



Year One Self-Evaluation Report

Prepared for
The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Institutional Overview

College profile

Founded in 1961 as Highline College, today Highline serves approximately 17,000 students. The college offers associate degrees that prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions, as well as associate degrees and certificates in approximately 40 professional-technical programs. We also offer pre-college and basic education, short-term training programs, and continuing education classes. This fall, we will offer our first Bachelor of Applied Science degrees. In addition to face-to-face daytime classes, we offer on-line, hybrid, web-supported, evening and weekend classes to serve today's mix of traditional and non-traditional students. Beyond the main Des Moines campus, we offer a limited range of classes at community sites, including our Marine Science and Technology Center at nearby Redondo Beach.

With over 68 percent of our students reporting race or ethnicity other than white, Highline remains the most racially diverse community college in the state — almost twice as diverse as the system average. The majority of our students are local adult learners, but we also serve over 700 international students each year, along with approximately 1,200 high school juniors and seniors in the state's Running Start co-enrollment program. Students' purposes for attending are varied, with 29 percent seeking basic skills education, 31 percent declaring an intention to transfer to a four-year institution, 23 percent attending for work-related courses or other educational goals, 1 percent seeking high school completion, and 2 percent looking for personal enrichment.

Current environment

Thanks to prudent financial planning, we have successfully transitioned from recent high-enrollment years to current, more typical enrollment levels. Meantime, we continued to experience strong demand from new immigrant groups seeking tuition-waivered basic skills courses, which remain nearly one-third of our overall effort. We have been nimble in our response to these changes, launching new initiatives while preserving the majority of our core services.

Nonetheless, finances have remained an ongoing challenge. Over the past several biennia, the college lost almost \$9 million in state dollars. We buffered that loss through a combination of strategic budget cuts and increased reliance on tuition and revenue from Running Start and international enrollments. Because we had meaningful core themes and objectives in place, the college made budget choices that best met those goals. The 2013 Legislature adopted a 2013-15 budget with minimal cutbacks to higher education. With the state's economy slowly stabilizing, we had anticipated greater financial stability in the immediate years ahead. However, with the Washington State Supreme Court's *McCleary* ruling (2012), the state must now fully fund K-12 education. As a result, higher education is anticipating potential significant cuts in the next biennium.

During this period, Highline has benefited from stability in its internal structure, allowing us to focus on our core themes and attain some noteworthy achievements to advance those themes. A few highlights:

Core Theme 1 — Student engagement, learning and achievement: In 2013-14, we completed our third year as Achieving the Dream Leader College — a national-level recognition of our sustained improvement in key student achievement indicators and our leadership in the nation's student completion movement. Also, we completed our third year of a TRiO grant which provides wrap-around support services to first-generation college students, low-income students, and students with disabilities. Our Gateway to College (GtC) program, a college-based high school dropout-recovery initiative, admitted its third 50-student cohort in 2013-14. This fall, we will expand GtC to serve a cohort of English Language Learners. The past year saw our third round of faculty engagement in Reading Apprenticeship Training, a pedagogy that increases student retention and success. At the same time, Highline's Placement Task

Force as adopted more effective and student-friendly intake placement methods to increase completion rates. Most recently, the college was selected to receive a three-year Working Families Success Network grant to support our low-income students through a three-pillar approach of financial coaching, employment and career development, and access to public benefits and tax credits. We also received a \$160,000 state allocation to expand engineering enrollments.

Core Theme 2 — Diversity and globalism: In 2014, Highline received the Advancing Diversity Award of Excellence from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The college was also named as a Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) award-winner in 2013. Highline completed its first year of the Culturally Competent Educators initiative to increase our cultural competence in serving students. Also, in our third year of a federal Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant, we expanded our ACHIEVE project, which helps intellectually disabled individuals attend and succeed in college. The Mathematics Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) Student Center also completed its third year in 2013-14, offering academic support and advising for underrepresented students in math, engineering, science, and technology. Over the same period, our global initiatives have continued to expand partnerships and exchanges with educational institutions in Egypt, Indonesia, Brazil, and China. At the same time, our Welcome Back Center continues to provide a streamlined path to careers for immigrant adults who bring professional credentials from their home countries.

Core Theme 3 — Presence within the college's communities: We completed our first year of Career Coach, an online community service that provides local data on employment and associated education and training, and offers the program Resume Builder. In response to low participation rates among local Latino populations, we also launched a Spanish language website, hired bilingual staff, and mounted a wide variety of Latino outreach initiatives. This past year saw a third, very successful annual Highline Alumni Dinner and first-ever Japanese Alumni Reception in Tokyo. The fourth annual Black and Brown Male Youth Summit attracted over 500 participants. This year we augmented the summit with a first annual Young Educated Ladies Leading female summit (Y.E.L.L.), a free event designed to empower and encourage our young women of color, eighth grade through college. Meantime, the Marine Science and Technology (MaST) Center remained open year-round for education to the community and students, and offered a summer camp. Our Small Business Development Center continued to work with new clients and create new jobs while our StartZone microenterprise initiative continued to launch new businesses led by low-income women, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities.

