Cascadia College NWCCU Ad Hoc Report

Prepared for Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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This report is the response to the request from NWCCU, dated July 15, 2015, that Cascadia College address Recommendation 1 of the spring 2013 Year One Peer Evaluation report:

> "The Commission encourages the institution to build on its Mid-Cycle Evaluation efforts and to utilize its assessment strategies towards producing data-driven student learning outcomes that inform mission fulfillment and sustainability"

Context

Cascadia has a tradition and practice of collaborative planning and decision making. Founding faculty (hired from 2000 to 2003) describe the extraordinary amount of time they spent in groups planning curriculum, developing procedures, and using the "fishbowl" technique in hiring interviews. These traditions have continued with over 20 functioning committees and concepts such as a "charrette" understood by almost all employees.

This robust shared governance approach to planning and decision making has enormous benefits and has contributed to a vibrant institution with strong levels of student success, enrollment growth, and financial security. However, by 2015, this approach led to a series of planning/assessment/accreditation documents that were poorly integrated creating confusion about the priorities of the College.

These strengths and weaknesses are reflected in the commendations and recommendations from NWCCU in spring, 2013:

Commendations

The Commission commends the College on its open and participatory, transparent decision-making and governance structure.

In addition, the Commission finds laudable the College Board of Trustees' clearly defined oversight, participation, and engagement in planning.

Moreover, the Commission commends the College for a robust, systematic assessment of student learning led by faculty which genuinely internalizes the value of assessment of student learning to enhance student achievement and is grounded by the four College-wide learning outcomes……

Lastly, the Commission finds noteworthy the use of well-developed, in-depth tools for authentic assessment of student advising as evidence of the practice of using assessment results for improvement.

Recommendations

The evaluation committee recommends that the College continue to review and establish meaningful links among its mission statement, its core themes, objectives, and indicators (Standard 1.B.1 and 1.B.2).

The committee recommends that the College strengthen the connection between assessment of core themes and the College's planning, decision-making, and allocation of resources (Standard 4.B.1).

These strengths and weaknesses were reiterated by NWCCU in their March 2015 mid-cycle report.

> Cascadia has done an excellent job of involving various campus constituencies in the creation of its planning processes. However, in their current state, the coordination of the processes is confusing as is the numeric scoring being used to assess mission fulfillment within the accreditation planning process. While the college has core themes that are clearly derived from its mission and are tied to college planning and resource allocation, these areas of confusion will need to be brought into focus before mission fulfillment and sustainability can be fully measured. The college is aware of this and appears to be committed to solving these issues in the very near future as they continue with the good work that has already been done. In fact, the college was already working on draft documents outlining planned changes before the evaluation team left campus.

The mid-cycle report was very helpful in articulating the issues associated with accreditation. The purpose of this document is to describe how Cascadia College has embraced these recommendations and responded by integrating the planning, assessment, and accreditation documents into one comprehensive Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan, approved by the BOT in January 2016, now forms the basis for accreditation, planning, decision-making, and allocation of resources.

This report offers (a) an overview of the planning and assessment documents, (b) a summary of the process for integrating these documents, (c) an outline of the themes in the final Strategic Plan, and (d) a description of the methods used to ensure the Strategic Plan guides decision making and the allocation of resources.

Overview of Planning/Assessment/ Accreditation Approaches:

By late 2014, six formal planning/assessment approaches had been developed and approved. These were:
- Strategic Directions
- Mission Statement
- Core Themes
- Accreditation
- Academic Plan
- Outcomes Assessment

Four **Strategic Directions** were developed in 2011 based on feedback from NWCCU and considerable discussion on campus. These are described in the Board of Trustees Action item document (6-25-11) as "outcomes to steer the college towards." These four directions were:

- Increase focus on academic-transfer programs
- Focus on industry relations for professional technical programs
- Become a community college model for best practices
- Become more financially stable

A fifth strategic direction was added in 2012

- Helping students complete their education

The **mission statement** was first vetted at the fall convocation in 2012 by approximately 130 employees. On September 19, 2012 the Board of Trustees approved a new mission statement:

- Transforming lives through integrated education in a learning-centered community

Two **core themes** were developed in the 2012-13 academic year through the College Navigators (a cross sectional group of the campus comprised of representatives from classified, exempt, and faculty areas), assemblies, and campus-wide discussions. These core themes, derived directly from the mission statement, were:

- Integrated Education
- Learning Centered Environment

The Comprehensive Accreditation Report for the 2012-2018 cycle was based on the two core themes as well as a series of more focused objectives and indicators. The core themes and objectives were:

- Integrated Education Objectives
    - Learners connect disciplinary knowledge to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary contexts
    - Learners build knowledge across the curriculum and co-curriculum
    - Learners apply integrated education to situations on and off campus
- Learning Centered Community Objectives
    - The community is engaged in a learning-centered environment
    - Strong engagement with other educational institutions
    - Learners are supported to achieve educational goals

This structure formed the basis of the Mid-Cycle Accreditation Report submitted in March 16, 2015.

The **Academic Plan** was written in 2013-14, stimulated by the development of a proposal to secure funding for a new STEM classroom building on campus. The process began with a series of charrettes coordinated by President Murray. These notes were collated and organized by the Director of IE, Vice President for Student Learning and Success, and the President. Subsequent drafts were circulated to the campus community for feedback. The final version of the 10-year Academic Plan was organized around the two core themes, Integrated Education and Learning Centered Environment. Access, a priority of any community college, was also added as a theme.

The Academic Plan was written to focus the institution on short term and long term academic goals. In the summers of 2013 and 2014, groups of faculty and administrators met to help determine the timing of the goals: in particular, what year the focus on a specific goal would begin, and how many years of

work accomplishing the goal might take. Eleven goals were determined to be a priority during 2014-15 and five additional goals from the plan were selected for the priority in 2015-16.

Data were collected during 2013-14 to help determine if the goals were met; however, data collection ` was not systematic and no benchmarks were set. A series of meetings in 2015-16 with faculty, Student Learning and Student Success staff identified indicators for each goal. Care was taken to identify meaningful indicators that were based on available data. Where possible, data on indicators would be collected from 2012-13, the beginning of the accreditation cycle, so meaningful benchmarks could be identified.

The **Outcomes Assessment Committee** was formed in 2008 (originally called the Program Assessment Working Group). The charter of the Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) stated that OAC "engages faculty in cross-discipline discussion and learning outcomes based assessment of Cascadia's programs in order to foster ongoing curricular improvement." During 2008-09 the committee worked on program review, accreditation, and developing classroom embedded assessments that matched to program learning outcomes. From 2010-14 the committee focused on refining rubrics and assessing student work on key performances relate to the four college-wide learning outcomes: interact (2011), learn (2012), communicate (2013), and think (2014).

This work brought commendations from a variety of groups including NWCCU (see above). However, faculty were concerned that the very labor intensive process did not result in significant institutional wide changes in teaching and learning and was somewhat disconnected from measures of student progress. Consequently, in 2014-15, OAC reviewed its approach to outcomes assessment. The consensus was that a new approach was desirable. This approach should build on the work in the previous four years and be more tightly linked to discipline areas and our strategic planning. For example, English faculty are currently discussing what kinds of writing students should complete in ENG 101 and how student work could be assessed across sections.

Integrating the Documents

In summer 2015, a task force comprised of faculty and staff discussed the academic plan and how to integrate a variety of campus planning documents described above. This group recommended
- Using the Academic Plan as the core planning document
- Adding a fourth theme "Assessment of Student Success" that includes measures from various assessment tools (e.g., CCSSE, SAI), pass rates in gateway courses, and program outcomes (work formerly done by OAC).

During Pre-Fall week in fall 2015, faculty were provided an update on the changes in the Academic Plan and the shift to the Strategic Plan. During fall 2015, E-team reviewed the work by the task force, and in collaboration with the SL Deans devised a fifth core theme "Institutional Sustainability" that included managing infrastructure, supporting employees, managing risk, supporting and engaging the campus community, and maintaining the relationship with UW-B. The campus was kept updated with these changes via President Murray's weekly letter.

This document, renamed the Strategic Plan (Appendix 1), was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees on January 20, 2016. It was also agreed that the strategic directions developed in 2011-12 (see above) were now reflected in the five core themes:

- Access
- Integrated Education
- Learning Centered Environment
- Assessment of Student Success
- Institutional Sustainability

A summary of this integration is in Appendix 2.

