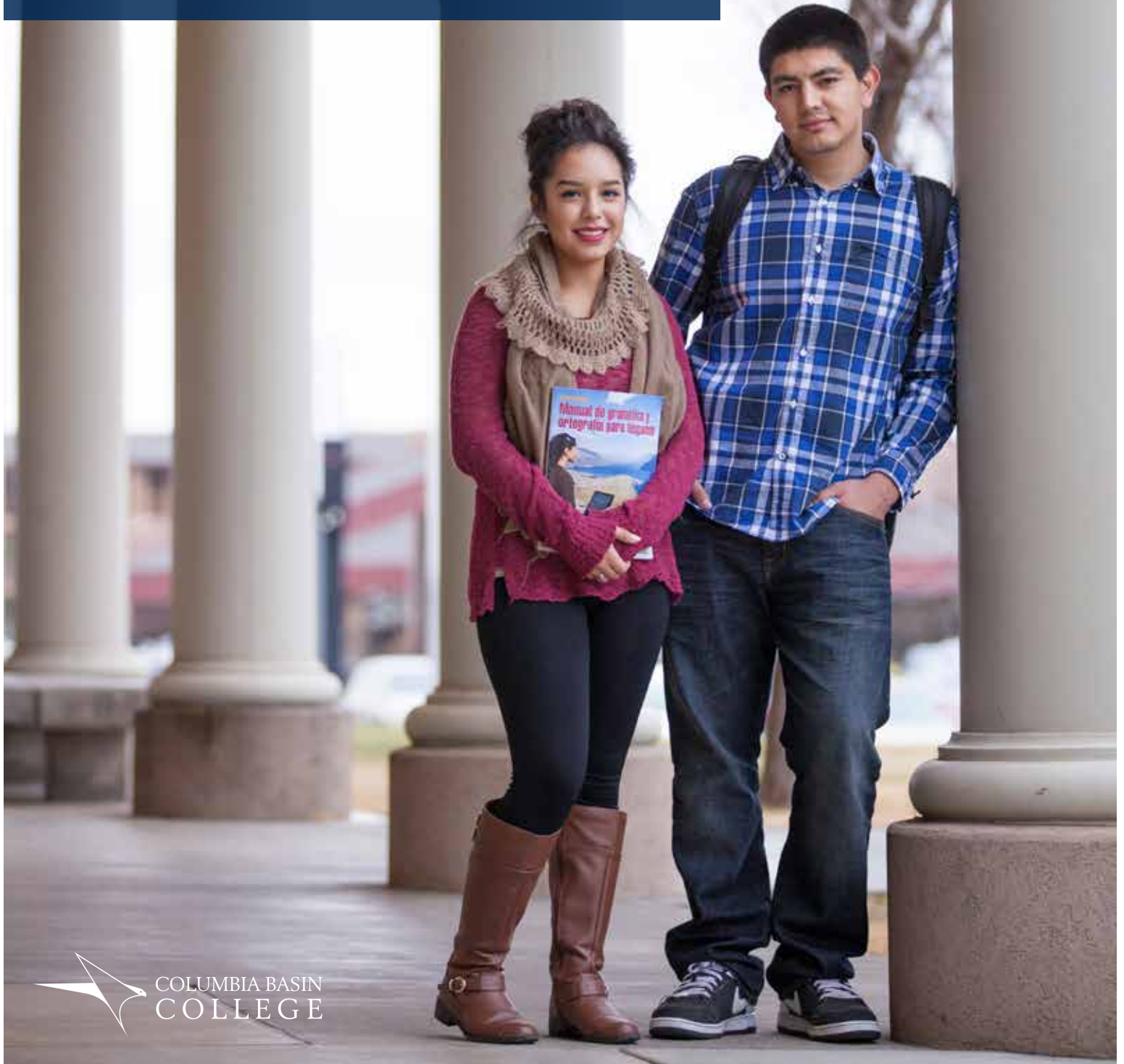


Columbia Basin College

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2015-2020

"Theory-based, data-informed, learning-focused."



