CATEGORY 6

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

6C1 Student and Administrative Support Services

Student and Administrative Support Services			
Focus	**Involved Departments and Programs**	**Processes**	**Process Requirements**
Main Campus New Student Recruitment, Enrollment, Orientation	Admission, Financial Aid, College Services (bursar), Registrar, PowerCampus/ IQWeb, Bookstore, Student Life, Information Systems	Inquiry, application, admission, early course selection, registration, scholarship and financial aid application and processing, advising, Builder Camp, transfer student orientation, laptop distribution	Flexibility and responsiveness, provision of accurate and timely information, communication of effective balance of challenge and support
Professional Studies New Student Recruitment, Enrollment, Orientation	PS Advisors, Financial Aid, College Services (bursar), Registrar, Power Campus/ IQWeb, Instructor in Entrance Seminar	Inquiry, application, admission, course selection, evaluation of transfer credits, degree planning, application and approval for financial aid	Flexibility and responsiveness, provision of accurate and timely information, communication of effective balance of challenge and support
Helping Students Learn	Academic Departments, Library, Information Systems, Academic Advisors, ADA Student Support, Academic Support Services, Information Systems	Academic advising, instruction, tutoring, accommodation of students with disabilities, library resource instruction, laptop-based instruction, online learning	Ease of access to faculty, readily available academic support, well-supported IT for learning, responsive-ness to personal accommodation needs and differing learning styles and needs

Student and Administrative Support Services (continued)			
Focus	*Involved Departments and Programs*	*Processes*	*Process Requirements*
Student Services	Student Life, Residence Life, Career Planning, Athletics, Campus Life (SGA, Stufu, student organizations), Bookstore, Food Services, Registrar, Financial Aid, counseling and mental health services, nurse and health services, Campus Security, Financial Aid, College Services. Campus Ministry	Student activities, athletics, residence life, career advising and planning, book and supplies purchasing, food services, registration, analysis of transfer credits, degree checks, transcripts, financial aid application and approval, referrals for mental health services, nurse services, securing the campus, check cashing, bursar functions, worship services and other avenues for exploring and expressing faith	Creation of a welcoming community; provision of services that respond to student needs; offering of safe and attractive housing; good and varied food offerings; support for personal development and for interpersonal relationships; aid for students in managing financial, academic, and personal challenges; ensuring a setting in which spiritual exploration is valued and taken seriously
Administrative Support Services	Business Office, Human Resources, Communications, College Planning, Plant Operations, Budgeting and Finance	Billing, benefits administration, purchasing, payroll, hiring, budgeting and finance, performance evaluation, personnel processes, internal and external communications, securing philanthropic support, planning to meet college needs, janitorial and maintenance services for buildings and grounds, risk management	Effectively management of finance, business and personnel matters; planning for change; provision of safe and appropriate facilities for living, dining, recreation, and instruction; fostering of effective internal communication

The college has outsourced several key services: bookstore (Follett), main campus food services (Sodexho), main campus facilities and grounds (Sodexho), course management software server hosting (Blackboard), Professional Studies building janitorial and maintenance services (to various vendors).

6C2 Systems in Support of Learning

The job of the college's administration is to create an environment in which the encounter between faculty and students can be productive and in which the college's objectives of service, enrichment, and church connection can be effectively pursued. The college's administrative leadership is in constant discussion concerning the need to be active facilitators of learning and service.

Key services impacting instruction include the library, information technology, academic advising, academic support services, the bookstore, career planning, and facilities maintenance. Key services providing support for the academic enterprise of the college include the office of admission, the registrar, and IT support for SCT PowerCampus (administrative software). Services that support student development outside the classroom are provided by student life, athletics, food services, residence life, counseling and health services, and campus ministry. Services that provide the context in which the college may operate smoothly, employees can perform well, and students can handle financial matters include financial aid, college services (bursar), human resources, campus security, information systems, plant operations, and communications.

6P1 Identifying Key Student Needs

All support service units of Southwestern College engage in a wide array of data collection efforts in order to identify and respond to the needs of Southwestern's learners. Some support service units employ nationally normed surveys such as the Student Satisfaction Inventory (results displayed in Appendix C). To assess the needs of Southwestern students in relation to specific programs, initiatives, and services, units of the college employ other means to gather student feedback and assess student needs. These range from the automated Web-forms deployed by plant operations that enable students to request room maintenance to the exit interview data collected from graduating seniors in our Leadership program.