Closing the Loop

The myriad of planning documents contributed to the college's weakness in systematically reviewing and acting on the information gained from data collection. Reviews did happen within groups (e.g., E-Team, Student Success) but campus wide data sharing and discussions were not systematic. The President began the process of rectifiying this in the 2014 campus-wide Convocation that focused on student data. However, the resignation of the Director of IE in early 2015 slowed the planned follow-up

With the hiring of a new, highly experienced Director of IE, and the conceptual campus-wide work that has been done, Cascadia College is now poised to fully implement an assessment that will be focused on data-driven student learning outcomes and will inform mission fulfillment and sustainability. The College has committed to an annual campus-wide **"Closing the Loop"** event each spring quarter. The first event will be held on April 15, 2016[1]. Data for each goal from the previous assessment period will be collected in a centralized web-based portal that has been developed by the IE Director. Discussions at the "Closing the Loop" event will focus on the priority goals for that year.

Relationship of Planning Documents with Resources

Each year Cascadia's Budget Council, comprised of faculty, exempt, and classified staff, reviews proposals from all units of campus and makes recommendations to the President. Budget Council proposals have required an alignment with the existing planning documents since the beginning of this accreditation cycle. The transition in the College's planning documents is reflected in the requirements of the budget proposals (see table below). (Operational plans were the annual priorities derived from core themes and strategic directions).

In 2016, budget proposals must be aligned with the Strategic Plan –the master planning/accreditation document for the College. Final budget decisions will be informed by the assessment data provided in the yearly "closing the loop" event and current strategic plan priorities.

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[1] From 2017-18 this day will be negotiated with the Faculty union as a non-instructional day.

Rationale for Budget Council Proposals					
Year	Core themes	Strategic directions	Operational Plans	Academic Plan	Strategic Plan *
2012	X	X	X		
2013	X	X	X		
2014	X	X		X	
2015	X	X		X	
2016					X

Summary

In the past eighteen months, Cascadia has made enormous progress in coordinating and simplifying its mission, planning and assessment. Numerous faculty and staff have been involved. The campus community and Board of Trustees have been regularly updated. The planned "closing the loop" annual event will ensure that the College conducts a careful review of assessment data, and that changes for the subsequent years are based on these data. This will ensure that Cascadia makes significant progress towards mission fulfillment and sustainability.

Strategic Plan: Themes, Sub-Themes and Goals

Theme 1: Access

Theme 2: Integrated Education

Theme 3: Learning-Centered Environment

Theme 4: Assessment of Student Success

Theme 5: Institutional Sustainability

Approved by the Board of Trustees on January 20, 2016

Theme 1: Access

Expanding college access for high school students

- Strengthening opportunities for high school students in math
  2014-15 ongoing
- Creating new initiatives in English to bridge the gap between high school and college
  2015-16
- Developing an integrated K through 20 system of education in Cascadia's district that focuses on life-long learning
- Expanding dual enrollment opportunities through Running Start and College in the High School
  2014-15 ongoing
- Exploring an early college high school academy program in Information Technology

Promoting pluralism and social justice by expanding access to college programs

- Enhancing recruitment and support of underrepresented students
- Improving transitions from Adult Basic Education to college coursework
- Increasing off-campus, online, and time-shifted scheduling to increase options for students
  2015-16

Streamlining access to Bachelor's degree attainment

- Streamlining pathways with UW-Bothell (co-located partner) and other four-year institutions in areas such as Business, Global Studies, Art, Engineering, Computer Science and Science
  2014-15 ongoing
- Developing new Transfer Admission Guarantees, with other high choice destinations (e.g., Stanford, Arizona State University)
- Developing a system of co-enrollment with several universities (e.g., Bastyr, UW, Seattle University, DigiPen)

Theme 2: Integrated Education

Enhancing interdisciplinary programs

- Implementing the Bachelors of Applied Science in Sustainable Practices
  2014-15 ongoing
- Expanding integrated learning experiences (e.g., learning communities, linked classes, and opportunities for community-based learning) for new and continuing students
  2014-15 ongoing
- Exploring ways to further integrate STEM and Humanities programs
- Developing new interdisciplinary Professional Technical programs/certificates in high demand occupations