Core Theme 4 — Sustainability: Sustainability includes not only preserving existing resources but also garnering new ones. In addition to a number of recent grants, our ongoing awards include \$225,000 in National Science Foundation funding for geoscience education, and monies from the Port of Seattle which underwrote a major renovation of our Building 4. Another grant helped us to decrease our waste tonnage. On the human resources front, Highline was named among the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* "Best Colleges to Work For" in both 2010 and 2013. This past year we recruited over a dozen new full-time faculty and successfully promoted several employees to higher levels of leadership within our institution. Also, one-time funds from sources such as excess enrollments were used strategically to move the college's goals forward, including facilities upgrades, software purchases, and temporary staffing expansions. To make better use of resources and better align technology with the college's core themes, we merged Administrative Technology and Instructional Computing into one department under Instructional Resources.

Highline College today remains a vibrant, innovative, and values-driven institution. In keeping with our core themes, we strive to serve our diverse community with passion, respect, and excellence, and to be a part of that community.

Preface

Update on institutional changes

Since we submitted our *Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report* last year, Highline College has the following changes to note.

Bachelor's degree start-up — New this year, the college will offer its first Bachelor of Applied Science degrees. These programs provide the third and fourth years of college work for people who have completed a two-year technical degree. Highline has submitted substantive change prospectuses to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) for all four BAS degrees — Cybersecurity and Forensics, Global Trade and Logistics, Respiratory Therapy, and Youth Development. As of August 2014, three of them have received NWCCU approval.

College name — To reflect the addition of the four BAS programs, effective July 1, 2014, the Board of Trustees changed the college's name back to the original Highline College. Highline College was established in 1961 as a "community college serving the Highline area." In 1967, Highline changed its name to Highline Community College to reflect the Washington State Legislature's passage of the Community College Act that year, creating a statewide system for community colleges. Now offering two-year and four-year degrees, the college adopted the more suitable name Highline College. The name change was acknowledged by NWCCU on July 17, 2014.

At NWCCU's request, the college is separately submitting an *ad-hoc* report to address Recommendation 2 from the institution's fall 2013 *Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation*.

Chapter One: Mission, Core Themes and Expectations

Executive summary of Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3

Authority (ER 2)

Highline College, established in 1961, in accordance with the Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 28B.50, provides “thoroughly comprehensive educational, training, and service programs to meet the needs of both the communities and students served by combining high standards of excellence in academic transfer courses; realistic and practical courses in occupational education, both graded and ungraded; community services of an educational, cultural, and recreational nature; and adult education, including basic skills and general, family, and workforce literacy programs and services.” The college operates under the authority of Title 132I of the Washington State Administrative Code, its Board of Trustees, and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Mission and Core Themes (ER 3)

Highline College’s core themes were approved by our Board of Trustees, consistent with its legal authority in 2010. An updated mission statement, incorporating those themes, was adopted May 2013, fulfilling the board’s April 2012 resolution to accomplish that task. Most recently, in June 2014, the Board of Trustees reaffirmed the college’s mission, reinforcing the alignment of that mission with the institution’s new Bachelor of Applied Science degrees. The mission and core themes, detailed in this report, are appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. In accordance with the Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 28B.50, our purpose is to serve the educational interests of our students. Our primary programs lead to degrees recognized in higher education, among them the Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, and Associate of Science degrees. As a publicly-funded institution, all of our resources go to support our educational mission.

Mission (Standard 1A)

Mission statement

Our current mission statement, as adopted by the trustees in May 2013, is fully aligned with our core themes.

As a public institution of higher education serving a diverse community in a multicultural world and global economy, Highline College promotes student engagement, learning, and achievement, integrates diversity and globalism throughout the college, sustains relationships within its communities, and practices sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning.

Interpretation of mission fulfillment

Highline College has, over the past several years, moved strongly and continuously toward a establishing a “culture of evidence” for its work. Our efforts in this direction have been supported by the structures and requirements of Achieving the Dream, the state’s Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) performance-funding metrics, and NWCCU’s accreditation processes. The development of the core themes and their related elements are a natural extension of the work we have done in those areas.

Our four core themes provide the lenses through which we view and assess mission fulfillment. Each of the core themes is grounded by objectives which reflect the concrete components of the vision articulated in the theme. Every objective is further refined by a limited set of indicators of achievement which are meaningful, verifiable, and directly assessable. Each measure has an identified benchmark, which represents a minimum threshold of fulfillment. Benchmarks are tied either to externally validated standards of achievement or, in the absence of an external reference, an internally defined standard for continuous improvement. Data are drawn from accessible, well-accepted measures and sources.

Constant attention to the values articulated in our core themes and objectives, ongoing assessment of the indicators for the objectives, and strategic planning to sustain continuous improvement are how we evaluate mission fulfillment.

Articulation of extent of mission fulfillment

We define our minimum threshold for mission fulfillment as achievement of 80 percent of our benchmarks across all core theme objectives. Our 2012-13 rate was 92 percent.