The diversity of the Southwestern student population, which includes online and distance students as well as traditional residential learners, has necessitated flexibility in data collection methods and needs assessment tools. For instance, there is one student satisfaction library survey in the fall designed to evaluate the needs of those who use the traditional library facility and another survey administered in the spring via an online delivery mechanism that includes questions related only to the online and Web services typically accessed by distance learners.

For some units such as financial aid, the registrar, and student life, the needs of individual students are conveyed through interaction between individual students and the staff/administrators of the support service units. Consequently e-mail, phone conversations, instant messaging, and face-to-face or real time interaction are an integral ingredient in meeting student needs.

While many individual departments and programs gather information, either formally or anecdotally, about the needs of the college's students and other stakeholders, no system for gathering and evaluating this information is currently in place. Sharing of information, uniformity in use of instruments, and consistent reporting of information for the purpose of evaluation and improvement is not the current state of practice at the college.

6P2 Identifying Key Administrative Needs

The support service needs of college employees are identified and provided through many means. Notable among these are the operation of college committees, the faculty's committee structure, the work of the Administrative Council, and myriad daily discussions and exchanges among the individuals who

are operating the college. The college planning process (See Category 8) identifies opportunities for improvement at the college and plans change that will improve support services.

With regard to external stakeholders, feedback concerning needs and expectations is generated through a variety of avenues. Nursing, music, education, and athletic training undergo accreditation by their professional organizations and require feedback from some support units. These reports are generated in consultation with the vice president for academic affairs and the appropriate faculty division chair. Likewise, human resources, enrollment management (particularly Professional Studies), and security may interact regularly with other outside employers, government agencies, and law enforcement. Contacts are established within each of these external agencies. Feedback is obtained through the contacts, though surveys, focus groups and through other methods. Units ranging from the alumni program to dining services use comment cards and event evaluations to assess the needs of external stakeholders.

6P3 Managing Support Services

The college's daily delivery of student and administrative support services is accomplished through the college's vice presidents for academic affairs, professional studies, finance, institutional advancement, communications, information technology, student life, and enrollment management and planning. The college's director of athletics supervises all aspects of the college's athletics and recreation programs. These administrative leaders are in daily contact with program directors and other administrative personnel and actively monitor and shape the provision of services to college stakeholders. A variety of means, detailed above, are used to evaluate the adequacy of services provided and to make needed improvements.

Each vice president is responsible for documenting key processes. The quality of this documentation is uneven. The college's documentation of policy has improved and could now be called adequate, but documentation of daily practice in furtherance of policy is not adequate, nor is gathering of performance data. Sharing of information is encouraged through meetings of the Administrative Council, in cross-functional working groups, and informally. The college is committed to empowering personnel to solve problems for stakeholders and to pursue improvements. This commitment is communicated in performance evaluation and planning processes. The "Are We Making Progress?" survey indicates the college's employees feel empowered to make change.

6P4 Making Informed Changes

As noted above, support areas actively seek subjective information about stakeholder satisfaction. This information is used to identify gaps in performance and satisfaction and to focus improvement efforts. Much of this use of perception-based information is informal, is poorly documented, and often lacks a plan for evaluation of the impact of improvement efforts. The notable exception is the college's Student Satisfaction Inventory, which allows year-to-year comparisons on identical measures and which initiates, each year, focused conversation and planning about ways to improve service.

The "Are We Making Progress?" survey asks employees whether they believe their time and talents are well used, whether the college removes obstacles that get in their way, whether they have good processes for their work, and whether they can get everything they need to do their jobs. Again, these queries elicit subjective reports of perceptions. The college's Administrative Council reviews the results of this survey and annually identifies areas for improvement. This process provides summative, macro-level information of somewhat limited value.

The college has not worked well to gather and analyze objective process and outcome data to evaluate and improve key support processes. Measures of process time, response time, errors and exceptions, and so on, are not commonly used. Processes are not well documented.

6P5 Measuring Key Processes

See 6P4

6R1 Student Process Survey Results

The Student Satisfaction Inventory (see Appendix C) indicates that on most measures related to service provision, the college's students are satisfied with the college's services.

6R2 Administrative Process Survey Results

The 2007 "Are We Making Progress?" survey indicates the following concerning employee assessments of whether their work environment allows them and others to work effectively:

- 62% agree that they get all the important information then need to do their work.

- 89% agree that they are allowed to make decisions to solve problems for the people they serve.

- 78% agree that they can make changes that will improve their work.

- 53% agree that they can get everything they need to do their jobs.

- 63% agree that they have good processes for doing their work.