Growing community-based learning and internships

- Identifying opportunities in the curriculum for community-based learning and internships
- Developing community partnerships that promote assessment and community- based learning programs
  2015-16
- Recruiting industry partners to engage students in real world applications in Professional Technical Programs

Developing and implementing a model community college internationalization plan

- Developing a comprehensive and integrated internationalization plan including the infusion of global themes into the curriculum and the development of global studies
  2014-15 ongoing
- Facilitating ties between local and global cultures within Cascadia College and beyond
- Exploring innovative ways to link STEM programs to global partners

Theme 3: Learning-Centered Environment

Improving faculty and staff support

- Increasing the full-time part-time faculty ratios to 50:50 of credits taught as budget and enrollment allow
  2014-15 ongoing
- Increasing support for full-time and part-time faculty and staff development
  2014-15 ongoing
- Supporting use of data in implementing best practices in teaching and learning
- Recruiting and supporting faculty and staff to represent the diversity of the student body, pluralism and social justice
  2014-15 ongoing

Extending Academic Support for Students

- Implementing, assessing and refining effective supplemental instruction and/or tutoring models including developing a comprehensive STEM Learning Center
  2014-15 ongoing
- Enhancing retention by implementing and improving best practices (e.g., intensive advising for high risk students, mandatory orientation, year-long registration)
  2015-16
- Ensuring the continued adoption and implementation of high impact instructional technology

Creating physical spaces that support integrated education

- Devising physical spaces to more effectively integrate STEM and the humanities
- Creating spaces that support informal modes of learning
  2014-15 ongoing
- Developing spaces that increase the connections between student learning and community partners
  2014-15

Enhancing and Expanding STEM Education

- Enhancing the quality of STEM education through cutting-edge lab curricula, new faculty hires, and ongoing professional development
- Expand the integration of sustainability research and practices in STEM education
- Creating spaces and identifying resources that allows for the development of undergraduate research opportunities

Theme 4: Assessment of Student Success

Maintaining high levels of student engagement

- Promoting student engagement in "active and collaborative learning"
- Promoting high levels of "student effort"
- Promoting high levels of "academic challenge"
- Promoting high levels of "student-faculty interaction"
- Promoting student use of "support for learning"

Strengthening students' success

- Increasing student attainment of Student Achievement Initiative credit-accumulation benchmarks (completion of 15, 30, 45 college-level credits)
- Increasing student attainment of Student Achievement Initiative completion benchmarks (completion of apprenticeships, certificates, or degrees)
- Increasing student attainment of Student Achievement Initiative benchmarks concerning completing gateway courses (completion of a college-level English or Quantitative Math course)
- Maintaining progression through ELP levels and transition ELP to college level

Ensuring student learning

- Ensuring students meet college outcomes in distribution areas
- Maintaining high success rates in gatekeeper courses

THEME 5: Institutional Sustainability

Improving Infrastructure

- Creating and configuring facilities to support growth of the student body, integrated learning, program development, and employee effectiveness.
- Designing, implementing, and maintaining technology to support the operations of the College
- Developing and implementing a transportation management plan to supports enrollment growth in an environmentally responsible manner

Managing Risk

- Managing enterprise risks through a systematic process.
- Maintaining a high level of emergency preparedness
- Maintaining a safe and secure campus
- Developing and implementing a financial plan to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan

Maintaining Relationship with UW-B

- Maximizing synergies with UW-B while maintaining institutional identity and control in a financially sustainable manner.

Communicating and Engaging

- Maintaining Shared Governance in organizational decision making.
- Establishing college as community resource for higher education
- Maintaining effective lines of communication with campus community

Supporting Employees

- Providing opportunities to participate in personal, professional, and required training and development.
- Maintaining Effective Employee and labor relations

Relationship among Strategic Plan, Academic Plan, Core Themes,

Strategic Directions and Outcomes Assessment.

Mission
Transforming lives through integrated education
in a learning-centered community

Core Themes
- Integrated Education
- Learning Centered Environment

Strategic Directions
- Increase focus on Academic-Transfer Programs
- Focus on Industry relations for Professional Technical Programs
- Become a community college model for best practices
- Become more financially stable
- Helping Students complete their education

Outcomes Assessment
- Assessing Student work

Strategic Plan

1. Access
2. Integrated Education
3. Learning Centered

4. Student Outcomes
5. Institutional Sustainability

Academic Plan