We hasten to emphasize the importance of the term *minimum* in this context. In light of the college's long history of collegiality and innovation, the institution's leaders have opted to define *mission fulfillment* as a compliance-level baseline, with the clear expectation that the college will continue to excel in all mission areas, consistently improving its performance over time. In this way, the concept of *mission fulfillment* encourages, rather than discourages, the continued commitment and energy of the campus community. The approach so far has been effective. As recently as April 2014, the college president held an all-campus meeting to announce four "stretch goals" within Highline's student attainment measures (Core Theme 1, Objective 3). Already, the president's remarks have triggered a variety of ideas, initiatives, and commitments to achieve — and, ultimately, surpass — the new targets.

The annual [*Mission Fulfillment Report*](#) (User name: NWCCU, Password: Accred12014) presents a comprehensive evaluation of institutional performance. The report then articulates the achievement level (relative to the benchmarks) on each indicator of every objective in the four core themes. At this deeper level of analysis, the details are an important and rich source of information for strategic planning, campus and community discussion, and goal-setting.

The *Mission Fulfillment Report* (MFR) is posted annually for review by the college community. Over the course of the year, our Executive Staff — comprised of the president and the four vice presidents — regularly evaluate data from the MFR to ensure that the college is maintaining the course charted by the core theme benchmarks and the college's planning, assessment, and improvement processes. In consultation with the trustees, Executive Staff is charged with developing goals and, where deficiencies arise, a data-driven response plan that delegates implementation to appropriate groups and individuals. In this way, mission fulfillment is an ongoing process, carefully managed, effectively guiding the day-to-day work of the college.

Core Themes (Standard 1.B)

Core Theme #1

Promote student engagement, learning, and achievement

Highline is a learning community where students are empowered to pursue their own educational pathways through innovative curricula, quality instruction, and student services. Students engage with their peers and community to experience multiple perspectives, practice civic responsibility, and contribute to the global community.

Objective 1: Students engage with their curriculum, campus, and community for a meaningful educational experience.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
1.1: Students experience positive interactions with faculty in and outside of the classroom.	1.1A: CCSSE “Student-Faculty Interaction” scores	Scores remain at or above national norm of 50.
1.2: Students participate in organizations and activities that provide support, mentoring, or leadership opportunities on campus and in the community.	1.2A: Percent of students who participate in student organizations (CCSSE item 13.i.1)	Score remains at or above 17% (CCSSE national sample average).

Rationale:

We begin with student engagement because we believe that it is the foundation of student success. Students who form meaningful relationships with faculty, staff, and fellow students are far more likely to stay in school than those who are less connected. Vincent Tinto, arguably the leading spokesperson for that view, says it this way: “Simply put, involvement matters, and at no point does it matter more than during the first year of college when student attachments are so tenuous” (2003). Though our focus of this objective begins in the classroom, it expands to the campus and greater community.

Besides retention, there are, of course, additional benefits to an engagement-focused college. “Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives” (Center for Community College Engagement, 2012).

Measures of both indicators for this objective come from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a widely used, nationally-normed instrument which we have administered since 2008. Indicator 1.1 reflects the most elemental aspect of the student experience — interactions with faculty — as the core of student engagement. We use the national norm for those items as our benchmark. As a mid-sized, low-funded institution serving an exceptionally diverse population of many first-generation and low-income students, performance at the national average is an ambitious but achievable benchmark of our success in this area, we believe.

Indicator 1.2 reflects the college experience outside the classroom. Here, we are using a single CCSSE item which directly measures extra-curricular participation, setting our initial benchmark at CCSSE’s national average for that item, following a similar rationale as that of Indicator 1.1.

Objective 2: Diverse teaching methods, innovative curricula, and student support services fulfill the learning needs of students.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
2.1: Faculty engage in continuous course-level assessment.	2.1A: Number of departments reporting on successful faculty assessment of course level student learning outcomes	Number of departments successfully reporting is 90% or better.
2.2: Students experience HCC courses as challenging and engaging.	2.2A: CCSSE “Academic Challenge and Collaborative Learning” composite score	Score is at or above the national norm of 50.
2.3: Faculty and student services personnel provide effective support to students.	2.3A: CCSSE “Support for Learners” score	Score is at or above the national norm of 50.
	2.3B: Percent of first-level academic probation students who achieve good standing in the second quarter	Percentage is at or above 42%.

Rationale:

Our second objective moves from engagement to evidence of learning. Here, our first indicator advances a philosophy that expects instructors to consistently assess student performance based on stated learning outcomes which are explicitly linked to our College-Wide Outcomes, to use the assessment findings to engage in self-evaluation, and to revise and innovate for improvement in instruction. Our second indicator reflects our belief that strong curriculum and pedagogy are evidenced in a student experience that includes collaborative learning and a challenging intellectual environment. Finally, best practices are enhanced with academic support in flexible, responsive options available for all students. Thus, in our third indicator, we focus our attention on delivery of services that help students navigate the college system and connect with one another.

