

*Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

A Year-Three Evaluation  
Committee Report

**Highline Community College**

Des Moines, Washington

April 30 to May 2, 2012

*A Confidential Report Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities that  
Represents the Views of the Evaluation Committee*

**Evaluation Committee Report  
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**Highline Community College  
Evaluation Committee Roster  
April 30 to May 2, 2012**

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## Introduction

From April 30 to May 2, 2012, a three-person evaluation team from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities conducted a Year Three Evaluation Visit at Highline Community College. The visit covered Standards One and Two of the revised standards for accreditation approved by the Commission in 2010. The college had previously submitted a Year One Report in 2011 which led to their accreditation being reaffirmed by the Commission in August 2011.

Highline Community College faculty, staff, administration and students went out of their way to extend every courtesy to the visiting team. The team conducted individual interviews, held group meetings with faculty, staff and students and met with two members of the HCC Board of Trustees. In addition, evaluators reviewed numerous documents and records supporting the Year-Three report.

Evaluators noted that College Administration, as well as other college employees, have embraced the challenge of responding to the revised standards and that the college demonstrates a commitment to self-reflection and self-evaluation.

## Progress on Year-One Confidential Report Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

*The Evaluation Team could not find evidence that Highline has articulated a threshold of accomplishments or outcomes that represent the extent to which it is fulfilling its mission. The evaluators recommend the College establish a mechanism for identifying and communicating an acceptable threshold in which the campus believes it has fulfilled its mission (Standard 1.A.2)*

The Committee found that HCC had made great progress on this recommendation. HCC did an excellent job of identifying and communicating an acceptable threshold in which the campus believes it has fulfilled its mission. While this first iteration may need some refinement, the committee believes Standard 1.A.2 is currently being met.

### Recommendation 2

*The Evaluation Team recognizes the work the College underwent to establish a framework for institutional effectiveness aligning its mission to its strategic plan. However, the evaluators are concerned that the College's Core Themes, objectives, and indicators of achievement are not the primary drivers in defining mission fulfillment. The Evaluation Team recommends the College complete its work of transitioning from the use of strategic plan initiatives, and their indicators, in defining mission fulfillment, to using the institution's Core Themes, objectives and indicators (Standard 1.A.2).*

The committee again found that this aspect of Standard 1.A.2 is also now being met by HCC. Its core themes, objectives, and indicators are now the primary drivers of mission fulfillment, and they have been fully integrated into its assessment and reporting of mission fulfillment.

### Recommendation 3

*While the Core Themes and accompanying objectives provide a sound over-arching construct for a continuous improvement model tied to mission attainment, the evaluators are concerned that the College has only conceptually established indicators of achievement for the Core Theme objectives. The Evaluation Team recommends the College establishes specific indicators of achievement that are clearly defined, meaningful, assessable, and verifiable measures of accomplishment of the objectives of its Core Themes (Standard 1.B.2).*

The Committee found that HCC had also made progress on this Recommendation, bringing it in compliance with Standard 1.B.2. Indicators and measures have been reduced in number and more carefully designed with each being scrutinized for validity, interpretability, and sustainability. HCC is now satisfied that it has a coherent set of objectives, indicators, and data sources that are meaningful, verifiable, and assessable measures of the core themes and mission fulfillment. The Committee agrees with this self-assessment.

### **Year-Three Report**

The college's Year-Three report was extensive, substantive and well-written. Electronic appendices, linked electronically to the report, were very useful to the committee. The campus completed a self-study that was the result of wide involvement from across the College community including the governing board, full and part-time faculty, staff, administrators and students. While the actual writing of the report was done by one individual, this was only done after that individual met with many others on campus to review the College's strengths and weaknesses against the new standards. The result was a document that was clearly written and analyzed both the current strengths and weaknesses of the College against the Standards and Policies of the Commission. While the report itself did not get into much detail in some areas, the committee felt that most questions were answered in the self-study and linked appendices provided to each committee member before the visit.

For example, while the Committee did not see that any problems with the curriculum and coursework, it took some effort to identify the details of the curriculum approval process. However, on-site interviews revealed that an appropriate process that met NWCCU standards was in place.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Highline Community College meets all eligibility requirements for accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

Highline Community 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, The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Highline Community College's mission and core themes are clearly defined and have been adopted by its Board of Trustees, consistent with its legal authority. The current mission and its associated strategic initiatives were approved by the trustees in 2006. The 2006 strategic initiatives provided a framework for development of its Core Themes over the 2010-11 and 2011-12 years. The core themes were presented to the board of trustees initially in late-winter 2011. The Board endorsed updated language, as revised through feedback from its *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* feedback, this April. The mission statement is currently in the process of revision.

HCC's mission is clearly defined and adopted by its Board of Trustees, most recently in 2006. HCC's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its educational service area, and its principal programs lead to certificates and associate degrees.