COLUMBIA BASIN  
COLLEGE

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# VISION



The community college is one of democracy's greatest ideas. Tens of millions of Americans have flowed through community and technical college doors to become the nation's doctors and welders, entrepreneurs and chemists, machinists and poets. Finances—not intelligence—and mobility—not ability—limited Columbia Basin College's first students in 1955. These constraints of money and place are even more salient for students today. The costs of a university education has escalated rapidly in the past decade, further hampering the average American's ability to pay for a college education. Most potential college students in the Tri-Cities probably cannot afford to pay \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year for tuition, room, and board at a state university, nor would many of them be able to uproot themselves from families and careers even if they could. Consequently, Columbia Basin College's inclusive mission as a higher education gateway cuts a broad swath across the socioeconomic spectrum of our community. Anyone who aspires to a life of great achievement based on higher education can access an affordable, high-quality pathway through Columbia Basin College.

# CONTEXT

Columbia Basin College has emerged from the Great Recession with its core mission battered but intact. We now operate with 42 percent of our funding coming from state support when only 25 years ago we stood at 85 percent. In addition to this substantial base funding reduction, a large part of the cost burden has been shifted to the student side of the equation because the state has progressively disinvested in higher education.

Yet, buried in popular media reports about university tuition costs that outpace inflation is the story about community colleges, whose average costs, adjusted for inflation, have not increased much.

Our purpose and mission, in spite of fiscal concern, is dynamically realized across the scope of our work. As a comprehensive community college, Columbia Basin College

exists for three broad educational purposes built upon the foundation of open access, but we also serve an important "nexus" function for our community. Additionally, much of any organization's ability to realize its mission is related to its internal culture, so the concept of community extends both within and without.

This plan proposes five large Goals. These are delineated further into Objectives with some initial implementation tactics provided. A successful plan must live and breathe and thereby be capable of adapting to changing environmental pressures. The expectation is that each Objective will be developed during its five-year life span with numerous tactical plans in multiple areas

of the College. The strategic framework identified in this plan is meant to foment a "population of strategies" (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000) in a continuous improvement process.

Our strategic imperatives framework is based on this continuous improvement cycle of planning, assessing, and improving. At one end, we hope to create new initiatives in response to new environmental and system challenges while at the other end we will simply manage the entropy that occurs in complex systems. Nothing in this plan should be construed as a criticism of status quo efforts that have caused national recognition by the Aspen Institute or the American Association of Community Colleges or the local recognition testified by the thousands and thousands of well-educated students past and present.

## Context **CONNECTIVITY**

### Connectivity must be the overarching strategy

Rumelt (2011) noted that strategy “is the application of strength against weakness. Or, if you prefer, strength applied to the most promising opportunity” that “doesn’t just draw on existing strengths [but] creates strength through the coherence of its design” (p.9). Scholars in strategic planning have identified three generic differentiation strategies that organizations ultimately choose from to apply strength to opportunity. Among these are to be the highest and best user of technology, the lowest cost provider, or the provider with the greatest connection to the individuals or groups being served.

As a community college with a bare bones funding model, we understand that we will not be the highest user of technology. We further understand that as disruptive business models continue to develop (for example, Texas’ \$10,000 bachelor degree or the rapidly maturing MOOCs that may remain cost-free but have articulated credit attached for a low price), we will not be the lowest cost provider of higher education for much longer.

Our only viable response is to continue to strengthen as *this* community’s college. We must be the local community’s solution to higher education needs. We must be the most closely connected college choice for local citizens within this increasingly globalized and chaotic market. What the high-tech and low-cost options often fail to provide is the high-touch connections that Columbia Basin College is uniquely positioned to provide.

With this connectivity strategy, our pre-employment programs need to exceed employer expectations. Our transfer courses and programs need to be as rigorous as any lower-division offerings in the country but with better support than cavernous university enrollments provide. Above all, quality that includes evidence-based proof that students possess the outcomes we intend must be hand-in-glove with greater and deeper levels of connectivity to help students achieve learning success.