For measure 2.1A, we rely on internal measures of successful unit-level assessment activity. The reporting processes for the college’s educational assessment programs are comprehensive and rigorous. By maintaining a high level of successful participation in these programs, we ensure that faculty continue to monitor, refine, and evaluate their work in order to maintain ongoing improvement of the student experience. Though faculty-wide compliance is expected, we have set the benchmark at 90, rather than 100 percent to allow some leeway for unavoidable obstacles that may occasionally interfere with annual assessment plans, particularly in single-person departments. Meantime, for measures 2.2A and 2.3A, we again turn to the CCSSE, using national norms as our benchmark for self-assessment. For measure 2.3.B, we measure the rate of successful progression from probation to academic good standing because this progression has far-reaching effects on student persistence and attainment. Further, every department in Student Services, through support services, advising and intervention strategies, plays a part in moving students toward their educational goals. Based on our four-year average of 37 percent progression, we chose an ambitious goal of 42 percent — a five percentage-point improvement over the current rate — as our benchmark.

Objective 3: Students achieve their goals by progressing on educational pathways.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
3.1: Advanced Basic Skills students will transition from non-credit to credit courses.	3.1A: Percentage of Advanced Basic Skills students who transition to college-level courses during the academic year	Percentage is at or above 10%.
3.2: Degree- or certificate-seeking students will progress through significant educational milestones.	3.2A: Percentage of eligible students who attain 15 college-level credits within the academic year	Percentage is at or above 45%.
	3.2B: Percentage of eligible students who attain five college-level credits in quantitative reasoning within current year	Percentage is at or above 25%.
3.3: Degree- or certificate-seeking students will attain credentials.	3.3A: Percentage of eligible students who attain a credential and 45 credits in current year	Percentage is at or above 25%.
	3.3B: IPEDS graduation rate of full-time, first-time degree-seeking students within three years	The rate is at or above Washington state peer institutions' aggregate rate for the current year.

Rationale:

Our final objective measures student progress. If students are engaged and are learning, their successes should lead to tangible achievements: course completions, credit accumulation, and credentials.

Here, our indicators and measures directly align with Washington State’s Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) measures. The SAI framework builds on the work of Clifford Adelman, veteran researcher formerly of the U.S. Department of Education, and others who have argued that students who gain academic momentum have a higher likelihood of remaining in college or achieving a degree or certificate irrespective of background characteristics, social, or academic integration (Adelman, 2006). Adapting Adelman’s framework to a Washington context, Leinbach and Jenkins (2008) proposed that measures such as developmental education completion, and key credit-level benchmarks, promote continued momentum toward completion. Because those benchmarks can be analyzed locally, we have selected them as a convenient, meaningful, and rich source of data on student goal-attainment. For each, we have set as our benchmark our initial three-year rolling average, a reasonable target given Highline’s high SAI performance relative to system averages. We have chosen the IPEDS graduation rate as a final measure, with a benchmark equal to or higher than the aggregate state rate for the current year. Given our college’s disproportionately large basic skills enrollments, statewide averages represent a set of ambitious targets for Highline’s credit- and credential-related metrics.

Core Theme #2

Integrate and institutionalize diversity and globalism throughout the college

Highline is an institution in which issues of diversity and globalism are central to decision-making, integrated throughout curriculum and pedagogy, and considered in all interactions among faculty, staff and students. Faculty and staff are culturally competent, all students progress and achieve at comparable rates, and a positive campus climate exists for all.

Objective 1: Diversity and globalism are infused throughout the curriculum; faculty employ a pedagogy that integrates diversity and globalism.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
1.1: Diversity and globalism are integrated broadly across the curriculum.	1.1A: Percentage of courses with student learning objectives that link to the College Wide Outcome on diversity	Percentage is at or above 35%.
1.2: Students from diverse backgrounds experience positive interactions with faculty in and outside the classroom.	1.2A: CCSSE “Student-Faculty Interaction” score, disaggregated by race/ethnicity	For each racial/ethnic category, the score is at or above the national norm of 50.
1.3: Students from diverse backgrounds experience HCC courses as challenging and engaging.	1.3A: CCSSE “Academic Challenge/Active and Collaborative Learning” composite score, disaggregated by race/ethnicity	For each racial/ethnic category, the score is at or above the national norm of 50.

Rationale:

According to the literature, students benefit from exposure to issues of diversity in the classroom, through course content, discussion, and interaction with diverse peers and faculty (Millem, C. & Antonio, A.L.; Hurtado, S. Dey, E.L., Gurin, P.Y. & Gurin, G., 2003). Therefore, diversity must be infused throughout the curriculum, and faculty must be competent to teach in a way that advances those values.

We begin with curriculum. Our associate degrees all include a diversity requirement which can be met by taking a course designated as having significant diversity content. Beyond that requirement, however, ongoing exposure to issues of diversity supports further learning for all students, not just degree-seekers. Accordingly, we have adopted a College-Wide Outcome which addresses awareness of diversity, as well as the capacity to use that knowledge to guide ethical behavior in diverse contexts. Because we have explicitly linked course-level student learning outcomes to the College-Wide Outcomes, we can readily identify the extent that diversity is integrated into the curriculum. Our 35-percent benchmark anticipates that substantial diversity content will appear in at least one course out of a typical three-course load.

