

Mid-Cycle Peer Evaluation Report Seattle Central College

Seattle, Washington

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

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Roster of Evaluators

Dr. Kendra Cawley
Dean of Academic Affairs
Portland Community College
Portland OR

Mr. Garth Sleight
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Miles Community College
Miles City MT

Dr. Les Steele
Executive Vice President and Off-site Liaison
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Redmond WA

Overview

Seattle Central College is one of three colleges in Seattle Community College District VI, along with North Seattle College and South Seattle College. Each of the colleges is independently accredited, but each is accountable to the District office and collaborates with the others. The Seattle Community College District has its own mission statement and district strategic goals; however, Seattle Central College is able to establish its own identity and foster its own culture within its own mission statement and core themes.

The Mission of Seattle Central College:

Seattle Central College promotes educational excellence in a multicultural urban environment. We provide opportunities for academic achievement, workplace preparation, and service to the community.

Core Themes: In order to operationalize and assess fulfillment of its mission, Seattle Central College has established the following Core Themes:

- I. Responsive Teaching and Learning
- II. Catalyst for Opportunities and Success
- III. Diversity in Action
- IV. Communities Engagement

Part I: Assessing Mission Fulfillment

Seattle Central College has a robust infrastructure and sophisticated process in place for engaging in strategic planning, assessment and improvement from the institutional level to the individual course level. The President's Cabinet oversees planning, assessment and improvement from a macro-level. In order to foster campus wide buy-in with these efforts, the President's Cabinet relies on several other groups to assist in the achievement of the college mission and core themes, and to ensure that shared governance is an integral characteristic of the college culture. The College Council, which is comprised of a large cross-section of campus personnel, meets regularly to discuss college issues and needs. Feedback from these meetings is then conveyed to the President. The instructional deans also play an integral role in serving as liaisons between the faculty and the President's Cabinet. Core Theme Teams and the Curriculum Coordinating Council with its four standing committees, all critical to this infrastructure, will be discussed in more detail below. All the teams, councils and committees are supported by the Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Institutional Research and the Senior Research Analyst, who provide critical expertise for college-wide assessment. These two individuals facilitate the gathering of research data and help to clarify the meaningfulness and ramifications of the data.

Institutional Planning Assessment and Improvement

The college has developed a strong integration of strategic planning with the budgeting process in a manner that has helped the college organize and prioritize budget requests, tying them not only to the strategic plan but also to the core themes, and thus to indicators of achievement. Templates were

developed with input and engagement from managers in many departments, with IR serving as facilitators, and are subject to continuous improvement cycle. IR staff commented that this provides a way of bringing a distributed decision making model into something that is more systematic and clear for resource allocation and has really benefited some programs in which the requests can indeed be shown to contribute to improvement.

Core Theme Planning

Each core theme has its own Core Theme Team. The members of this team developed the outcomes, objectives and indicators of achievement for the core them, and meet approximately quarterly (sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the need) to review, discuss and analyze the data relevant to the assessment of mission fulfillment. Each year a Core Theme Progress Report is prepared and reviewed by the Core Theme Team. The results of the report are disseminated to the college stakeholders. The college mission is considered achieved when 70% of the core theme objectives are fulfilled.

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) has the mammoth responsibility of providing oversight and ensuring quality control of the college's instructional program, which is closely tied to Core Themes 1 and 2. The CCC is composed of four standing committees that carry out this multi-faceted stewardship:

- Course Approval
- Instructional Assessment
- Program Review
- Learning Communities

The evaluators were impressed with the passion and dedication manifested by the CCC representatives, and the strong degree of functional collaboration among them. The Course Approval Committee reviews new courses and course revisions, and requires that courses have the approval of the Instructional Assessment Committee. When a faculty member proposes a class, he/she must demonstrate alignment of course learning outcomes with both the program learning outcomes and the college-wide student learning outcomes. Program Level Outcomes for the specific workforce program or, for transfer disciplines, the district transfer degree outcomes, need to be achieved and demonstrated as well, and again, this is based on the alignment of course outcomes to program outcomes. The five College-Wide Student Learning Outcomes: (Think, Communicate, Connect, Collaborate and Continue Learning) were developed by a large number (>50) of college faculty and staff over nine month period of deliberation. Courses are not required to align with all five, but to at least two, and more if appropriate. When the evaluators asked about the intrinsic value of the CWLSOs, especially since a class is "required" to demonstrate alignment with as few as two, a representative of the CCC observed that the CWSLOs provide a matrix of how courses need to align with the full set of CWSLOs. This applies to program outcomes as well.

Since course level assessment is at the core of instructional assessment, it is important to recognize the critical work carried out by members of the Instructional Assessment Committee. The IA committee reviews course and program outcomes, requires language that suggests accessibility, and vets the alignments (course to program and college-wide outcomes). This committee works in concert with other

members of the Curriculum Coordinating Council to provide checks and balances in this significant enterprise.

Overall, assessment is faculty-driven, both in structure (faculty committees reviewing and approving key parameters) and in execution, and seeks to preserve the deeply-rooted tenet of academic freedom while concurrently honoring the college's responsibility to be accountable to its stakeholders, including the expectations of Seattle Community College District VI and the Accreditation Standards of NWCCU.

