

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT

Spokane Community College
Spokane, Washington

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Prepared by

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*A Confidential Report prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
that Represents the Views of the Evaluator*

Introduction

Spokane Community College (SCC) is one of three member institutions of the Community Colleges of Spokane District (the other two being Spokane Falls Community College, which has separate NWCCU accreditation, and the Institute for Extended Learning (IEL)). SCC was established in 1963 after a long history as a vocational training facility. Initial accreditation was granted in 1967 and accreditation has been reaffirmed since then. The student body is about 7000 FTE strong; approximately 70% of the students are pursuing a professional technical certificate or degree and 30% are preparing for transfer to a four-year college or university.

After a regular five-year interim evaluation visit in October, 2008, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities reaffirmed the accreditation of Spokane Community College with three commendations and three recommendations, including a warning on Recommendation 2 (Faculty Evaluation). The Commission requested that the College prepare a focused interim report and host a Commission evaluator in spring 2010 to address Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the Fall 2008 Regular Interim Evaluation Report. These recommendations deal with

- Implementing and disseminating the College's strategic plan
- Part-time faculty evaluation
- An A-6 contractual agreement with the Institute for Extended Learning

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

College Report/Visit

The Focused Interim Report prepared by the College for this visit (April 2010) is a concise, straightforward description of progress made on Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 since October, 2008. The additional information and exhibits were well organized and helpful. The focused interim report appears to provide overall evidence that the college has made significant progress on each of the Recommendations.

The evaluator was graciously and kindly received by the college during his visit. All conversations with college personnel were cordial and candid. At various times and in various combinations, the evaluator met with the President, two members of the board of trustees, senior level instructional and student services administrators, the College Alliance, the instructional deans, and a group of adjunct faculty representing various programs of study. The evaluator also spent time reviewing annual reports from reporting units with regard to goals and the strategic plan and the faculty evaluations of adjunct instructors; the reporting units' goal updates were available both on paper and on the web. The evaluator thanks all SCC personnel for their preparation for and hospitality during the visit.

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The evaluator met jointly or individually with the following college personnel during his visit:

Joe Dunlap, President
Greg Bever, Chair, CCS Board of Trustees
Carol Landa-McVicker, Member, CCS Board of Trustees
Terri McKenzie, VP for Student and Instructional Services
Carol Riesenberg, Vice President of Learning
Virginia Tomlinson, College Alliance Chair, Dean of Arts and Sciences
Dennis Keen, English Faculty
David Edwards, Council of Chairs
Bill Rambo, Counselor
Mark Macias, Institutional Research
Shawn Beard, Institutional Research
Karen Johnson, Financial Analyst
Jovanna Dunbar, Staff Representative
Brenda Martinson, Staff Representative
Debi Alley, Executive Assistant to the President
Scott Morgan, IEL Chief Operating Officer
Dave Cox, SCC Acting Dean of Technical Education
Tom Gribble, SCC Dean of Business, Hospitality, IT
Amy Lopes Wasson, IEL Dean of Student Services
Geri Swope, IEL Acting Vice President of Learning
Deby Hanson, SCC Business Technology Department Chair
Mary Jordan, IEL Business Technology Instructor
Brian Rowe, IEL Welding Instructor
Jeff Waybright, SCC Accounting Instructor
Jeff Schwab, SCC Welding Instructor
Ken Burrus, Dean of Physical Education
Terri Armstrong, Dean of Health and Environmental Sciences
Colleen Straight Woods, Business Technology Adjunct Faculty
Laura Kier, Computer Information Systems Adjunct Faculty
Candy Howard, Medical Assisting Adjunct Faculty
Jonathan Frey, English Adjunct Faculty

Report on Recommendation 1

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that through a participative process involving all constituencies, the College and district implement and disseminate their coordinated strategic planning process (Standard 1.A.1).

The impetus for this recommendation seems to be coincidental timing of the evaluators' October 2008 visit in the College's process of implementing its new 2008–2011 strategic plan. In early 2008 the Community College of Spokane District had approved their mission, values, and goals statement for 2008–2009. In the spring of 2008, Spokane Community College developed their own strategic plan to align with the District's document. Final editing of SCC's strategic plan was completed that summer. In September (just weeks before the evaluators' visit) the College Alliance was created (as part of a more streamlined and coordinated shared governance model) and charged with the responsibility for the strategic planning process. They have enthusiastically taken on that charge, but there was not time before the evaluators' October visit to have much to show.

With regard to implementation, the College Alliance identified 96 (later consolidated to 60+) reporting units and asked each of them to set unit goals consistent with the College strategic plan and to submit an annual report on progress on those goals. There was 100% return rate for the May 2009 annual updates; the next updates are due in a few weeks, and there seems to be an efficient process in place to ensure there is 100% response rate again.