Second, to assess the cultural competence of teaching staff, we have opted to disaggregate Core Theme 1’s “Student Faculty Interaction” and “Academic Challenge/Active and Collaborative Learning” scores by race and ethnicity, again setting CCSSE’s national norms as our benchmark. Our rationale reflects the belief that, in a culturally competent environment, students’ perceptions of their learning experiences and interaction with faculty should be consistent across races and ethnicities.

Objective 2: Student support and business services initiatives successfully meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
2.1: Support and business services are effectively/successfully delivered to diverse students.	2.1A: CCSSE “Support for Learners” score, disaggregated by race/ethnicity	For each racial/ethnic category, the score is at or above the national norm of 50.

Rationale:

Beyond the classroom, services and programs on campus play an equally significant role in the success of our diverse students. Consequently, we are committed to providing culturally competent support services. Here, student perception is again an important tool for evaluating our success. The CCSSE “Support for Learners” score includes items that assess financial aid services, advising, and help with general coping, among others. In disaggregating the results by race/ethnicity, we can determine how well our diverse students feel we are meeting their needs with these critical wrap-around services. These data can help us identify areas for improvement in the cultural competency of the services we offer.

Objective 3: Students from diverse backgrounds progress, achieve goals, and complete degrees/certificates.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
3.1: Degree- and certificate-seeking students from diverse backgrounds achieve significant milestones at rates comparable to relevant comparison groups.	3.1A: Percentage of eligible students who attain 15 college-level credits within the academic year, disaggregated by race/ethnicity (including international)	For each racial/ethnic category (including international), the percentage is at or above 45%.
	3.1B: Percentage of eligible students who attain 5 college-level credits in quantitative reasoning within the current year, disaggregated by race/ethnicity (including international)	For each racial/ethnic category (including international), the percentage is at or above 25%.
3.2: Students from diverse backgrounds complete degrees and certificates at rates comparable to relevant comparison groups.	3.2A: Percentage of eligible students who attain a credential and 45 credits within the current year, disaggregated by race/ethnicity (including international)	For each racial/ethnic category (including international), the percentage is at or above 25%.
	3.2B: IPEDS graduation rate of full-time, degree-seeking students within 3 years, disaggregated by race/ethnicity (including international)	For each racial/ethnic category (including international), the rate is at or above Washington state peer institutions’ aggregate rate for the current year.

Rationale:

Highline’s very existence is based on helping students achieve academically, and if we are not serving all students equally well, then we need to understand why and adjust course. Scholars of diversity in education have argued that measuring equity of student outcomes is crucial. Bauman et al (2005), for example, state that achieving “inclusive excellence [demands] equity in educational outcomes for all

students at its conceptual core.” For this objective, then, we have again chosen to disaggregate measures from Core Theme 1 to give us a clear view of whether diverse students are achieving equitably. The SAI benchmarks are identical to those used in Core Theme 1: a three-year rolling average of our own students’ achievement. The IPEDS graduation rate is similarly disaggregated here, again with a benchmark that is aligned with that of Core Theme 1. For the most part, the current measures in Objective 3 remain unchanged from our 2011 *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* because they continue to serve the college effectively. However, in our efforts to fine-tune our mission fulfillment assessment, we concluded that our international students represent a large group that is not in the SAI data. For that reason, we opted to add a comparable metric for international students, using records from our student management system.

Objective 4: The College engages in inclusive recruitment and hiring practices, and fosters a campus climate perceived as culturally competent and inclusive by all constituents.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
4.1: Recruitment, hiring and retention of personnel are equitable and full-time employees show increasing diversity.	4.1A: Percentage of people of color in full-time positions	The percentage is at or above 25%.
4.2: Employees from diverse backgrounds experience the campus climate as positive.	4.2A: Percentage of employees indicating general satisfaction with workplace environment, disaggregated by race/ethnicity	The percentage is at or above 75%.

Rationale:

Our final objective recognizes the importance of campus climate in making members of the campus community feel productive and engaged. Climate is influenced by everything from the diversity of faculty and staff, to visual images in posters, to the way new visitors are treated, to processes for debating campus issues. Together, these disparate elements create a “feeling” that makes some perceive that they are welcome and makes others feel alienated. Unsurprisingly, researchers like Clayton-Pederson et al. (2007) include campus climate as one of the key dimensions in their framework for campus diversity.

Our first climate-related measure focuses on the diversity of our employees. In selecting a benchmark we considered many options, including national figures on faculty (17.7% faculty of color), SBCTC data (14.7% faculty, 23.1% classified staff, 16.7% professional staff of color) and Washington state population (23.8% people of color). Since we exceed all of these, we set our 2009-10 baseline as an initial benchmark. At the same time, our long-term goal is to mirror the diversity of our students (68%).

For our second indicator, we look at employee perception of campus climate. Here, while retaining the original metric for Indicator 4.2, we recently adopted a more efficient tool to gather that data. In the past we used a locally-modified version of Washington State Department of Personnel’s Agency Climate Survey. However, in our continual efforts to refine our metrics, for 2014-15 we opted to replace that instrument with the *Chronicle for Higher Education’s* “Best Colleges to Work For” survey. The “Best Colleges” survey is an advantageous choice for a variety of reasons. It’s a survey we’re already using for other reasons, it is designed specifically for higher education, and it meets our needs to fully disaggregate by employment category (faculty and staff), full- and part-time status, and race/ethnicity. We chose a benchmark of 75 percent, mirroring the target for workplace satisfaction in Core Theme 4, Objective 1.