A five member Board of Trustees is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution. Trustees are appointed by the Governor of the State of Washington; none of whom have contractual, employment, or personal financial interest in the institution.

HCC employs a president who is appointed by the Board of Trustees whose full-time responsibility is to HCC.

HCC provides the administrative and support services necessary to achieve its mission and meet its goals.

The College employs a core of full-time, professionally qualified faculty. The faculty is adequate in number and qualifications to meet its obligations toward achievement of the institution's mission and goals. Faculty are involved in the formulation of institutional policy and participate in academic planning, curriculum development and review, student academic advising, institutional governance and are evaluated in a periodic and systematic manner.

Consistent with its mission, HCC offers educational programs leading to a number of certificates and associate degrees. All degrees are based on recognized fields of study; are of sufficient content and length; are effective in the use of library and information resources; and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered.

HCC's transfer degree programs require a core of general education as an essential element of the degree. All other associate degree programs require a general education component; and certificate programs of a year or more require a core of related instruction.

HCC provides library and information resources for students and faculty appropriate for its mission and for all of its educational programs wherever located and however delivered.

HCC recognizes academic freedom as a necessary condition for the successful practice of the academic profession in a free society. Faculty are accorded academic freedom to pursue scholarship, research, and artistic creation. Board policy ensures intellectual freedom and independence.

HCC is an open admissions institution, with selective eligibility and special admissions procedures for a limited number of programs. The institution publishes its student admission policy which specifies the characteristics and qualifications appropriate for its programs, and it adheres to that policy in its admission procedures and practices.

HCC publishes accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admissions requirements and procedures, academic rules and regulations, programs and courses, degrees offered and degree requirements, costs and refund policies, student rights and responsibilities, and the academic credentials of faculty and administrators.

HCC demonstrates a stable funding base, a budget development process that is tied to institutional mission and goals, and informed by institution-wide planning with a required balanced budget, and a responsible level of debt. The institution's financial records are audited annually by qualified state auditors.

HCC has established clearly defined and systematic processes for regular planning and evaluation at all levels of the institution. The College measures progress on its strategic initiatives and it publishes the progress results.

HCC has agreed to disclose to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities any and all such information as the Commission may require to carry out its evaluation and accreditation function.

HCC accepts the standards and related policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and agrees to comply with these standards and policies as currently stated in the Accreditation Handbook (2011 edition) and on the Commission's website. HCC agrees that the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or members of the public that may request such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its status with the Commission. HCC understands that the Commission treats the institutional self-study and evaluation committee reports as confidential.





## Standard One - Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

### Standard 1.A - Mission

The current mission statement of HCC is as follows:

*We deliver innovative education and training opportunities to foster your personal and professional success in our multicultural world and global economy. We help you build a better future.*

HCC is aware that its mission statement is not fully aligned with its core themes. The Board of Trustees will launch a revision of the mission statement during their summer retreat. In preparation for this, the administration has prepared a draft mission statement for their review. At the same time they will begin to develop a strategic plan that will articulate forward movement for the college as defined by the [Mission Fulfillment Report](#) (User name: NWCCU, Password: Acr3d1t3d). Both of these efforts will be rooted in the context provided by the core themes. The revision of the mission statement and a new strategic plan are projected to be completed in 2013.

HCC has provided evidence that, over the past several years, they have made significant gains in establishing a culture of evidence for its work. The development of the core themes and their related elements were closely linked with the evidence gathered and analyzed to date.

HCC views its four core themes as providing the lenses through which they view and assess mission fulfillment. The Evaluation Committee, in speaking with people across campus, found this to be true. 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 is 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.

The Mission Fulfillment Report articulates the achievement level (relative to the benchmarks) on each indicator of every objective in the four core themes. HCC was very intentional in setting its acceptable extent of mission fulfillment as “70% of our benchmarks across all core theme objectives.” HCC’s core theme groups and Data Management Team adopted the convention that the benchmark levels of core theme performance indicators would be set at minimum acceptable thresholds. In other words, benchmarks are not constructed as stretch goals for the institution, but as baseline performance levels that inform improvement targets. Philosophically, the Executive administration wants to honor the hard work of dedicated faculty and staff through a mission fulfillment definition that affirms the institution is currently effective in meeting its mission (all but 2 of the performance indicators are currently met). HCC’s distinctive campus climate is reflective of highly motivated faculty and staff who are

always looking for ways to improve their work with students. Their mission fulfillment definition is appropriate for the culture of the institution.

In future years, the *Mission Fulfillment Report* (MFR) will be posted annually for review by the college community. Over the course of the year, HCC's executive staff regularly evaluates data from the MFR to ensure that the college is maintaining the course charted by the core theme benchmarks and the college's strategic plan, which is driven by the report's findings. Executive staff is charged with developing goals and a data-driven response plan, delegating 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.