Members of the College Alliance relate that reporting unit leaders have generally become enthusiastic about this process partly because allocation of resources is dependent on units showing how expenditures align with the strategic plan (and the campus master plan for capital expenditures). While nearly every college has a strategic plan, it is rare to see a strategic plan drive resource allocation to the extent SCC's does. Reporting units are also buying into this process because they see the value to the students in having a strategic plan and goals that move the College forward.

With regard to dissemination, an impressive effort has been made to inform the campus community of the strategic plan. All employees were given desktop tents featuring the nine goals. A brochure was also printed and sent to community constituents along with a letter from President Dunlap inviting feedback and participation in the planning process. The brochure is also shared with program advisory committees. The extent to which *students* are aware of the strategic plan and goals is unclear.

Commendation: The College is commended for its streamlined and effective model of shared governance, which includes the College Alliance. This group has been instrumental in disseminating and implementing the strategic plan which drives resource allocation and decision making.

Report on Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the College clearly define part-time faculty evaluation by the use of multiple indices. Though progress has been made, there is an uneven practice across the campus (Policy 4.1).

Because this point had been the subject of two successive recommendations it had risen to the level of a warning. The College took the initial recommendation seriously and had been doing adjunct faculty evaluations with multiple indices by the time of the October 2008 visit, but the documentation was uneven. One reason for the uneven documentation was that the faculty contract allows for different forms to be used for the peer evaluations. However, as a result of the October 2008 visit, the College asked peer evaluators to all use the same form, which is included in the faculty contract, to provide uniformity; the form chosen requires more in-depth responses than some of the other check-box forms.

Adjunct faculty are now all clearly informed of the evaluation process and its importance. They are evaluated by students in their first two quarters in one section of the faculty member's choosing per term, and annually in subsequent years; they are also evaluated by peers or administrators on a rotating basis. A summary sheet listing which classes were evaluated by students and peers/administrators, as well as documentation of follow-up with the faculty member and a signature acknowledging receipt of the evaluation, is kept on file for each adjunct faculty member. No adjunct faculty members fall through the evaluation crack.

While the College clearly does evaluate part-time faculty with multiple indices in an even and uniform manner, there remains room for improvement. Another index in the evaluation process could be an opportunity for self-evaluation, reflection, and goal-setting at the individual instructor level. A further suggestion would be to formalize resources for helping struggling faculty members—they should be better supported in their efforts to use the results of the evaluations to improve their teaching.

Report on Recommendation 3

Recommendation 3: The committee recommends that the A-6 agreement/contractual relationship with extended learning (IEL) constitutes a substantive change (Standard 2.G.2, Policies A-2 and A-6).

The College has been communicating with the Commission with regard to the developing relationship between SCC and the Institute for Extended Learning (IEL). At the time of the October 2008 evaluation visit work had begun on a contract to codify the relationship, and it was made official in May 2009. That service agreement seems to adequately address all points in Policy A-6, as evidenced by a letter dated May 27, 2009 from the Commission approving the collaboration between SCC and IEL. In light of this approval the evaluator was mainly interested in verifying that the service agreement is being closely followed.

The evaluator was given a copy of an annual Service Agreement Report prepared by the CEO of IEL, and dated March 23, 2010, with “the purpose of demonstrating compliance with all aspects of the agreement.” Each of the articles of the agreement is addressed, and it appears that the agreement is strictly adhered to.

A discussion with faculty and administrators from both IEL and SCC verified that, with regard to for-credit courses, SCC is fully in control of the hiring and curriculum. Hiring practices and expected faculty qualifications are identical at IEL and SCC for credit-bearing offerings. Faculty members teaching the same courses and disciplines at the two institutions communicate frequently. IEL faculty are evaluated in accordance with Trustees policy. SCC also offers appropriate student services at IEL as required, including veteran services, financial aid, and library services. SCC maintains the academic records of IEL students taking SCC classes.

The collaboration between IEL and SCC is ramping up; it has started small but will grow. Staff at both institutions are clearly aware of the service agreement stipulations (which mirror those in Policy A-6) and are committed to abide by them. As long as this remains the case the collaboration will be beneficial to students and within the parameters of Commission policy.

Conclusion

The College has made commendable progress on all three recommendations; much of this progress was already in process at the time of the October 2008 visit. In the opinion of the evaluator, the College has adequately addressed the concerns and recommendations expressed by the previous evaluation team. The leadership team headed by President Dunlap seems to have brought a new level of improved morale, coordination, and participation in shared governance.

Commendations

1. The College is commended for its streamlined and effective model of shared governance, which includes the College Alliance. This group has been instrumental in disseminating and implementing the strategic plan which drives resource allocation and decision making.
2. The College is commended for its commitment to helping all students achieve their educational goals, especially when college resources are stretched thin.

Recommendations

None.