Core Theme #3

Build valuable relationships and establish a meaningful presence within Highline College's communities

Highline College, in collaboration with community partners, identifies community needs, and develops, implements, and maintains programs based on those identified needs.

Objective 1: The College communicates effectively with its communities.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
1.1: The community is aware of Highline's programs, offerings, and services.	1.1A: Rate of community members' awareness of the college's statutory mission elements as reported in the Community Perception Survey	80% of respondents indicate awareness of college's statutory mission elements (transfer, workforce training, and basic skills).

Rationale:

The first step in community engagement is establishing awareness of Highline and its offerings within the communities the college serves (Walshok, 1999). Successful communications lead to positive perceptions of the college. The community members' perceptions of the college are fundamental to their decisions about engaging with Highline. When a community understands the offerings of the college, it begins to assess the potential benefits and opportunities gained through deeper engagement, thus opening the door for the college to connect with the community (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult, 1983).

We believe that this first objective is best measured with a direct, straightforward assessment of community awareness. Within the past several years, we have conducted two community perception surveys. In these surveys, we explored the level of awareness that community members have about the college's statutory mission elements: transfer programs, workforce training, and basic skills. Results showed that residents are not only aware of the college, but also familiar with our three-fold statutory mission. The specific and positive nature of that feedback has led us to see community awareness as an appropriate measure of our external communications. Accordingly, we have set a high benchmark for achievement here, with the goal of maintaining the 80-percent awareness level of the past two surveys.

Objective 2: The college initiates community connections to understand community needs.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
2.1: The college actively offers a variety of programs and makes connections with external organizations.	2.1A: Rates of agreement that the college is meeting community educational needs as reported in the Community Perception Survey	Pending: 50% proposed.
2.2: Participation rates reflect meaningful connections and confidence in the quality of college offerings.	2.2A: Overall participation rate from within the service district	Rate is within 0.5% of state average (currently 5%).
	2.2B: Participation rate of degree-seeking students by racial/ethnic group	Percentage of students of color is within 5% of the district total for each racial/ethnic group.

Rationale:

While outward communication is a critical first step in engaging the community, the second step is creating reciprocal connectivity to communities. In assessing this objective, we look not only at awareness of college services but also at evidence of their perceived relevance. In other words, it's not enough that community members know about us. They should also see value in what we do. That value derives from our success in initiating meaningful connections and understanding community needs.

We have selected two areas of assessment for this objective. The first is, again, a perception measure. Our Community Perception Survey includes questions about our success in meeting community needs. Based on the 2011 survey's results, we have set a benchmark (pending) of 50 percent for this measure as we continue evaluating the validity of that target.

Our second metric is derived from the participation rates of degree-seeking students. Our rationale here is that if the families who live in our community are both aware of the college and confident that we can provide quality educational experiences, then they will encourage their children, family members, and neighbors to attend Highline. Our assessment is framed in two dimensions: overall rates of participation and equity of participation among ethnicities. Tentatively, our first target is to maintain an overall participation rate of between 4.5 and 5.5 percent of our area's 15 to 44 year-olds, a target that is within one-half percent of the statewide average (currently \approx 5%). As with the community perception benchmark mentioned above, we are in the process of evaluating the meaningfulness of the participation-rate benchmark. The second target is to have our percentage of degree-seeking students from underrepresented groups remain within five percent of their representation in the district population. By disaggregating enrollments in this way, we can more clearly see where our efforts at connecting with specific communities are effective and where they are in need of revision. In the end, the most consistent measure of our community's trust is the faith that families place in us to educate their children, friends, and themselves.

Objective 3: Highline College contributes to meeting community needs.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
3.1: The College serves the ever-changing needs of our diverse service district.	3.1A: Number of community members served by community non-credit programmatic offerings	Service levels meet or exceed 2012-13 total.
	3.1B: Number of community members served by community-responsive events	Participation level meets or exceeds 2012-13 total.
3.2: The college meets regional workforce development needs.	3.2A: Post-completion employment rate of students in workforce education program	Percent is at or above 74% (state average).
	3.2B: Percent of Advisory Committee members who agree that our program curricula meet the needs of community employers	Percentage is at or above 90%.

Rationale:

Full community engagement finds the community integrated with the college, its programs, and offerings. In that environment, effective partnerships between agencies, schools, universities, businesses, government, and residents are a vital part of community growth. Such collaboration increases the

likelihood that organizations reach a larger population, avoid a duplication of services, make better use of their resources, and deal more effectively and thoroughly with the myriad problems faced by communities (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Hastad & Tymeson, 1997).

In our recent efforts to refine our mission-fulfillment metrics, we have retained many of our earlier measures for Core Theme 3, Objective 3. We also adopted new measures. After seeking more meaningful indices of community engagement in our last accreditation cycle, we expanded our definition of community impact.