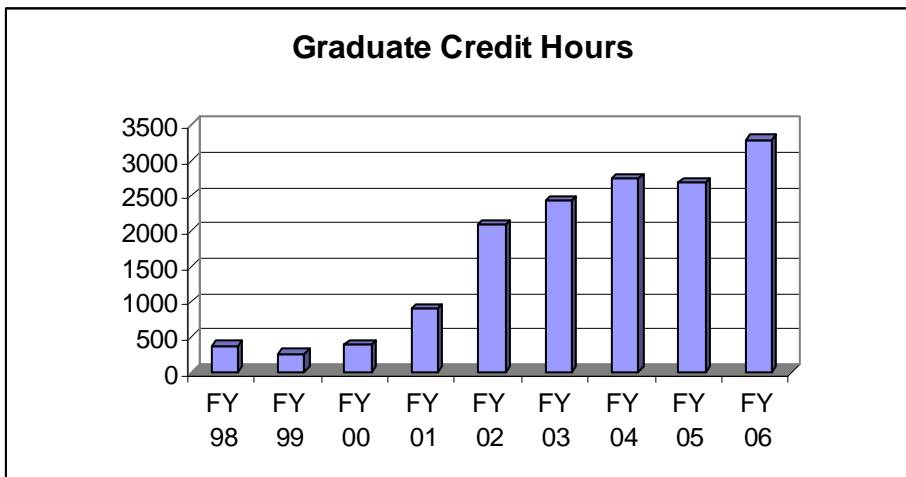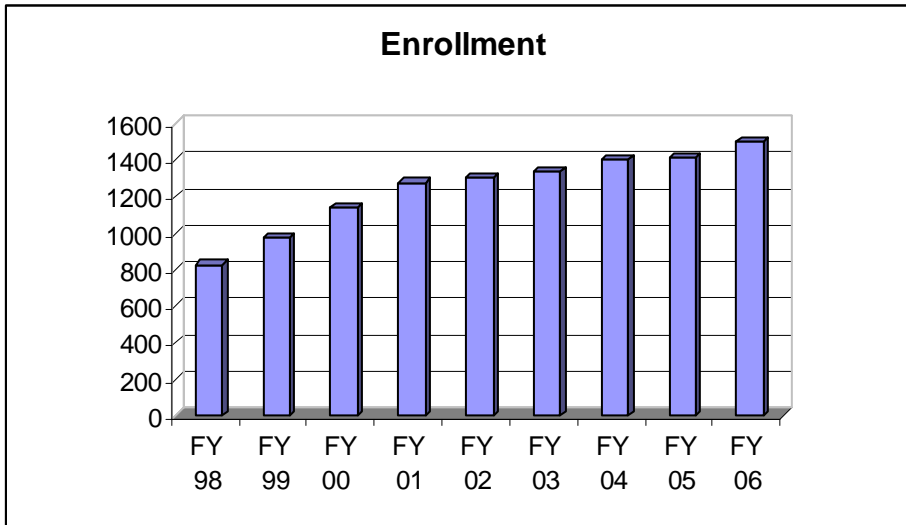- 31% agree that the college removes things that get in the way of progress.