Because adaptable relationships are essential to connectivity, Columbia Basin College must be a learning organization that builds new strengths through continual self-reflection and insight. As Rumelt (2011) further noted, “An insightful reframing of a competitive situation can create whole new patterns of advantage and weakness. The most powerful strategies can arise from such game-changing insights” (p. 10). As a learning organization, we should continually strive to test our theories, analyze our data, and reframe our policies and actions when necessary.

Budget reductions, technology disruptions, and an unwillingness to learn are among a host of environmental threats for public institutions, but the strategic intention of connectivity will serve us well.

Context

# DECLINING STATE SUPPORT



No assumption is as salient as the certainty that the disinvestment of public education will continue, forcing all public services agencies, including higher education, to increasingly be subject to free market forces. A basic economic reality is that when government doesn't protect its services—whether through taxpayer funds, tariffs, trade agreements, fiscal policy, and so forth—then those services will either wither or seek alternate revenues. Because higher education is so important to our community—hard data forecasts indicate that the national employment market will require about two-thirds of the workforce to hold post-secondary credentials—more market-based strategies for Columbia Basin College's long-term viability are critical for mission fulfillment. The most immediate market force strategies at our disposal include increased grants and contracts, increased participation of college-ready recent high school graduates, increased international student population, increased retention and completion, reduced fee-waived programs, and increased public-private business partnerships such as the Columbia Basin Analytical Laboratory with the R.J. Lee Group and Kadlec Regional Medical Center.

The College would have no credibility without great teaching. Our discipline experts have spent significant amounts of time in graduate school preparation or industry employment, augmented by subsequent ongoing professional development, in order to become masters in their fields. Two developments in the last two decades have changed the nature of teaching. The first, the Internet, has expanded the availability of easily accessible expert knowledge that has changed the nature of textbooks and classroom activities forever. The second is the new applied science of learning, which is developing evidence-based principles of learning (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014; Marin, 2014) that are creating evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning practices.

American community colleges were built with the idea of a large part-time faculty, but there is no doubt in our belief that our college is built on the bedrock of a committed group of full-time discipline experts who design curriculum, who help students master difficult academic and technical knowledge and skills, who meet with students before, during, and after formal class periods, and who perform the committee work required to keep a great institution moving forward. We must find ways to flourish that are anchored in this firm foundation. The College is deeply committed to a robust full-time faculty delivering rigorous academic, technical, and professional education.



Context  
**DYNAMIC  
FACULTY**

Context

# DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

The next several years present numerous challenges to the institution's viability that are best understood through Christensen's (1997) concept of "the innovator's dilemma." In Christensen's formulation, technology enables "disruptive innovation" that begins at the bottom end of the market but allows quick up-market movement as the enabling technology continues to improve. Contemporary business is brimming with examples of upstarts with inferior products that quickly became the market leader as its enabling technology rapidly matured. For example, transistor radios quickly destroyed the far superior vacuum tube technology as miniaturization of circuitry advanced. Moore's Law, which has accurately predicted a doubling of computing power every 18 to 24 months, explains this rapid progress. Moore's Law, predicted to "run out" sometime over the next decade, will be replaced by quantum computing, whose effects belie prediction.

The dilemma occurs when the institution focuses on "sustaining innovation" going forward. The Sony Walkman fell prey to the iPod because the management kept improving its product for the existing customer and thereby completely missed the newest disruptive technology. From IBM to Microsoft, from DEC to Dell, from Xerox to 3-D printing, the market rewards the disruptors at a pace that follows the swiftness and cruelty of Moore's Law.

As a community college--the entity that disrupted higher education markets in post-war America by serving increasingly larger numbers of non-consumers of higher education--Columbia Basin College has been quite successful. As four-year colleges and universities have seen tuition increases that outpace the spending power of the average American, the community college has become increasingly attractive. First, as an option for transfer students, we provide a rigorous but low-cost alternative to a four-year institution. Second, we are the only affordable sub-baccalaureate solution for the great skills gap between high school and the needs of the Knowledge



Economy. Third, at a time when today's replacement populations are at dismally low levels until 2030, state universities and private colleges have reached price points beyond middle-class reach. The traditional four-year institutions will increasingly serve a shrinking elite market with some diversity created by financial aid and international student recruitment.