## **Standard 1.B – Core Themes**

HCC Core Themes have not been modified since its Year One Report. However, there have been extensive changes to the methods used by the College to assess their adherence to these core themes as well as an adjustment of their activities to better meet the objectives of these core themes.

### **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.*

Major recent activities associated with Core Theme One are that the college has completed its fourth year as an Achieving the Dream College and, in September 2011, Highline was designated as a 2011 Leader College in recognition of its sustained improvement in key student achievement indicators and its leadership in the national student completion movement. In January 2012, HCC celebrated the completion of its first year of a TRIO grant which provides wrap-around support services to first-generation college students, low-income students, and people with disabilities. This program has been very popular with students and there is currently a waiting list for students. The College's Gateway to College (GtC) program, a college-based high school dropout-recovery initiative, admitted its first 50-student cohort, with an initial 86-percent retention rate.

### **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.*

Major developments in Core Theme Two Activities have included the 2011-12 launch of a five-year grant to expand its ACHIEVE project, which helps intellectually disabled individuals attend and succeed in college. At the same time, the College established a MESA Student Center to provide academic support and advising for underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering and math. Over the same period, its global initiatives have included partnerships and exchanges with educational institutions in Egypt, Indonesia, and China. Now in its third year, HCC's Community College Initiative (CCI) program brought 14 non-traditional students from seven countries to study at Highline. While small in number, these students have been very visible on campus. In May 2011, the College's Welcome Back Center, which assists internationally-trained healthcare professionals to re-enter their field, joined its counterparts nationwide in receiving the *E Pluribus Unum* Award from the Migration Policy Institute.

### **Core Theme 3**

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

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

The College has taken advantage of the celebration of its 50<sup>th</sup> year in existence to reach out in a number of ways to the surrounding community. This included a first-ever Alumni Dinner that drew approximately 300 attendees. In March, the College celebrated the unveiling of a whale skeleton at the Marine Science and Technology (MaST) Center, augmenting the resources that MaST provides to the community. Meantime, its Small Business Development Center worked with 220 clients and created 65 new jobs while its StartZone microenterprise initiative launched over 21 new businesses led by low-income women, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities.

### **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.*

To better achieve the objectives of Core Theme 4 the College has focused on stewardship but also on garnering new resources. HCC's MESA center, TRiO program, Achieving the Dream initiative, ACHIEVE expansion, and international projects are all examples of recent, new grants. In addition, in August 2011, the College received over \$225,000 in National Science Foundation grants for geoscience education. With funds from the Port of Seattle, due to its position in the flight path of SEATAC Airport, it improved energy efficiency and noise control in one building and will start soon on another.

## **Standard Two – Educational Program and Its Effectiveness**

### **Standard 2.A – Governance**

Highline Community College has an effective administrative structure that ensures progress is being made on a number of fronts. While there is a clearly defined administrative structure, one of the most impressive things about the College is the informal web of close interactions between disparate areas on campus leading to the development of positive synergies between the different categories of employees, students, the Board of Trustees, and the community.

The College President reports to the Board of Trustees. Reporting to the president, four vice presidents lead their respective divisions — Academic Affairs, Administrative Services, Institutional Advancement, and Student Services. Collectively, these five administrators comprise Executive Staff, which meets weekly to manage the college’s strategic planning, operations, and division-level policies.

At a regular Executive Staff meeting, attended by one member of the evaluation committee, a diverse array of topics were on the agenda ranging from problems with buildings to student affairs issues to reports on committees and upcoming meetings. At that meeting it was explained that a major goal of that group was to model working across units to solve problems. Other groups reinforced that this was effective. All top administrators work very well with one another and with others in other functional areas of campus. Talents are discovered and put to use in ways that were not part of an individual’s original job description. This is one thing that has allowed the campus to do so well, in spite of losing 40 employees recently.

Shared governance is found across campus with both formal, and more importantly informal, ways for employees and students to affect campus operations. The development of strategic planning initiatives was described to be much like a bee swarm. Ideas are allowed to develop freely and, as long as they are headed to one of the campus goals, and gather sufficient support along the way, the swarm is allowed to continue to gather strength as it meanders to its objective. People are given much freedom to accomplish things using the methods they think are best, they are not micro-managed.

Confidence in senior leadership is one of the reasons that the college was named in a Chronicle of Higher Education survey in 2010 as being one of the Great Colleges to Work For. Other factors leading to this distinction were professional/career development programs, teaching environment, job satisfaction, and work/life balance. All employee groups seem content and look forward to coming to work each day. The College reported only a single faculty grievance in the past 25 years, a remarkable testament to the fact that the administration is proactive in meeting the needs of its employees

## Standard 2.B – Human Resources

The College employs sufficient numbers of faculty and staff to deliver its mission, core themes, programs and services. Although funding reductions in recent years have caused reductions in staff positions, critical mission functions were maintained. Staff positions are classified according to Washington State Department of Personnel and faculty positions adhere to minimum qualifications set by Washington Administrative Code. Position announcements give clear explanation of job duties, descriptions and authority of position and position recruitments are done with diverse committees representing divisions across the institution.