Program Review is very robust, and engages both faculty and administration in review and commendations/recommendations. The template itself is maintained and updated annually by faculty. The formal review is conducted by 3-4 members of the Program Review Committee, and commendations/ recommendations are developed by that team before passing the review to Administration. Program representatives noted that the Program Review meetings have been collaborative and helpful.

It is also noteworthy that the college's prior annual reporting model (in effect from 2006 – 2011), which enjoyed limited faculty engagement and was not providing meaningful information, was replaced by a process closely wedded to Program Review. One year prior to the formal quadrennial Program Review, each program prepares an Assessment Review and meets with a team from the IA committee to look specifically at recent assessment-related issues. This was found to be far more useful, and the conversations have helped move the culture of assessment forward in a way that five years of prior reporting had not done.

Part II: Operational Examples

Example A: Achievement levels of Core Themes and Mission

In the Mid-cycle Report, SCC provided the summary data for the extent of mission achievement based on the Objectives, Outcomes and Indicators of Achievement (IAs). The criteria for the IA achievement levels were identified (in Appendix 6) as a percentage of the benchmark established based on a three year look back (where that is possible) of the data, with a score of 2 or 3 indicating meeting at least 95% of the benchmark. Data for each indicator was also offered in Appendix 1 (The Revised Standard One Report).

Based on this presentation of data, the evaluators conclude that the college appears to be well positioned to demonstrate mission fulfillment in terms of the Indicators of Achievement it has defined and the methodology it employs. Although there are quite a large number of indicators, each has been thoughtfully considered by the Core Theme Team under which it sits, and has been judged sufficiently meaningful to be evaluated in this first round of data analysis. Most of the IAs have benchmarks based on three years prior data, which will be revised annually as data from each successive year become available. For those indicators where 13-14 represents the first data year, by the time of the Year Seven Report, the college will have the three-year values necessary to set initial benchmarks in those terms.

Evaluation of the 13-14 data (not including IAs for which there is not yet sufficient data to benchmark) shows an initial estimation of mission fulfillment: when broken out by core theme, achievement ranged from 50-100%, and overall, 88% of 56 IAs, 88% of 16 outcomes, and 78% of 9 objectives. The objectives

and outcomes (and in more detailed presentation, the IAs) that are not met at a satisfactory level (2 or 3 on a 3 point scale) are a focus of discussion at a variety of different college meetings, and there is evidently great interest in looking at and working with this data across the college.

It was surprising that of the 68 indicators identified, several related to student success in terms of persistence and passing rates, and a few involved indirect measures (e.g., perception of benefit from educational initiatives); however, none of them relate to direct assessment of student attainment of student learning outcomes. When Core Theme team members were asked about this, they acknowledged this weakness in the data, but felt that faculty needed to become more familiar with the expectations and system of assessment of student learning outcomes (piloted in the 18 courses as described below in Examples B1 and B2) would eventually yield appropriate data, but with so few courses assessed in this manner thus far, it did not make sense to include measures measure based on such a small and non-random sample in the general IA data set.

Example B1: Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes to College-Wide Student Learning Outcomes

An important part of SCC's approach to the challenge of learning assessment at multiple levels is to require programs to explicitly identify the alignment between course outcomes, program outcomes (workforce outcomes or district-wide transfer outcomes) and institutional outcomes (the CWSOLs), and then focus assessment efforts at the course level. The evaluators recognized the organizational value of this approach, and were impressed by the systems in place, specifically Program Review and Course approval processes, that will move the college towards comprehensive alignment

Example B2: Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes to Program learning Outcomes

This Example offered alignment and assessment data for a pilot project involving 18 courses (in 7 program areas), with a total of 1,159 students assessed. Alignment was shown in two tables, one mapping each course in the data set to the college wide outcomes and a second showing alignment of the five transfer disciplines to the district wide transfer program outcomes. Data was provided for each of the 7 subject areas (some of which involved more than one course. Materials provided during the visit clarified the methodology for collecting assessment data, indicating that faculty teaching this set of courses (which in some case involved more than one section and faculty member per course) selected an outcome to assess, and submitted information about the assessment: the kind of activity, the criteria used for exceeding, meeting or not meeting expectations, and the result. The form on which this submission is made also asked faculty to reflect on the results, and note course and/or curriculum changes indicated by the assessment result. Alignment with the CWSLOs was also queried. Results of this pilot presented by Program/Discipline showed the percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectation ranging from 45% to 92%, with an average of 76%

Overall the collection of information and data is strong. Two limitations were discussed and acknowledged. First, the data for each discipline being comprised of results from multiple courses and/or instructors is not meaningful in the aggregate, as the outcomes (and assessment methods)

chosen may be quite different in the different courses. This might be addressed in a larger data set in which a specific course outcome is assessed in the same way across several sections. Second, the decision about what level of student performance meets expectations is made by individual faculty, and thus could be quite different even across a single course outcome assessed in multiple sections. This was intentional, as a way of preserving faculty autonomy at the level of course instruction, but it has the effect of rendering the results meaningful only on that level. However, faculty noted that such a decision can vary from program to program and even within some programs, for example, Social Sciences. Faculty that we spoke with agreed that conversations about the results are happening, and critical, and will likely lead to agreement what to measure and how, and there is evidence of this, at different stages of development, across the college.