At present the college has very little process-level data that would allow close scrutiny of key college processes. That weakness will be addressed through an AQIP action project related to process design and measurement. The college has progressed in generating enterprise level summative data.
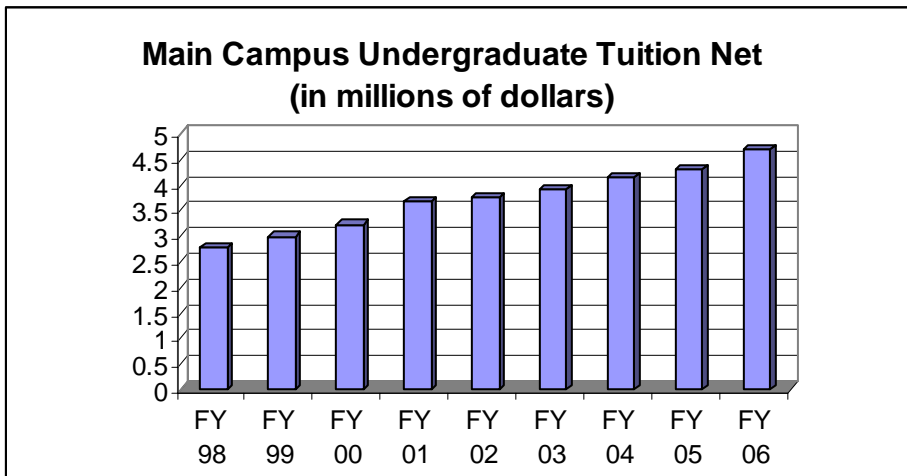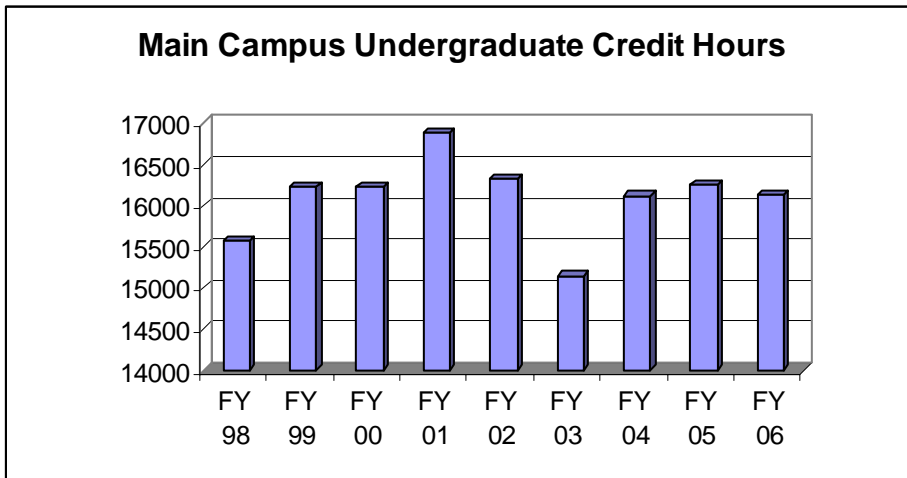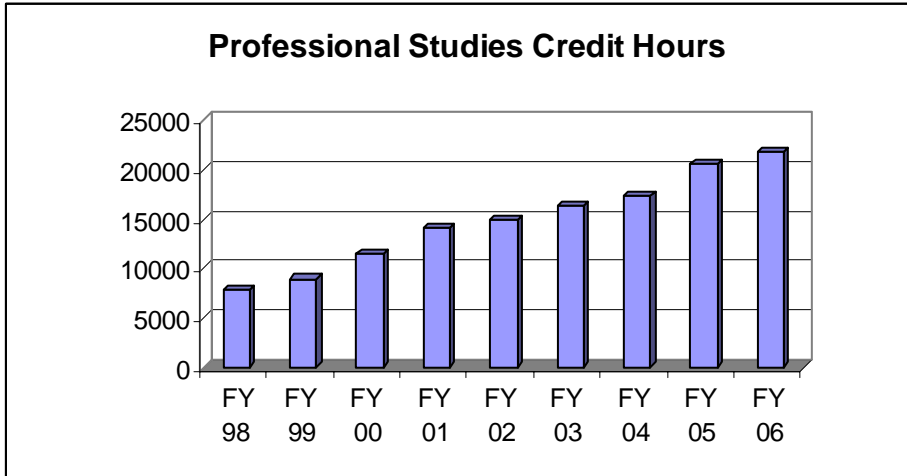
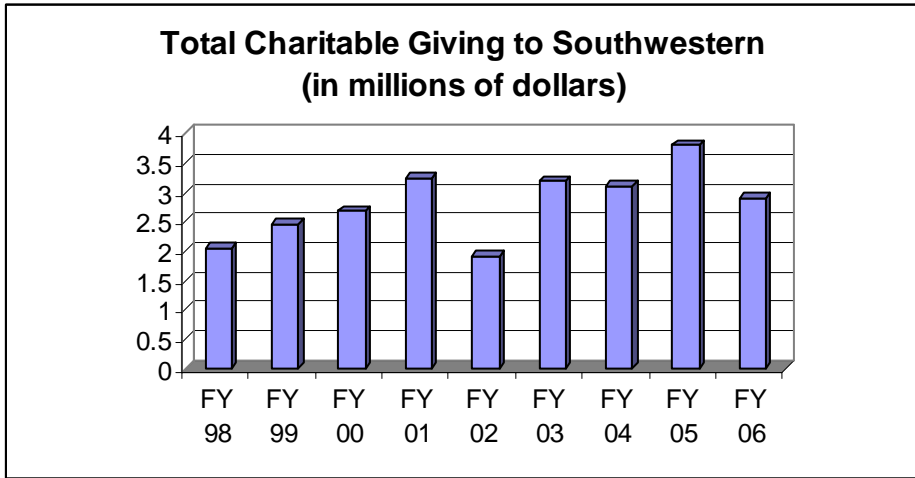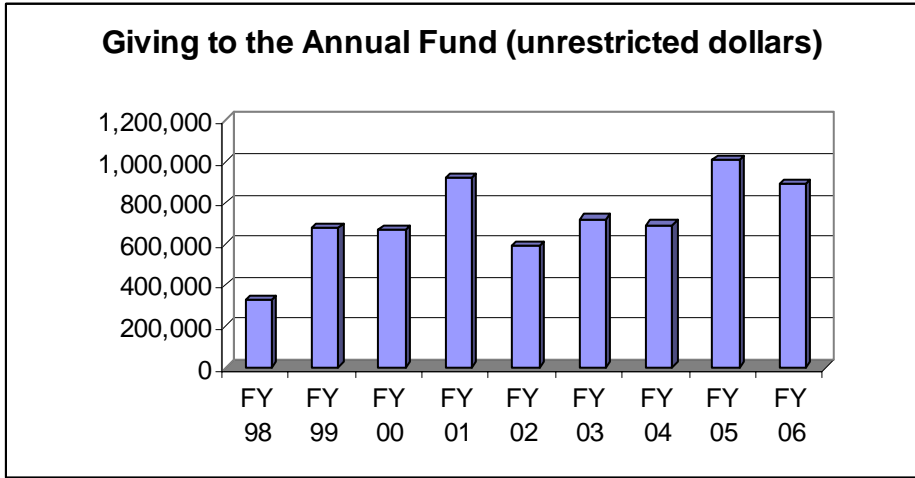The college's enterprise level data show the following:

- The college's headcount enrollment has almost doubled in the past eight years, from a little more than 800 to almost 1,600.

- The number of credit hours completed by Professional Studies undergraduate learners has almost tripled in the past eight years, from about 7,500 to about 22,000.

- The number of graduate credit hours completed by Southwestern college learners has increased over the past eight years from less than 500 to almost 3,500.

- Main campus undergraduate credit have grown slightly (with one serious trough in the academic year following the 9/11 attacks), from 15,500 in FY98 to over 16,000 in the past three fiscal years.

- The college's main campus tuition net (that is, the portion of the college's received tuition that it does not return to students as a tuition discount) has increased over the past eight years from $2.75 million to $4.75 million in a context of modest growth in main campus enrollment.

- Giving to the unrestricted Annual Fund of the college has increased from about $300,000 in FY98 to $900,000 in FY06.

- Total charitable giving to the college has increased from about $2 million a year in the late 1990s to more than $3 million in recent fiscal years.

- Because the college has achieved significant growth in tuition revenue and charitable giving we have made significant progress toward reducing its reliance on endowment earnings to balance our annual budgets. This fiscal year's projected expenditure of endowment earnings of $800,000 is the smallest in 20 years and will allow significant internal growth in the college's endowment corpus.

Enrollment

Graduate Credit Hours

Professional Studies Credit Hours

Main Campus Undergraduate Credit Hours

Main Campus Undergraduate Tuition Net
(in millions of dollars)

Giving to the Annual Fund (unrestricted dollars)

Total Charitable Giving to Southwestern (in millions of dollars)

6R3 Comparing Ourselves to Others

The primary nationally-normed perception-based instrument used by many of Southwestern's administrative and student support units is the Student Satisfaction Inventory. It indicates that Southwestern students are more satisfied with services at the college than are students at other four-year colleges or students in the total universe of institutions that administer the SSI.

6I1 Incentives to Improvement

Work to improve processes and systems is usually initiated when one of the following occurs:
- Emergence of new technology;
- Learning about new processes through participation in trade shows, professional events, continuing education events, or other information gathering processes;
- Feedback from stakeholders reflects that current processes are not effective;
- Existing processes become obsolete;
- Consortial partners change processes, which necessitates response on the part of Southwestern;
- Benchmarking indicates a shift in best practice.

Such responses may grow into significant reviews of processes and systems, but the pattern has been, instead, for individuals to pursue incremental and somewhat isolated change. Moreover, results of changes are often not well documented.

6I2 Setting and Communicating Goals for Improvement

The college has used the AQIP action plan process and the college's own planning processes to set targets for support process improvement. This resulted in the selection of human resources policies and practices, retention outcomes, and achievement of financial viability as targets for ongoing improvement. Annual updates to AQIP are also communicated to the campus, to trustees, and to other stakeholders. Change generated through the college's planning process has tended not to focus on measurables so much as on "getting things on the list done." A listing of achievements of the college is periodically shared with the campus and is posted on the college Web site (see Appendix H).