Evaluation procedures for all faculty, exempt/professional and faculty are clearly displayed on the HR website. All procedures identify clear timelines and procedures for regular evaluation and follow the appropriate collective bargaining agreement where necessary.

All faculty, staff and exempt/professional employees have access to professional development opportunities. Staff are provided accommodations for time and training considerations with the employer, as well as dedicated monies through the President's fund for pursuit of certificates and degrees. Through the collective bargaining agreement faculty have regularly scheduled funds made available to them for professional development activities. Faculty are provided additional on-campus opportunities for professional development through the Learning and Teaching Center and Instructional Design Department. Exempt/professional personnel have access to funds for pursuit of certificates and degrees.

The College maintains a faculty body that is qualified and capable of delivering the identified educational goals. Faculty qualifications are determined by the collective bargaining agreement, state administrative code and input from department personnel. Faculty qualifications are appropriate to the program requirements and may vary depending on the discipline. The recruitment and retention of faculty at Highline is influenced by the effort to address the core theme addressing *Diversity and Globalism*. The recruitment of faculty is supported by competitive wages compared to other community colleges in the state, but legislative control of the funding limits the local control of faculty wages. Although the recruitment and retention of faculty is strong, budget constraints have caused a shift in the faculty make up to include fewer full-time and more part-time faculty. This is a trend that is consistent with the comparable state institutions and the College is proactively acknowledging and addressing the potential challenges and problems that come with this change.

Faculty workload calculations are outlined in the collective bargaining agreement and are calculated based on standard practice for the calculation of hours to credit. The faculty workload, responsibilities and obligations are consistent with customary workloads at a community college. The evaluation procedure for tenured faculty members is clearly outlined in the collective bargaining agreement and provides multiple levels of review and evaluation throughout the approval process. Evaluation of part-time faculty is also outlined in the

collective bargaining agreement, with clear and regular expectations, and follows some of the structures used for the tenured faculty members.

### **Standard 2.C - Educational Resources**

Highline offers Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS) and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees consistent with both Washington State guidelines and accepted practice for higher education in terms of credit hours, majors' courses and general education content. AA and AS degrees meet requirements for direct transfer to other Washington institutions of higher education and provide courses which parallel the first two years of a university program.

In all Highline degrees, students complete at least 90 college-level credits in required courses; transfer degree requirements conform to Washington State Intercollege Relations Commission and Joint Access Oversight Group policies. Professional-technical degrees and certificates meet requirements of Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

The General Education component of transfer degrees at the College helps students develop breadth and depth of intellect. In determining minimum General Education requirements for these degrees the College follows a framework set by the state Intercollege Relations Commission Direct Transfer Agreement. This ensures a student's ability to effectively transfer to other institutions in the state. These General Education requirements are clearly defined and are met in the curriculum of each degree program. All General Education offerings are tied to assessable outcomes through course level student learning outcomes, College-wide learning outcomes (CWO), and degree level outcomes. These outcomes are published in the college catalog, Course Adoption Forms (CAF) and degree web pages. In addition to the common general education distribution areas, Highline also requires degree-seeking students complete at least one diversity/global studies course. The catalog lists many classes that have this designation. This requirement supports Core Theme 2: *Integrate and institutionalize diversity and globalism throughout the college.*

30 AAS degrees and 15 certificates (1 yr or longer) in professional-technical education programs were developed with input of Program Advisory Committees to prepare students for employment. AAS degrees and one-year certificates incorporate related instruction in the required areas of communication, computation and human relations. Detailed programs of study appear in the online course catalog and degree web pages.

Additionally, HCC offers many educational programs that are pre-college credit, basic skills development or continuing education in nature. The College uses innovation and collaboration to address the needs of the growing portion of the student body that requires remediation and preparation for college-level work. Staff and faculty are truly committed to working with the diverse students in ESL, ABE and pre-college credit programs. Pre-college credit classes are taught by faculty in the academic departments. Faculty coordinators report directing resources including new faculty hires and professional development activities to strengthen their department's work with developmental students.

The Highline Community College 2011-2012 Catalog provides evidence that all the degree and certificates (45 credits or more) have identified and published learning outcomes. In CAF the course level student learning outcomes are identified and linked to the CWO. This information is available in the quarterly class schedule through second level links on the course descriptions. Course syllabi that are provided in written form to students are expected to list course-level student learning outcomes. Department coordinators work directly with adjunct and full-time instructors to provide sample syllabi for courses.

At Highline, the development and delivery of distance courses is handled at the faculty/department level with instructional design support provided by the Instructional Design Department. The same quality review processes used for traditional classes are applied to courses delivered in distance and hybrid modes. Online students have access to 24/7 chat with a librarian and have access to information about student support services available through the Learning Management System (Angel) course shell provided by Instructional Technology. Most of the distance classes are taken by students who are also enrolled in live classes, thus e-learning students have access to services at the campus. Distance and hybrid classes account for between 10-20% of the class offerings.

