by the strategic directions of “Becoming a College Without Borders” and “Gateway for Student Success.”

8P7 – Risk Assessment
The administration at Kirtland is working to create a campus culture that is more entrepreneurial and willing to take risks. Risk has been defined as “stretching” or taking a chance to make it happen, moving past ones comfort zone, and past status quo. The process to create the current strategic plan was that of Appreciative Inquiry. This process focuses on what the college
does best and on the positive. By nature, it assesses risk because the process does not examine threats or weaknesses. The process assumes that when an organization moves forward, weaknesses and threats become more irrelevant.

The college assesses risk when it collects and analyzes data in creating a budget. The college assumes some risk but at the same time carefully reviews and assesses risk in each budgetary decision. The college assesses the risk of operating programs through the program review process. The standard for program success is carefully monitored with the goal of gaining optimal productivity from each program.

8P8 – Development of Faculty, Staff and Administrator in Planning Continuous Quality Improvement
All faculty, staff, and administrators were involved in the Quality Improvement AQIP Action Project described in 4P6. Through employees understanding of continuous quality improvement, they are equipped to address the changing needs of each department.

Kirtland has a large professional development budget and is able to provide the opportunity for any professional development activity needed to support the college’s initiatives. Kirtland is committed to sustain a professional development budget even during tough economic times. The evaluation or demonstration of the success of that professional development is left up to the appropriate administrator.

8R1 – Measurements of Planning Continuous Improvement
The effectiveness of the college’s planning process is measured by the successful completion of each action plan outlined in the Operational Plan and Administrative Objectives document. This document is created with measurements of success built into each objective.

A balanced budget is a measure of the effectiveness of our budget planning process.

AQIP Action Projects are monitored for progress and completion by the HLC’s website and reviewers.

Program review data is collected annually and used to adjust programming for the future. New programs are identified, programs with viability issues are flagged and the issues are addressed, or plans are made to suspend/discontinue programs that do not have sufficient enrollment or graduates. Several years of the program review data are available on the http://www.kirtland.edu/assessment website.

8R2 – Performance Results for Accomplishing Organizational Strategies and Action Plans
In 2009-2010, the Operational Plan and Administrative Objectives had 46 action projects in the operational plan. 32 were substantially completed (70%). Three projects where not completed but were rolled over to the next year for a total of 6%.

In 2010-2011, there were 93 action projects in the operational plan. 73 were substantially completed (78%). Seven projects where not completed but were rolled over to the next year for a total of 7%.

A sampling from the 2011-2012 plan has been included in Appendix A of this document.
8R3 – Projections for Performance of Strategies and Action Plans
On January 28, 2012, Kirtland Community College will convene its second Strategic Planning Summit using the same Appreciative Inquiry and Quality Improvement techniques used at the first summit in the fall of 2008. From that summit will come a new Executive Summary outlining the strategic direction of the college for the next three years. In the fall of 2012, new Operational Plans and Administrative Objectives will be developed and assigned to members of the college’s leadership staff to be implemented and achieved.

8R4 – Comparison of Results with Other Institutions
Kirtland has not compared its Strategic Planning and Continuous Quality Improvement processes to other organizations.

8R5 – Evidence of the Effectiveness of Planning Continuous Improvement
Objectives are becoming more measurable and goals are more specific to the Strategic Plan. A culture of continuous improvement was evident to the Quality Checkup Team members that visited the campus in September 2009. Faculty and staff understand the PDSA language of quality improvement.

8I1 – Recent Improvements
Compared to the last System Portfolio submitted in November 2007, Kirtland has improved significantly in this category. The planning processes used by the college are systematic (Strategic Planning Summit every three years, operation plans annually, Joint Strategy Forum for oversight of AQIP Action Projects), and comprehensive in the involvement of all employee levels, community, and students.

8I2 – Selection of Specific Processes to Improve
The college has adopted a “loosely coupled” culture that fosters collaboration between divisions. It creates a culture of risk taking, innovation and acceptance to change, encourages engagement of employees, and decision making for the good of Kirtland Community College. This new culture increases the importance of defining objectives (plans), establishing measurements to assure that we have accomplished what we are doing, and re-evaluating that we are on the right track. It is imperative that the college continue to train and promote the concepts of continuous quality improvement in all its employees. If the employees understand the PDSA cycle they will be more comfortable with the concepts of a “loosely coupled” organization.