

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

Columbia Basin College

Pasco, WA

October 2011

A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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I. Roster of Evaluators

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II. Introduction

In accordance with the newly-revised accreditation process of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (hereinafter “the Commission”), this report provides an overview and analysis of Standard 1 - Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations for Columbia Basin College (hereinafter also referred to as “CBC” or “the College”). As such, it reviews the eligibility requirements; mission and extent of mission fulfillment; Core Themes with objectives, indicators, and rationale for selection. It also addresses the College’s response to its most recent Recommendations provided by the Commission. The intent of the Peer Evaluation Team is to offer collegial input on the quality and usefulness of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report submitted by CBC, to provide a critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College’s response to Standard 1, and to review the College’s progress on responding to the Recommendations of the Fall 2010 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report.

Columbia Basin College (CBC) is a rural, public, two-year community college located in Pasco and Richland, Washington. CBC serves Franklin and Benton counties with a majority of the population living in the Tri-cities area (Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland). CBC’s demographics have changed dramatically since it opened in 1955. The Franklin County campus serves a high proportion of Hispanic students. Franklin County is one of two counties in the state designated as “minority majority” with 48.68% of the population being Hispanic. The College is governed by the Policy Governance Model through which the Board of Trustees identified the six End States and delegated the Means for achieving them to the President of the College.

As a comprehensive community college, the College offers a full range of degree and certificate programs in transfer and professional-technical areas as well as offerings in ABE/GED, ESL, and Basic Skills courses.

Since submitting the Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report in 2010, the CBC Board of Trustees has begun to review both the College’s mission statement and its Core Themes. The result will be that the Board will eliminate the Access Core Theme and incorporate the goals and indicators previously related to this theme into the Academic, Workforce, and Basic Skills Core Themes. In addition, a review is also taking place with regard to the Emotional Well Being Core Theme. These changes are not reflected in this Year One Self-Evaluation Report.

Like its sister colleges in Washington, CBC has experienced a drastic drop in state support, resulting in a loss of \$7 million. Tuition and fee increases have offset the budget reductions by approximately \$4 million. The College has made significant efforts to obtain additional funding from federal, contracted, and self-support measures.

III. Assessment of Self-Evaluation Report and Supporting Materials

The evaluators acknowledge the administration, faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees of Columbia Basin College for their intentional efforts in addressing Standard 1 - Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations. The college community has gone through a rigorous

process resulting in the adoption of objectives and indicators of achievement to support its Core Themes.

Columbia Basin College developed its Core Themes from its mission statement, and the Evaluation Team believes that the Core Themes successfully encompass all aspects of the mission. The College defines mission fulfillment in terms of performance achieved in each Core Theme as well as overall performance.

It is clear to the evaluators that a great deal of work has gone into the development of Core Themes, objectives, outcomes, and indicators of achievement.

The Self-Evaluation Report was well written and formatted. In some places it was more difficult to read and understand due to the complexity of the methodology selected by the College and the challenge of describing and illustrating the methodology. The section describing the goals (objectives), indicators, desired outcomes, and rationale were very nicely formatted and easy to follow.

The Addenda did not include all the evidence needed to document the full extent of the progress made on Recommendation 1 from the Fall 2010 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation.

IV. Topics Addressed as an Addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report

Columbia Basin College received two recommendations in the fall of 2010:

Recommendation 1: While new tools and templates are in place for the assessment of student learning and program review self-study, they have not been fully implemented and integrated with planning, decision-making, and resource allocations across applicable core themes. The evaluation committee recommend that the College implement, across the institution, an approach to program evaluation that better aligns and vertically integrated all levels of assessment and that contributes to the achievement of program goals (Standard 4.A.2, 4.A.3, 4.A.4).

Although the report speaks to having “fully implemented a program review process” and lists a number of departments as having completed the review (Anthropology, Biology, Communication Studies, Criminal Justice and Forensics, Early Childhood Education, Engineering Technology, English, Health Education and Physical Education, History, Mathematics, Paramedic, Business, Business Administration, Accounting and Economics), the Evaluation Team only found evidence in the report and supporting documentation of the review being completed in the areas of Business and History. However, the documentation for those two departments shows a robust methodology for program review.