At the top of their market, then, community colleges, will find a position that is less expensive than a traditional four-year institution,

which will encourage participation in all of our programs, including the applied baccalaureate. However, the community college finds itself in danger of being disrupted at the bottom end of the market over the next decade by failing to capitalize on the wave of innovations that Moore's Law and the advance of enabling technologies will inevitably bring. In other words, community colleges will still be more expensive than the disruptors, who will come full-bore with MOOCs and a variety of competency-based disaggregated models with higher productivity that will make them less expensive and more flexible to student needs. Increasingly, the community college will find itself squeezed between expensive elite institutions that provide a social development function for the privileged and the increasingly commoditized digital education economy.

Consequently, the face-to-face and hybrid markets for which CBC is a provider will be ripe for sustaining and disruptive innovations. Moore's Law will continue to make more high-touch-with-high-tech solutions possible while driving down the adoption price curve for both institutions and students. It is not difficult to imagine that the lowest end of the market will contain certain traditional college offerings as a commodity, which is probably the greatest disruption opportunity of the MOOCs. Because of the inevitability of this is reality, there are both Sustaining Innovations that must be made to improve the College's offerings for our current students and community needs, yet there are also Disruptive Innovations that must be made to ensure our long-term relevance.



Context

# OUR SMALL COLLEGE MODEL



At the same time, the declining demographics for higher education do not support the growth model that has fueled our institutions statewide. Within this forecast for declining participation is the certainty of an intra-state rise in higher education competition exacerbated by very low barriers to entry by out-of-state competitors as disruptive enabling technology strips away the historical protections of our geographically contained service districts. A late night television surfer in Benton and Franklin counties will find appealing ads for any number of credible and accredited colleges and universities. Southern New Hampshire University and Western Governor's University, for example, are two very credible not-for-profit universities with unique delivery models that advertise regularly on the local stations, while others also market aggressively as players in the for-profit market. Big data

analytics for these players routinely mine browser behavior to track, and then target, anyone with an Internet connection who is searching out higher education opportunities. Demographic factors and disruptive technology are undermining our existing success model.

Small colleges survive in an expensive, crowded market because they offer relationship, nurturing, challenge, and a core curriculum. Large state universities focus on research and graduate schools with undergraduate programs characterized by lower-division classes with large enrollments that create sink-or-swim environments for many students. Research into our student population tells us that more of our students are successful with structures that enhance their relationships with faculty, staff, and other students.

# STRATEGIC GOALS



Goal 1: CBC will be a national leader in student retention and completion, achieving outcomes comparable to state baccalaureate institutions

## Why is this important?

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that those without degrees or credentials suffer a substantial penalty in the workforce in terms of both job availability and pay. The number of jobs available to those with only a high school diploma has declined for a number of years, as have salaries. Following the Great Recession, the number of jobs available for community college or baccalaureate graduates returned to pre-recession levels and began to increase, while the number of jobs for those without degrees did not recover from recession values. Further, those without degrees or certificates (particularly males) tend to drop out of the workforce altogether at a very early age (often as early as 35) due to inability to keep up with workforce demands for knowledge and skills.

For both short- and long-term success, it is critical that CBC retain its students through completion and help to ensure successful transitions.

## Objective A. Create empirically-based student pathways

1. Data analytics. Implement a state-of-the-art data analytics program at CBC to track student performance and progress, guide real-time student intervention programs, and provide decision-making tools to administrators, faculty, staff, and students themselves.
2. Degree Pathways. Identify clear pathways to completion for transfer students based on published research as well as analysis of CBC Data Warehouse data. Communicate optimal pathways to students and assess impacts of use of pathways.
3. Accelerated student progress. Accelerate learning pathways with student-friendly structures for prior and direct learning assessment.

## Objective B. Create excellence in student support activities

1. Student advising. Increase the impact of advising on student success through expansion of mandatory advising requirements, expansion of early alert effort support for faculty, increased attention to real-time data regarding student progress and retention, and realistic advising for developmental students for whom predictive analytics forecast a poor chance of success. Create an “exit coaching” process to assist students as they leave CBC.
2. Completion coaches. Continue to expand the role of completion coaches to provide support and resources that encourage retention and completion as these positions learn and mature with the data.
3. Student mentoring. Develop a mentoring process, using research- and theory-based approaches.
4. First-Year Seminar. Create a First-Year Seminar designed to improve retention and success of college-placed students that complements the HDEV 101 course for pre-college placed students.