For Objective 3, Indicator 3.1, in an effort to better understand our community's definition of community service, we solicited community feedback through surveys, focus groups, and high school and middle school visits. From those, we learned more about what our community identifies as important offerings. Based on that learning, we refined our metrics in two ways. The first measure is the number of community members served by non-credit ESL classes and continuing education classes. We chose this because it indicates our commitment to meet a direct need for non-degree seeking members of our South King County community — a core part of our mission and values, comprising a large component of our college population. The second is community participation in non-academic community-driven offerings such as Black and Brown Male Summit, Y.E.L.L. (Young Educated Ladies Leading), ESL Night, the Asian Pacific Islander Leadership Institute, and *La Familia es Primero*. We chose this measure because it indicates the college's commitment to help community members, potential students, and their families to access, navigate, and influence higher education. These community-responsive events engage members of our community who would otherwise not have a gateway to post-secondary learning. As benchmarks for 3.1.A and 3.1.B, we chose 2012-13 as a snapshot year, marking the timeframe when we made significant changes in these areas. For 3.1.A, we recently began offering more continuing education in employer-requested training and other community-requested offerings, in addition to our ongoing ESL classes, and for 3.1.B, several of our community-responsive events began or solidified around this time.

In a similar way, for Objective 3, Indicator 3.2, we are retaining some measures and adopting some new measures. Measure 3.2A's post-completion employment date continues to provide a meaningful measure of the college's ability to align with local economic needs. Maintaining consistency in this metric allows us to track our long-term effectiveness in economic impact. However, because this data is updated only every six months, it provides us with a solely retrospective view of our performance. Because the delay limits our perspective, we have added interviews from our professional/technical advisory committees to gain anticipatory data as an early alert mechanism in Measure 3.2.B. Here, we set our benchmark at 90 percent because the current committee members, who represent the industries we are training our students to join, have expressed a high level of confidence in our programs' relevancy. Together, these two measures give us a thorough picture of our relevance in meeting regional workforce development needs.

In short, while we have retained the strengths of our earlier Core Theme 3 metrics, we believe that our revised measures for this 2014 *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* are even more meaningful and better reflect our commitment to our community.

Core Theme #4

Model sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning

Sustainability calls for policies, procedures, and strategies that meet society's present needs without compromising the welfare of future generations. Sustainability encompasses the intertwined ideals of viable economies, social equity, and ecological integrity. For the college, sustainability calls for us to use our resources — human, physical, and financial — to improve the future success of the college, minimize our impact on the environment, and model sustainability for students.

Objective 1: The College recruits, retains, and develops a highly qualified workforce.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
1.1 Staff and faculty actively pursue continuing professional development opportunities.	1.1A: Rate of agreement that employees have opportunities at work to learn and grow professionally	The percentage is at or above 75%.
1.2: Current employees indicate satisfaction with working environment and campus climate.	1.2A: Percentage of employees indicating general job satisfaction and positive campus climate	The percentage is at or above 75%.
1.3: Employees are retained by the college.	1.3A: Short-term (2-year) attrition rate	The attrition rate is at or below 8%.

Rationale:

Education is a service-oriented industry where the quality of the professional providing instruction and support services has significant influence on student success. Thus, our people are our most important resource. The quality of our employees is both developed and maintained through the professional development opportunities we provide to everyone. Investment in professional development improves not only the qualifications of the existing workforce on campus, but also the level of employee workplace satisfaction, which is clearly linked to staff retention.

As an employer, Highline strongly supports professional development and provides funding for all employees to pursue opportunities for professional growth. Thus, our proposed measure of employee professional development is direct and quantitative: the rate of agreement that employees have opportunities at work or learn and grow professionally. In fall 2011, we completed our first local Employee Satisfaction Survey, adapted from the Washington Department of Personnel's question bank. This year, we are replacing the survey with the *Chronicle for Higher Education's* "Best Colleges to Work For" survey as our instrument of choice. Despite this change, we have retained the original benchmark of 75 percent, which mirrors the benchmark for overall workplace satisfaction in Core Theme 2, Objective 4.

Workplace satisfaction and employee retention also can be measured directly, if perceptually. The first-run Employee Satisfaction Survey responses indicated significant overall satisfaction with the working environment and campus climate, an encouraging but unsurprising finding given our two-time recognition as a "Best Colleges to Work For" awardee from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and as a NWJobs.com "People's Pick" favorite employer in the education category. In light of these successes, we set our initial benchmark for this measure at a high mark: 75 percent. Finally, for an initial measure of retention, we are using short-term attrition. Originally, we had established a benchmark of 8 percent based on our average retention during the last economic downturn, when budget constraints limited recruitment and a weak job market may have forced individuals to apply for, accept, and remain in positions that were significantly below their professional qualifications. With an additional three years of data available now, we have

nonetheless retained the 8 percent benchmark for now, until better long-term trend information is available. On a positive note, even as the employment market has become more competitive recently, Highline saw increased retention, with only 5 percent short-term attrition.