Part III: Moving Forward

With regards to direct assessment of student learning outcomes, the limited scope of the pilot project that was presented explains why this data has not been used as an indicator of achievement. In order to be meaningful, results would need to come from many more programs/disciplines, and be sorted in some way, possibly by Core theme mapping if not also by program/discipline, and, in the opinion of the evaluators, with criteria for meeting expectations agreed upon across a broader unit than a given instructors course. Nevertheless, the college has developed an appropriate approach and effective tool that can be used to document achievement of student learning outcomes, and has considerable scope for further development.

The core themes tables in the revised Chapter One do not consistently include benchmarks for the Indicators of Achievement (IAs). However, benchmarks have been established, as evidenced in the Core Theme Progress Report included as Appendix 6. As SCC prepares its Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, Chapter One will provide an overview of the college's mission, core themes, and means of assessing and evaluating mission fulfillment. This chapter is a prelude to Chapter Four, which pertains to Core Theme Planning, Assessment, and Improvement. In order to provide a more complete overview of the college's process for assessing core themes, the evaluators urge SCC to consider adding an extra column in their core themes table in Chapter One that includes the benchmarks. The columns would therefore include Number, Indicator, Measure, and Benchmark. The order for placing Measure and Benchmark would be an institutional judgment.

Much of the discussion that took place between the evaluators and SCC personnel focused on the yeoman efforts that are taking place both with planning and assessment. Looking forward to the Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, it will be extremely important for SCC to be intentional and thorough in describing and documenting the changes (improvements) that have occurred as a direct result of assessment efforts. To the very extent possible, talk in terms of changes that have taken place or that are currently taking place. Be especially parsimonious with any statements of what you "are going to do." In short, frame your action statements in the past tense, present perfect tense, or present progressive tense, not in the future tense.

Conclusion

SCC has strong, collaborative administrative and faculty leadership who place great emphasis on planning and improvements. The process of evaluating mission fulfillment shows a high-level of engagement and detail at multiple settings, and provides actionable information. Faculty leaders have developed a method for collecting student learning outcomes assessment data that is well documented and reasonably communicated. However, it was not evident that student learning outcomes assessment is, at this point, a collective process, nor that meaningful data is captured to guide curricular improvements that result in consistent student learning.

The efforts that have been made to clarify process for both strategic and core theme planning, and for measuring and reporting levels achievement, do represent a change for the organization, but one that appears to work within the culture of the college. We have no doubt that SCC will be able to show meaningful measurement of mission fulfillment in all areas by the time of the Year Seven Report.

Meetings with College Staff

College President: Paul Killpatrick

Chief Academic Officer: Wai-Fong Lee

Faculty

Bill Harms, Philosophy
Kayleen Oka, Sociology
Camilla Sigelmann, Apparel Design
Melanie King, Art History
Helena Ribeiro, English
Denise Vaughn, Basic and Transitional Studies
Fred Goglia, Respiratory care
Jim Hubert, Economics
Marc Salverda, Graphic Design

Instructional Deans

Bradley Lane, Humanities and Social Sciences
Matthew Von Ruden, Seattle Maritime Academy
Wendy Rockhill, Science & Math
Rebecca Kenney, Seattle Vocational Institute
Chris Sullivan, Business, IT, & Creative Arts
Debra Sullivan, Applied Behavioral Science, Social & Health Services
Stephanie Delaney, Extended Learning
Laura DiZazzo, Basic and Transitional Studies
Kim Robitaille, Allied Health, Nursing

Curriculum Coordinating Council

Kayleen Oka, Sociology, former PR Committee Chair
Kelley McHenry, former LC Committee member
Greg Hinckley, LC Committee chair
Lynn Kanne, Librarian, IA member, formerly PR
Marie Villarba, Chemistry, IA Chair
Dan Loos, Basic and Transition Studies, Chair CA
Camilla Sigelmann, Apparel Design, CA member

Core Theme Teams:

Bradley Lane, Dean, Humanities/Social Sciences, Core Theme I,
Chuck Davis, Facilities & Maintenance, Core Theme IV
Diane Coleman, Interim VPSS, Dean Enrollment Services, Core Themes II and III
David Gourd, Executive dean, Allied Health, Core Theme II
Chris Sullivan, Business, IT, Creative Arts Academy, Core Theme II
Jeff Keever, Auxiliary Services, Core Theme IV
Andrea Samuels, Workforce Education, Core Theme IV
Maggi Sutthoff, Interim Dean, Student Development, Core Themes III and IV
Laura DiZazzo, Basic Skills and Transitions, Core them III

Institutional Effectiveness

Cherisa Yarkin, Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives & Institutional Research
Elizabeth Kronoff, Senior Research Analyst