5. Positive campus culture and environment. Create educational, developmental, social, and civic activities.
6. Reduce cost to students. Develop technology solutions such as Open Education Resources that lower the cost of education and reduce student debt.

### Objective C. Establish data collaborations with K-12 and baccalaureates

1. K-12 Collaboration. Establish collaborative agreements with K-12 Districts in the Service Area to share outcome and student performance information that results in more students prepared for college-level coursework upon matriculation.
2. Baccalaureate collaboration. Establish collaborative agreements with regional universities to share outcome and performance data that enhances the readiness of CBC graduates for transfer success.
3. Dual-Credit. Establish CBC as the dual-credit leader in all three areas (Running Start, College in the High School, Tech Prep).

### Goal 2: CBC will be a national leader in innovative student learning approaches and outcomes

#### Why is this important?

Given the exponential growth in knowledge and technology and the increasing complexity of the working environment, there is a tremendous need for students to develop effective critical thinking and reasoning skills, to be able to function effectively in a culturally diverse environment, and to maintain a high trajectory of learning throughout their lives. Research has suggested that many students fail to significantly improve their critical thinking and reasoning skills, numeracy ability, and written communications skills during their college careers (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Other research has shown that the failure to develop these cognitive skills follows students into their post-college careers, derailing them from finding and maintaining successful careers (e.g., Arum & Roksa, 2014). However, students whose college education incorporates basic principles of learning and cognitive development show strong evidence of learning and a successful career trajectory. It is critical to student success that CBC intentionally adopt teaching and learning practices that optimize student learning and development experiences.

### Objective A. Support state-of-the-art teaching practices and processes that optimize student learning.

1. Theory-based, evidence-driven practices. Identify teaching and evidence-based learning approaches and practices that are supported by current theory and research.
2. Faculty development. Provide support through educational programs, learning opportunities, and Teaching & Learning Committee grants.



## Objective B. Adopt cutting-edge approaches to measuring Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) that yields information to improve learning.

1. Campus wide learning assessment. Strengthen the campus culture of assessment by incorporating nationally validated measures of student learning while building a theory- and research-based model of student learning that incorporates SLO data and provides learning improvement opportunities.
2. Program-level assessment. In support of Program Review activities, update and measure Program Outcomes for each department, using the results to drive program improvement.
3. Classroom level assessment. Under the leadership of the Teaching and Learning Committee, expand classroom-level measurement of the SLOs by providing additional assessment training and assessment support.
4. Individual student assessment. Track acquisition of the SLOs from matriculation to completion.

## Goal 3: CBC Professional/Technical Education students will be highly employable and highly effective once hired

### Why is this important?

The post-Great Recession workplace is becoming increasingly competitive, with the most-qualified graduates finding full-time positions and good salaries, but lesser-qualified graduates finding much less desirable options. Consequently, CBC must provide strong “value-added” education to its professional and technical students to best position them for placement and subsequent job success. CBC graduates must be highly effective employees who demonstrate outstanding technical knowledge and skills, as well as high levels of motivation, initiative, communications ability, and teamwork. They will not only succeed in the competition for jobs, but they will also experience job stability, opportunities for advancement, and salary increases. It is critical that CBC provide outstanding education to its workforce students.

## Objective A. Ensure that Professional/Technical Programs provide cutting-edge technical training and skill development

1. BAS Programs. Expand and develop BAS program offerings, substantially increasing BAS enrollments while ensuring rigor through specialized accreditation or certifications where possible.
2. AAS-to-BAS development. Develop BAS programs in traditional arts and sciences areas where a labor market need exists for both credentials.
3. Competency-Based Learning. Provide competency-based learning opportunities to increase the flexibility of educational programs and credit accumulation.
4. Internship opportunities. Provide internship and job shadowing opportunities with follow-up assessment to determine employer satisfaction.
5. Placement assistance. Provide resume and interview workshops for local and regional employment opportunities.
6. Employer partnerships. Expand partnerships with local business for new program development.