The College Catalog has very clear admissions requirements for students with specific information for international, transfer, students returning after time away, and high school students. Graduation requirements for credits earned and GPA are clear, and processes for applying for graduation and petitioning for exceptions are outlined for students.

Multiple college offices and committees ensure that Highline's academic programs maintain appropriate content and rigor. Two governance bodies maintain central authority over curriculum processes: the Instructional Council (oversight of courses), and the Faculty Senate (oversight of degrees and certificates). There is an electronic system to facilitate the movement of CAF from the originating faculty member to department administration for review, and to the Instructional Council for final approval. It is in the Instructional Council that cross-division discussions occur about the broader impact of the course. The Faculty Senate has final approval over new and discontinued degrees and certificate programs. New certificate programs developed to meet community needs must conform to the framework and processes mandated at the state level. At Highline, the faculty truly have a major role in the design, approval, implementation and revision of curriculum. There is no formalized connection between the program approval and course approval systems. The parallel processes of course and program development/approval are effective because of the strong communication and collegiality among faculty in different departments.

Assessment of Highline's educational programs occurs at two levels: institution-wide through measures of student attainment and satisfaction including CCSSE, and Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) data, and at the course level. SAI and Achieving the Dream metrics give information about student progress through key courses giving momentum towards goal achievement. Highline was recognized as a Leader College in 2010, based on 3 years of continuous improvement in student attainment. Improvement in this area was due to both

enrollment gains and to improved efficiencies and practices that had a positive impact on achievement of specific targeted student groups.

The use of CWO provides a common thread through all courses for student learners and links the assessment of course level student learning outcomes. This intentional approach supports Core Theme 1: *Promote Quality Instruction and Student Achievement*, and shows an effort to strengthen the student learning experience through assessment. At this time, Highline does not directly measure student attainment of the CWO on an institutional level. They have recently created a database of CAF information that maps course-level learning outcomes with the CWO that may provide the infrastructure for future cross-departmental looks at student attainment of CWO and general education outcomes.

Faculty have the responsibility and ownership of student learning outcomes assessment at the course and program level. The Standards Outcomes and Competencies Committee (SOCC) facilitates and supports assessment by academic departments. Annual assessment reports submitted by faculty to SOCC provide evidence that departments are growing in the sophistication of their assessment practices. Reports indicate many departments are closing the assessment loop by using data to inform program and pedagogy changes to improve student learning.

Information and Visual Literacy is one of the CWOs. Library faculty teach formal Information Literacy (IL) sessions both in classrooms and in the library; they actively encourage instructors to incorporate information literacy into courses and programs. Library faculty review new course proposals in the curriculum process and give input on the Information Literacy content of courses. Faculty interviewed shared that the library is very responsive and helpful in meeting their requests and works collaboratively with them to meet the information literacy needs of their students. The library faculty and research librarians view every interaction with students as an opportunity to teach information literacy. The library developed color-coded resource materials for different reading levels to provide appropriate support for literacy development courses.

Students at the College have the option to earn credit through various assessments of prior learning. The College maintains a dedicated contact person to deliver the services associated with this activity and provides clear direction and explanation for students to access these opportunities. Process and policy in this area is currently being developed for consistent delivery of awarding credit.

Continuing Education at HCC provides a range of classes and programs (Professional Development and Personal Enrichment, Customized Training, Economic Development, Disability Services) in keeping with the College's mission and in response to community interests and needs. These offerings are mostly non-credit, but whenever courses are offered for credit, appropriate approval protocols are followed. Faculty are appropriately involved in the planning and evaluation of continuing education offerings. This department of the College has modified course offerings to respond to community needs and has demonstrated an ability



to manage areas outside of its area (Disability Services) in the interest of supporting the delivery of the College mission.

## **Standard 2.D – Student Support Resources**

The College provides a vast range of programs and services to support student educational needs. These programs are aligned with the academic offerings and show an intentional effort to provide support to the diverse student population as well as align with key objectives for student success in core theme #2, *Integrate and institutionalize diversity and globalism throughout the college.*

The College shows a clear concern for maintaining a safe environment for student learning and a proactive approach to the issue of safety on campus. A comprehensive approach to addressing possible safety issues has resulted in facility improvements through improved lighting and emergency communication devices. The implementation of an emergency alert system and the development of relationships with local first responders also contribute to campus preparedness. The Student Services area has also implemented the Behavioral Assessment Team and Student Judicial Affairs as a proactive approach to contributing to a safe campus and positive campus climate.

