Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT

Spokane Community College
Spokane, Washington

April 25, 2005

Prepared by

Carol Schaafsma, Director
Linn-Benton Community College

Introduction

After a full-scale evaluation visit in October, 2003, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities reaffirmed the accreditation of Spokane Community College. The Commission requested that the College prepare a focused interim report and host a Commission evaluator in spring 2005 to address four of the five General Recommendations identified in the Comprehensive Evaluation Report. These General Recommendations specified needed improvement in the following areas:

- A fully developed and systematic institutional planning and evaluation system.
- Linkages between institutional goals and objectives and the institutions resource allocation
- Multiple evaluation indices when appraising part-time faculty
- A clear system of governance to facilitate the accomplishment of the institution's goals and mission.

The full text of each Recommendation is included in the body of this report.

Since the College's self-study and full-scale visit, several new administrative leaders have joined the institution. This leadership team has taken action to address the General Recommendations as outlined by the evaluation team.

College Report/Visit

The focused interim evaluation report prepared by the college for this visit is a concise, straightforward description of progress made on Recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 5 since October, 2003. Although the report identifies six exhibits, there were several important documents mentioned and not included as exhibits. The evaluator asked for this additional information and it was readily provided. The additional information and exhibits were well organized and easily available. The interim evaluation report appears to provide overall evidence that the college has made significant progress on each of the General Recommendations.

The evaluator was graciously received by the college during her visit. At various times and in various combinations, the evaluator met with the President, all senior level instructional administrators, faculty department chairs and representatives and student leadership. The evaluator also spent time reviewing part-time faculty personnel files, department and division planning documents, governance committee membership and by-laws, and the college's strategic plan. All conversations with college personnel were cordial and candid.

Analysis

General Recommendation 1: It is recommended that the College continue to develop and implement a systematic institutional planning and evaluation system. While the committee found evidence of prior strategic planning and evaluation processes, current processes tend to be ad hoc, fragmented (i.e. at the departmental level) and not institutionalized. Essential conditions, elements and uses of systematic institutional planning and evaluation are:
A. Clearly define the planning and evaluation processes.

B. **The planning and evaluation processes should be documented and widely disseminated.**

C. **The planning and evaluation processes are ongoing**

D. **The planning process is participatory involving appropriate constituencies, such as faculty, administrators, staff, students, and other interested parties.**

E. **Results of the planning and evaluation processes influence resource allocation decisions and are used to improve programs and services.**

F. **Necessary resources are provided for an effective planning and evaluation system to function.**

G. **Institutional research is integrated with and supportive of institutional evaluation and planning.**

H. **The College uses information from its planning and evaluation processes to communicate evidence of institutional effectiveness to the public. (Standard 1: 1.B.1, 1.B.3, 1.B.4, 1.B.6, 1.B.7, 1.B.9)**

The College has defined a three year planning and evaluation process that is participatory and on-going. A strategic plan and department and division action plans are now in place to guide the work of the College. In the budget development process for next year, budget requests are required to be aligned with strategic goals and action plans. Although not yet distributed, brochures outlining the college's mission, vision, and goals are ready for mailing to college employees and the community at large.

Now that goals and the strategic plan are in place, the College is developing a process to identify some of the goals as college priorities. It is hoped that this will provide further focus to the work of the college and allow for better evaluation of the college's progress.

Because strategic and action plans are new, it is difficult to find evidence of evaluation and improvements. As next steps, the College should continue with its planning process, including identifying indicators of success, measuring those indicators, and evaluating and improving the plan, based on resulting data. These steps are part of the College's strategic planning process.

General Recommendation 3: It is recommended that the College demonstrate the linkages between the institution's goals and objectives and its resource allocation to achieve these goals and objectives. Although the College has formed budget, program review, campus planning and strategic planning committees, it is not clear that a linkage exists among these processes, or that these processes are understood or inclusive of appropriate constituencies. This linkage and the processes should be clearly defined, documented and participatory with appropriate constituencies. Furthermore, the strategic plan should address the needs of the College regarding technology and equipment across all units, and resources for upgrades, acquisitions, and replacements need to be developed and implemented. (Standards 5.A.1, 5.D.6, 7.A.3, 8.B.1, 8.B.2)

The College has developed budget allocation processes for Perkins, Worker retraining, and student supported technology fee resources based on the College's strategic plan and priorities. These funding sources are now coordinated so that funding sources are used for the highest

priority items. A computer and technology replacement schedule has been developed and funding this is given first priority.

Resource allocation processes have been articulated across the College. The linkages are more evident to administrators than to faculty and staff. Some faculty expressed concern about overdependence on student fees for goods and services needed for quality programs.

In its budget development process for state funds, the College has developed budget goals based on conversations in the Finance Council. Requests for additional funds must be linked to division and department strategic plans.

General Recommendation 4: It is recommended that a process for all part-time instructor evaluation using multiple indices be implemented. Although evidence was found that part-time faculty are evaluated within a five-year period, evidence was not found that multiple indices are used to evaluate part-time faculty. (Policy 4.1.c)

Part-time faculty are evaluated using multiple indices in all but one of the divisions. Most divisions and departments have added several sources of feedback to the part-time evaluation process. These include observations by department chairs or deans, peer feedback, and self evaluations. Departments and divisions are free to develop their own feedback forms, and many of them are modifying the forms used for contracted faculty to provide similar and appropriate feedback for part-time faculty.

General Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the College clarify its campus system of governance to facilitate the successful accomplishments of its mission and goals. While the individual departments have been functioning at a high level of success during a period of administrative transition, there is less evidence of this occurring at the institutional level. Important elements to be addressed are:
   A. **Administrators, faculty, staff and students understand and fulfill their respective roles in the campus governance system.**
   B. **The system and processes are documented and widely disseminated.**
   C. **The system of campus governance ensures that the authority, responsibilities, and relationships among and between the administrators, faculty, staff and students are clearly described in a constitution, charter, bylaws or policy documents.**
   D. **The system of campus governance makes provision for the consideration of faculty, student, and staff views and judgments in those matters in which these constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest.**
   E. **As a multi-unit governance system (district), the division of authority and responsibility between the central district office and the institution is clearly delineated, documented, and disseminated. (Standard 6: 6.A.1, 6.A.2, 6.A.3, 6.A.4)**

The College has made extensive progress on clarifying its governance system in the last year and a half. The governance structure includes representatives from all constituent groups.

Interviews with these groups indicated general understanding of the various councils and their roles. Faculty and administrators identified governance committees, understood their charges and referenced decisions made by the councils. Information about the councils and their charges has been disseminated widely.

Although district governance systems are still occasionally confusing, administrators, faculty, and students expressed increased understanding of and participation in district processes. The district strategic plan has identified role clarification as one of its goals and progress continues to be made.

There is a need to further explore and clarify the role of the Finance Council. The original charge to this committee has not resulted in the committee working smoothly, so further work is planned this month. Faculty and administrators expressed a desire to clearly articulate the scope of this council.

Conclusion

The College has made commendable progress on developing effective institutional planning processes, tying resource allocation to goals and objectives, and clarifying its governance structure. Many faculty, staff and students have been involved in this progress. Although there is more work to be done, administrative leaders are able to clearly articulate next steps and already have plans in place for accomplishing them.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the College continue to implement a College-wide part-time evaluation process, including multiple indices, in the Technical Education Division. (Policy 4.1.c.)