Objective 2: The College demonstrates good stewardship of financial resources while ensuring sufficient resources will be available in the future.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
2.1: The college maintains sufficient financial resources to both maintain programs and remain strategic in times of financial downturn.	2.1A: Percent of general operations budget maintained as operating reserves	Reserve remains at or above 10% of general operations budget.
2.2: The college maintains strong internal controls over assets and ensures compliance with college and state procedures.	2.2A: Number of annual audit findings	Annual audit findings remain at zero.
2.3: The college ensures continuing alignment of fiscal resources to meet current operating needs.	2.3A: Attainment of SBCTC FTE target allocation	Benchmark is \geq 96% of target.
	2.3B: Attainment of internal tuition-generating FTE target	Benchmark is 100% of target.

Rationale:

We recognize the critical importance of financial stability and growth to ensure the successful realization of the college’s educational mission. The college requires adequate financial reserves to respond strategically and thoughtfully to financial challenges. Our reserve benchmark of 10 percent matches the level fixed by our Board of Trustees. Further, a strong culture of internal controls assures funding authorities that the college is a good steward of scarce resources, strengthening our ability to compete for those resources. Any audit findings would be unacceptable, so our benchmark is zero there. Finally, in aligning our fiscal resources with operating needs, we recognize that we must pay careful attention to both state and local revenue targets. Here, we have two measures, both significantly altered from our last *Year One Self-Evaluation Report*. For our state performance metric, we have set our benchmark at 96 percent of our annual FTE allocation — the state’s minimum percentage for sustaining current allocations. Recognizing the college’s growing reliance on non-state revenues, we have added a second, internal tuition-collection target, with a benchmark of 100 percent.

Objective 3: The College demonstrates stewardship of environmental resources.

Indicator	Measure	Benchmark
3.1: The college encourages awareness and use of ‘green’ practices in working environments.	3.1A: Percent reduction in annual waste stream/landfill tonnage from baseline	Maintain or increase 5% reduction from baseline.
	3.1B: Percent reduction in annual total energy consumption (electricity and fossil fuels combined) from baseline	Total energy consumption remains 2% or more below baseline of 78, 511 MBTUs.

Rationale:

As stewards of the environment with a commitment to resource management, we are dedicated to efficiently using energy and reducing consumption of resources in our daily operations. Coordinated actions campus-wide reduce our environmental footprint by improving recycling efforts, reducing waste, and achieving college-wide reductions in fuel and energy consumption.

To assess our focus on resource management, we use two important and available measures — one of inputs and the other of outputs. While conserving water resources is a priority for the college, our ability to measure those reductions is prevented by the water metering system in place on our aging campus. As a result, we have focused on energy consumption as our primary input indicator. For this measure, we use a benchmark of remaining at least 2 percent below a baseline of 78, 511 MBTUs. This baseline aligns with the requirements of our Puget Sound Energy Resource Conservation Program grant, secured in December 2009, which incorporated industry-standard targets for an institution of our profile. As our output metric, we have chosen to measure campus landfill tonnage and its reduction as the primary measure for our waste-management efforts. Because it remains a relatively new measure for us, we have set our benchmark at our most recent level of achieved reduction, which was 5 percent below our 2009-10 tonnage. While we intend to further reduce our waste stream, maintenance of our current reduced levels requires vigilance.

In the longer-term, we intend to integrate teaching and learning into our sustainability efforts, establishing course-, program-, and eventually college-wide learning outcomes for this important human endeavor. However, at present, that curricular initiative is at its beginning stages and, as such, is a matter of strategic planning.

Conclusion

Highline's 2014 *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* attempts to reveal the thoughtful path that leads us to realize our mission. We trust that the text elucidates our vision of mission fulfillment. For those of us who work and learn at the college, the report gives us a measurable view of the ongoing work we do, the progress we have made, and our goals for the future.

Obviously, we were pleased that our last fall's *Year Seven Mission Fulfillment & Sustainability Evaluation* resulted in a commendation for our commitment to our core themes and mission. In its report, the Evaluation Committee commended Highline for "embedding the core themes seamlessly into the planning and decision-making processes of the college" — a welcome recognition of our hard work in crafting, implementing, and institutionalizing our initial set of core themes, objectives, and indicators.

Today, as we begin our first full-length accreditation cycle under NWCCU's revised standards, we believe that our core themes continue to be meaningful, measurable, and reflective of our values. They provide guidance and clarity for our mission fulfillment. Derived from strong data sets, our benchmarks are reasonable in light of past achievement but also have aspirational dimensions. The metrics and indicators allow us to measure our achievements and deficits meaningfully and longitudinally. Accordingly, where our specific measures have continued to serve us well, we have retained them. At the same time, where we have seen opportunities to strengthen and fine-tune our metrics to be even more useful to us, we have done that, too. In short, in reviewing our core theme measures for this *Year One Self-Evaluation Report*, we have sustained a dual commitment to stability and incremental refinement.

Our Board of Trustees continued that commitment when it reaffirmed our mission and core themes this July, even as we added a new degree level — the Bachelor of Applied Science — to our scope of educational services.

Going forward, the campus community will remain an active partner in the processes of planning and executing the activities that drive successful mission fulfillment. We are confident that our ongoing adherence to our core themes — as guides and measures of our success — will allow us to maintain our robust, energetic campus culture as we work together to deliver high-quality educational services to our diverse student body, helping our community members reach their goals.

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