Recommendation 2: Assessment of core theme indicators is evident and consistent. Assessment of student learning plans for improvement and implementation of those plans is inconsistent across the core themes. The committee recommends that the college assess student learning appropriate to the core themes, and use the results of that assessment of student learning to improve student achievement (Standard 4.B.1, 4.B.2)

The College focused on the new program review process during 2010-11, assessing student learning outcomes at the program level. CBC recognized the lack of student learning outcomes

assessment related to the Core Themes. CBC's Year One Self-Evaluation Report includes action plans for the Core Theme indicators, but the report shows no evidence of progress in the actual assessment of student learning appropriate to the Core Themes.

Compliment

1. The Peer Evaluation Team compliments the College for a thorough program review process.

Concerns

1. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that there is only evidence of review for two of the fifteen programs listed as having completed the review process.
2. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that the College has not provided sufficient evidence on substantial progress on Recommendation Two from the Fall 2010 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation.

V. Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirement 2 - Authority

The institution is authorized to operate and award degrees as a higher education institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, or governing board as required by the jurisdiction in which it operates.

Columbia Basin College operates under the approval of the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).

Eligibility Requirement 3 - Mission and Core Themes

The institution's mission and core themes are clearly defined and adopted by its governing board(s) consistent with its legal authorization, and are appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. The institution's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its students and its principal programs lead to recognized degrees. The institution devotes all, or substantially all, of its resources to support its educational mission and core themes.

The College addressed Eligibility Requirement 3 (Mission and Core Themes) in the body of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report, specifically in response to Standard 1.A and 1.B, Mission and Core Themes.

The Evaluation Team found evidence within the report that Columbia Basin College meets Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3.

VI. Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A - Mission

1.A.1 The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.

Columbia Basin College's mission statement is:

CBC exists in an environment of diversity, fairness, equity and sustainability to ensure that the people of Benton and Franklin counties have access to educational programs providing sufficient knowledge for higher educational achievement, meaningful employment, basic skills development, cultural enrichment, and physical and emotional well-being.

In addition to its mission statement, the college has adopted six End States to guide its operation:

- **Access:** CBC exists to provide people of the service district with access to educational programs.
- **Academic:** CBC exists to enable students to complete requirements that would allow them to obtain academic degrees, transfer to upper division colleges and universities, and pursue life-long learning and enrichment.
- **Workforce Development:** CBC exists to enable students to complete requirements that would allow them to earn degrees/certificates to assist them to gain employment and pursue life-long learning opportunities.
- **Basic Skills:** CBC exists to enable students to prepare for success in college-level skills courses.
- **Cultural Enrichment:** CBC will provide the college and the community with diverse and multiculturally rich programs designed to improve our quality of life, life-long learning and enhance educational programs.
- **Physical and Emotional Well-Being:** CBC will contribute to the physical and emotional wellbeing of its students and the community.

It is evident from the report that the Board of Trustees has approved both the mission statement and the End States, and it reviews them regularly and update them as needed. The mission and End States are communicated through both the College's web site and its catalog. The Peer

Evaluation Team found that the mission statement is appropriate for an institution of higher learning, and there is evidence that it gives direction for the College's efforts. There is, however, no indication in the report as to when the mission statement was previously revised, how frequently the mission statement is reviewed, or the process by which revision occurs.

1.A.2 The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.

CBC defines mission fulfillment in terms of performance demonstrated in each Core Theme area as well as overall performance. The College utilizes a scoring system for each of the objectives and indicators of achievement. **Minimum acceptable** performance for each Core Theme is defined as achieving at least 70% of the possible total performance points for each theme. The **target** performance level, however, is set at reaching at least 90% of the total possible performance points for each Core Theme. Reaching that is considered outstanding performance. Minimum accepted performance for overall mission fulfillment is a mean performance value of 70% across all Core Themes, again with a target performance level set at a mean of 90%.

CBC's methodology was based on the *Productivity Measurement and Enhancement System* (ProMES) which helped the College define a "Performance Curve" linking Percentage of Total Possible Points to Performance Points. Minimum acceptable performance on the Performance Curve was established at 70 Performance Points. The desired performance level, however, was set at 90 Performance Points. Overall mission performance is determined by calculating the mean Performance Points across all six Core Themes.