Services for recruitment, admission and orientation at the College are aligned to support the core themes of the college. Recruitment efforts are designed to address the identified local student population and are customized to build relationships with potential new students. Targeted student services address the challenges of enrolling students in an open-access institution and provide support for special populations through specialized orientations and support offerings. The College offers a dynamic system of advising services for students to serve the diverse population. The advising provided for students by professional advisors and faculty is easily accessible through a dedicated office and website information. Services are designed to address different populations in the college and follow other efforts in structure and delivery when addressing these special populations. Planning in this area shows continuing efforts for improvement and a focus on student navigation through the institutional processes.

The College uses the institutional website and electronic resources as the primary medium to deliver current and accurate college information. The college catalog is offered online and provides students with all the necessary information in an easy to read format. Other required information is found on the college website and is easy to find through the navigation tools. The Registration and Records Department uses resources through the state system to effectively back up student records. The department follows the FERPA standards for privacy and provides an explanation of that law for the public through the institution's website.

Financial assistance for students is provided by students through the financial aid office and is focused on addressing the student population which has come from a county with a poverty and unemployment rate substantially higher than regional averages. Information is provided

on the institution's Financial Aid website and provides all the necessary information and guidance for students to access the financial resources.

The offering of co-curricular activities is housed in the Center for Leadership and Service and provides a broad range of activities for students. These activities are governed by the Associated Students of Highline Community College and reflect the institutions mission and core themes. Co-curricular activities are managed through a very strong system of institutional and student leadership partnerships. The student leadership is developed through a system of open opportunities and available resources that encourage student participation and growth. This student leadership group has also contributed to the institution through a unique set of actions and has agreed to support some institutional activities, threatened by budget cuts, through the use of student fees and student leadership.

## **Standard 2.E - Library and Information Resources**

The mission of the HCC library: "great staff, great stuff, great service", is aligned with the institutional Mission and has a similar approachable, student-centered tone. It is clear that the library has a comprehensive and widespread influence at Highline. The Instructional Resources administrators are very proud of the welcoming environment, both physical and virtual, they have created for students. They do not have reliable foot traffic statistics, but observe that the library is always busy. The library provides access to print and electronic resources for students, faculty and staff. It is a testament to importance of the library that in times of reduced budgets, they are open seven days a week, and have day and evening hours for the convenience of students.

The depth and breadth of the collection is maintained at the Research Libraries Group Level Two (basic information level) for most subject areas. The HCC library participates in Washington State library consortiums as resources allow. Evidenced by involvement with a five-year weeding program informed by an analysis from Online Computer Library Center, the Highline library maintains currency of its collection. Librarians have also engaged in a recent review of print periodicals resulting in a 23% reduction in titles and realizing savings in serial expenditures.

The library collection is approximately 41% electronic items and 59% printed materials. To best serve their students, many of whom do not have access to computers at home, they are committed to maintaining a strong print collection. The library provides access to over 50 electronic databases and 60,000 electronic book subscriptions through E-brary. The library employs methods to ensure the intellectual freedom and privacy of patrons relative to electronic file use and borrowing records.

The Library Management Team (LMT) meets regularly to plan for the library and Instructional Resources; the LMT includes the Dean of Instructional Resources, the Library Director and

library staff. Their planning is informed by informal feedback from students, faculty and administrators. In Spring 2011, they piloted a survey instrument, created by the Instructional Resources Assessment Committee, to get regular feedback from students on the quality of learning resources. At the time of the visit, the results of the survey had been reviewed and were “positive”. The LMT is working to establish an ongoing contextual framework of assessment for Instructional Resources. The Evaluation Committee encourages the LMT to fully develop their survey instrument and analysis of results to get regular feedback from students and faculty on the quality and adequacy of information resources and services.

In support of the Core Theme 1, the library staff strive to enhance the information literacy skills of faculty and students. The library website has many services, instructional modules and resources on information literacy available including grant-developed tutorials tailored to Highline students and Camtasia instructional videos. The Evaluation Committee found these electronic resources to be user friendly and inviting. Students have 24/7 chat with a librarian service available. All full and part-time librarians provide individual and group instruction on information literacy. More than 1500 students/term participate in Information Literacy classes. Staff employ a formal peer assessment process to refine their IL instruction. Recent physical changes to library space promote more student collaboration and engagement. IL instruction takes place in a partitioned-off part of the library and can interfere with students’ studying. The current construction of a separate classroom for IL instruction will solve this space use challenge.

The Instructional Resources Division supports Core Theme 4: *Sustainability* through its Instructional Computing practices. Recently they have implemented revised print management policies to significantly reduce the consumption of paper through unnecessary printing by students. Library staff are involved in shared governance committees at the institution and foster open communication between academic faculty and learning resources.

## **Standard 2.F – Financial Resources**

Highline Community College’s Core Theme 4, “*Model sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning,*” includes a focus on resource stewardship. Specifically, Objective 2 commits the institution to demonstrating “good stewardship of financial resources while ensuring sufficient resources will be available in the future.” The Evaluation Committee found that the College is following through on this commitment. While being conservative in budgeting, they have freed up enough funds, even in times of state budget reductions, to allow creative use of its resources for new ventures.