## Objective B. Ensure that students develop the cognitive and personal skills needed for success, in addition to needed technical skills.

1. “Soft” skills. Ensure that CBC graduates are “21st century students” with strong critical thinking, numeracy, and communications skills.

## Goal 4: CBC will be a national leader in transitioning students from Pre- College to College-levels in Math and English

### Why is this important?

Pre-college placement in Math or English, associated with high levels of student failure and attrition, is probably the greatest single barrier to student completion both at CBC and nationally. A large percentage of pre-college placed students either do not even attempt the required remediation courses, or are not successful if they do. Particularly in Math, courses may be repeated multiple times without success. CBC cannot be successful at any of the Strategic Plan Goals if a large segment of the incoming student population is mired in pre-college courses. It is critical that the College find ways to be highly successful at the pre-college to college transition process.

## Objective A. Improve student success and transition in developmental Mathematics and English

1. Course content. Improve the course sequencing and content of developmental math courses to increase student success rates.
2. Student support. Improve student intake, advising, tutoring, peer tutoring, and supplemental instruction to enhance completion and success rates.
3. Placement. Improve Mathematics and English placement by tactics devised for K-12 adoption of EdReady from pre-COMPASS assessment and practice.
4. Developmental course priority. Require all students to demonstrate quarterly progress toward satisfying the college math requirement.
5. College-level reading abilities. Develop new approaches to ensure that all students in courses 100 or above have college-level reading ability.

## Objective B. Create institutional structures to improve developmental student performance

1. Reinforce “ability to benefit” with support. Implement a fee-based, non-credit “CBC Academy” for individuals with needs below “ability to benefit” levels.
2. Strategic partnerships. Develop strategic partnerships with third-party providers such as EdReady and Straighterline.com.

**Goal 5: CBC will be a state leader in providing campus facilities and technologies that meet the needs of students and the community through state-of-the-art, energy-efficient, and green technologies that reduce our carbon footprint by 50 percent and set the path for energy independence within 15 years**

### Why is this important?

CBC cannot hope to achieve its ambitious goals for student learning and completion without smart classrooms and technology to support faculty in their teaching and students in their learning efforts. Faculty must have ready access to web-based resources and reference information in classrooms that support student engagement and active learning. Students must also have ready access to electronic learning resources, which includes students preparing for college entry who must have access to COMPASS placement preparation and remediation resources. Further, rising energy costs, climate change, and the need for sustainable approaches to development require that energy efficiency and the use of green technologies be aggressively developed.

### Objective A. Provide a safe, secure, accessible, and easily understood campus

1. Safety and security systems. Upgrade and maintain leading edge quality.
2. Communications and signage. Create a campus way-finding system.

### Objective B. Create student-centered, flexible, and adaptable environments that enhance teaching and learning.

1. Distance learning. Create a “Virtual Campus” by significantly improving our online degree path to a quality that competes with national programs increasingly marketed in Benton and Franklin counties.
2. Center for Arts and Humanities. Create the partnerships necessary to build out a fine and performing arts center that includes new theater, music, and visual arts venues that further the teaching and learning experience.
3. Health Science Center II. Build a second 67,000 square-foot facility at the Richland campus for partnership in rural medical education with Kadlec Regional Medical Center as well as new programs in expanding health care sector.
4. Academic Programming. Develop policies that allow us to expand our performances, lectures, films, workshops and other educational programs to a Pacific Northwest catchment area.

### Objective C. Increase partnerships and funding

1. Facilities for partnerships. Work with local and regional groups to make CBC the convening nexus for the entire community.
2. Facilities for new revenue streams. Increase partnership space for joint business ventures and international student housing.

### Objective D. Surpass all sustainability measures

1. Energy conservation. Continue to upgrade the physical plant with solar panels to create a zero-carbon footprint with reverse metering to the PUD.
2. Sustainability. Move the campus culture to one that reflexively practices the three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle.

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