Compliment

1. The Peer Evaluation team compliments CBC on a well-articulated mission statement.

Concern

1. Columbia Basin College's mission is appropriate for a comprehensive community college, and has been approved by its Board of Trustees. However, the Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that no evidence was provided as to when the mission statement was previously revised, how frequently it is reviewed, or the process by which revision occurs. (1.A.1)

Standard 1.B - Core Themes

1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes

Columbia Basin College has identified six Core Themes (1.B.1): Access, Academic, Workforce, Basic Skills, Cultural Enrichment, and Physical and Emotional Well-Being. These are all aspects of the College's mission statement and together comprehensively serve as a meaningful interpretation of the mission.

In reviewing the Core Themes, it is clear that a great deal of work has gone into developing and revising the objectives (CBC refers to them as goals), indicators of achievement, and desired outcomes. In several instances the evaluators were unable to make a strong connection between the objective and the outcome e.g. Core Theme 6: Objective A - **The college provides activities and resources that improve physical and emotional health**, Outcome A5—Student athlete success. One of the measures of meeting the objective is comparing the GPA of student athletes to the student average. The evaluation team fails to understand how a comparative GPA is a measure of "physical [or] emotional health."

In some instances the Evaluation Team had concerns over how meaningful, and related, the measured outcomes and the associated indicators were. E.g. in Core Theme 2, Objective A: **Students demonstrate academic progress**, indicator A5—*Student perception of progress*; A5a-*Self-rating of progress toward degree*. The indicator of success is listed as “Graduation rates and average time to degree is in the top 30% of WA community colleges.” Also in Core Theme 2, Objective B relates only to student perception of effective learning. The evaluators encourage the College to consider using additional, direct and quantitative measures as indicators of achievement.

Again, acknowledging the amount of work that has gone into preparing both objectives and related indicators, the evaluation team notices that some indicators do not have specific enough outcomes or benchmarks. E.g. “students demonstrate **significant** improvement” (Core Theme 1: Goal C, Indicator C2); “**Strong** attendance meets arts and humanities goals.” (Core Theme 5: Goal A, Indicator A5). (Bold added)

Compliment

1. The Peer Evaluation Team compliments the College for the alignment between the mission statement and the Core Themes.

Concerns

1. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that the connection between the objectives, outcomes, and indicators of achievement is not consistent.
2. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that indicators of achievement are not consistently meaningful and in some instances lack specific outcomes or benchmarks.

VII. Summary

The Peer Evaluation Team reviewed Standard 1 – Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations noting Columbia Basin College’s articulation of its purpose, Core Themes, and its parameters for mission fulfillment. Identification of Core Themes with related objectives and indicators were also assessed as a basis for evaluating accomplishment of the Core Themes. As indicated above, both Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 are met.

Columbia Basin College’s accreditation was reaffirmed in February 2011, with a request to address Recommendations 1 and 2 in this year’s report. The College has provided evidence that there is progress made on meeting Recommendation 1, although the Peer Evaluation Team would like to see the additional evidence beyond the Business and History departments. The College has not shown evidence that Recommendation 2 has been adequately addressed.

Columbia Basin College has a mission statement that is appropriate to an institution of higher learning. CBC identified six Core Themes, and developed objectives for each Core Theme, and indicators of achievement for each objective.

CBC defines mission fulfillment in terms of performance demonstrated in each Core Theme area as well as overall performance. Although the College has overall benchmarks for acceptable performance, some of the individual indicators need additional work in order to ensure that all indicators are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable; corresponding desired outcomes are relevant and specific; and that collectively they will allow the College to fully and effectively evaluate the achievement of objectives, Core Themes, and ultimately mission fulfillment.

The Peer Evaluation Team noted that under some Core Themes several of the indicators are indirect measures, often of perceptions, that will require substantial work in order to provide the evidence needed to form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of objectives, Core Themes, and mission fulfillment.

VIII. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendation

1. The Peer Evaluation Team commends Columbia Basin College for identifying its Core Themes and the clear relationship of the themes to its mission statement. (1.B.1)

Recommendations

1. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that the College review its objectives, outcomes, and indicators of achievement to ensure they are aligned with each other, are specific and meaningful, and collectively can provide direct evidence of mission fulfillment (1.B.2).
2. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that the College provide evidence of review for the programs listed as having completed the review process. (4.A.2, 4.A.3, 4.A.4)