HCC is financially stable, with sufficient cash flow and reserves to cover all operations and commitments. Even as state revenues have declined over recent years, HCC’s enrollment has surged, bringing in additional tuition and student fees. The college has seen substantial growth in other local funding sources, including grants and contracts, and enterprise funds.

Revenue projections use conservative enrollment projections necessary due to the normal volatility of community college enrollment that fluctuates as the local economic picture changes. The Board of Trustees requires the College to build in a ten percent reserve, that can be accessed for projects at the end of the funding period.

HCC has seen a shift toward greater reliance on local rather than state support. The last several years have seen significant declines in state funding of Washington's community and technical colleges. Since fiscal year 2007, state allocations to HCC have decreased \$8.8 million, dropping from 67 percent of the college's total operating funds for 2007 to 61 percent for fiscal year 2012. Over that same time period, the College's tuition-paying enrollment has continued to exceed the state target. As a result, the College has been able to use this extra revenue to compensate for the reduction in state funding.

HCC follows an annual budget cycle, with planning for the next fiscal year beginning during the current winter quarter. As a key element of that process, the college develops careful revenue estimates for each of its major fund sources: state allocations, tuition revenue, grants, and contracts.

Budget development at HCC, under the guidance of its Budget Office, is a continual process that involves multiple campus constituencies. Structurally, the process follows the college's formal organizational framework. An *ad hoc* budget committee, consisting of the budget director and budget managers from each division, meets on a regular basis throughout the fiscal year to address continuing and emergent budget issues.

The college develops capital budgets following guidelines prescribed by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Fund sources may be legislatively-allocated dollars or local dollars. Biennially, the college undergoes a facilities condition survey, which provides the basis for routine state funding of repairs, minor projects, and maintenance. The college also can request state allocations for major renovations and new construction. Major projects are submitted as part of the college's biennial capital budget request and are developed in accordance with the Master Plan.

Along with legislatively-appropriated monies, Highline has made creative use of alternative funding sources to secure capital improvements. Since the mid-1990s, the college has partnered with the Port of Seattle in remodeling a number of campus buildings. Because of the college's location directly under the SEATAC Airport flight path, the Port has underwritten noise-abatement projects in a number of instructional facilities. HCC's practice has been to leverage the Port's investments by combining state-allocated repair dollars and local college funds to extend the scope of renovation. Port of Seattle funds typically pay for 70 percent of the cost of each project.

The college engages in enterprise activities appropriate to its mission, its Core Themes, and the needs of its students. These activities include parking and three Auxiliary Service areas: the bookstore, campus food services, and Hospitality Services. Each of these activities is accounted

for either in separate funds or distinct organizational codes within a fund. In general, auxiliary enterprises are self-sustaining and do not rely on general operational funds for support. Neither do the college's basic operations depend on enterprise income.

As an agency of the state of Washington, the college falls under the authority of the Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO). Audits are conducted by qualified state auditors in accordance with the state's annual audit plan for higher education. Findings and management letter items are carried forward to subsequent audit cycles until each issue is resolved. Prior to and at the conclusion of each audit, SAO audit staff and management meet with the College President, the Vice President for Administrative services, the Director of Finance and Auxiliary Services, and at least one Board member to review and discuss recommendations or action items. For the period July 2000 through June 2009, Highline received no audit findings and has successfully resolved all management letter items.

Fundraising activities at HCC are coordinated through the Highline Community College Foundation. Established in 1972, the Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization supporting the educational mission of the college through scholarships, emergency need awards, and special projects. Additionally, the Foundation provides capital fund-raising assistance and ongoing operational funding for the college's Marine Science and Technology Center (MaST) on the water in nearby Redondo. The College also contracts with the Foundation to provide support for International Student Programs.

The relationship between the college and the Foundation is governed by a formal agreement that clearly defines roles and responsibilities of each partner. The Foundation is a separate financial entity from the college and undergoes an independent audit of its financial statements annually.

## **Standard 2.G – Physical and Technical Infrastructure**

As called for in its Core Theme 4, Highline Community College is committed to maintaining physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and conducive to healthful and productive learning and working. Overlooking Puget Sound, Highline's 80-acre campus is home to 569,134 square feet of classroom, office, and maintenance space. Despite some funding and infrastructure challenges, the college maintains an attractive, functional learning environment for its students, staff, and community.

The College reports that some parts of the campus are easier to maintain than other parts of campus. A tour of the facilities showed the Evaluation Committee the extent to which this is true. At one extreme, the college's newest buildings, the Higher Education Center and the Student Union Building, are models of attractiveness, efficiency, and functionality. On the other hand, the oldest facilities, now approaching 50 years of service, require considerable attention, ingenuity, and investment to maintain. HCC's hillside location compounds some of the challenges, particularly around accessibility.

The Facilities Director and staff have an excellent comprehension of what is needed in the facilities, what its cost will be, and how it should be prioritized. They spoke with excitement and pride about where the college is going and how the facilities improvements will help them to get there. Due to original design and construction properties of some buildings, there are problems in making them as functional and efficient as desired. However, it is evident that they are doing a very good job given the starting point and the limited resources.

The Facilities Department works well with others across campus to come up with solutions that work well. This is another example of the College's collegial approach to problem-solving in general. Though focused on service, the Facilities Department's activities are not purely reactive. In recent years, the department has launched an aggressive effort to reduce energy consumption and waste campus-wide while improving safety campus-wide.

The College Master Plan provides a long-range program for the continued development and renewal of the College's Des Moines campus. The Master Plan explains the college's programs, describes its current and future campus facilities requirements, and explains the effect its activities have on the surrounding governmental jurisdictions.

The college's equipment stock is sufficient to meet both its operational and instructional needs. Academic Affairs and the Facilities Department together conduct an annual inventory of classroom interior assets and furniture. The two offices identify classroom needs for equipment, maintenance, and repairs. The College has made steady progress in this area, gradually equipping more and more classrooms with "smart" instructional technologies and modern, comfortable furnishings. Currently, multimedia instructional equipment has been installed in 95 of 101 regular (non-computer lab) classrooms.

Office furniture is budgeted and purchased by individual departments as necessary. The Facilities Department has a maintenance shop allowing staff the ability to store parts, supplies, tools, and equipment to make necessary maintenance and repairs.

Highline Community College's operational technologies are the responsibility of Administrative Technology (AT), a department within Administrative Services. AT maintains the campus network, communications, and desktop computing operations. Together, these resources are clearly adequate to support day-to-day functions, including these key technology resources.

Complementing AT's people and resources, the Instructional Computing (IC) department provides and maintains computer equipment and software in all instructional areas, whether in classrooms, the library, or in labs.

In addition to these facility-based resources, instructional technology is integrated throughout the College's learning resources. The Angel Learning Management System supports online, hybrid, and web-enhanced face-to-face classes.

The HCC IT Helpdesk provides individualized support to students, faculty, and staff through a physical location in the Instructional Computing Center, as well as by email, phone, and the web. In addition to responding to user requests, the Helpdesk provides information and some tutorials on the web, and updates the campus community on technology issues via email.

The college's Faculty-in-Residence program provides release time for faculty experts in instructional technology to provide support to their colleagues. The release time also allows the faculty-in-residence the opportunity to learn new techniques and teach these to others.

The college's longstanding Technology Advisory Committee (TAC) sets standards for campus technology and replacement cycles. Its membership includes representatives from the four major divisions on campus — Administrative Services, Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Institutional Advancement. This committee coordinates with the college's Administrative Technology (AT) and Instructional Computing (IC) Departments, whose directors are on TAC.

Among some key, recent accomplishments are the following:

- *Infrastructure stability:* Since 2008 the college has made major strides in securing its technology infrastructure. Key investments include a generator capable of supporting the campus servers in a power outage, expansion of storage area networks (SANs) to a total capacity of 64TB, and enhancements to the college's backup system to sustain operations in the event of a local disaster.
- *Wireless network:* The college has installed campus-wide wireless internet access with levels of access and security appropriate to different user constituencies.
- *Virtual infrastructure:* To reduce its equipment and support costs, the college has recently made a major investment in both virtual server and virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI). The VDI project replaces individual desktop computers with inexpensive, low-capability thin clients, concentrating computing power in a single data center.

## **Summary**

Highline Community College has made significant progress over the past year, especially on addressing the Recommendations of its Evaluation Committee Year Three Confidential Report to the Commission. HCC has also demonstrated that it is well functioning institution with systems in place to improve and monitor student success in a number of key ways.

While it has solid formal structure and processes in place, the real strength of the College is in its informal networks, all with the highest priority of providing needed services and facilities to students, that extend across all functional areas including faculty, staff, students and community members. These networks thrive because of mutual respect and willingness to assist one another from the highest administrative levels on down.



## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the College on purposely maintaining a supportive culture where administrators, staff, faculty, students, and community harmoniously work together to achieve student, college, and community goals, exhibiting an authentic system of shared governance.
2. The Evaluation Committee commends the College for fostering an atmosphere that has resulted in a vibrant program of student leadership and a cooperative approach between students and administration in support of student development.
3. The Evaluation Committee commends the College for their safe, well-maintained and welcoming campus environment that both reflects and enhances the College's focus on student engagement, learning and achievement.
4. The Evaluation Committee commends the College on the dedication of faculty, staff, and administration in supporting the progress and success of diverse students through evidenced-based practices, cultural competency, and inclusivity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Evaluation Committee found no concerns that it believed rose to the level of a Recommendation.