

Highline Community College  
Evaluation Committee Report for  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
Conducted October 9-11, 2013

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Members of the Evaluation Committee:

Dr. Ryan L. Thomas, Chair  
Associate Provost  
Weber State University

Mr. Ted G. Plaggemeyer  
Dean of Sciences  
Truckee Meadow Community College

Ms. Peggy Nelson  
General Education Division Manager  
Eastern Idaho Technical College

Ms. Kate Gray  
Instructor  
Clackamas Community College

Dr. Debra Klimes  
Director, Academic Development Center  
College of Southern Idaho

Mr. Kenneth Sullivan  
Director, Library and Instructional Technology  
Western Nevada College

Dr. Les L. Steele, Liaison  
Executive Vice President  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

## **I. Introduction**

Highline Community College (HCC) is an urban, public, two-year community college located twenty miles south of downtown Seattle, Washington. HCC has an annual headcount of approximately 17,000 students and serves a racially and culturally diverse local population, in addition to students from several other states and several foreign countries.

### **a. Assessment of Institution's Self-Study and Support Materials**

The evaluation community found the self -evaluation to be well organized and candid. The additional materials provided for the evaluation committee were comprehensive and well organized.

### **b. Brief Summary of Methods Used to Verify the Contents of the Self-Study**

Prior to the campus visit, evaluators reviewed materials (Year Seven Report, appendices, catalog/addendum, and online supplementary materials). The site visit was conducted on October 9-11, 2013. Evaluators conducted interviews with all major administrators and substantial numbers of faculty, staff and students. Students, staff, administrators and faculty were candid in their responses and feedback to the evaluators.

In addition to the self-study and the interviews, the Evaluation Committee reviewed evidence provided by HCC in the work room and online. Exceptional support was provided for evaluators in all areas (e.g., technology, scheduling, food, printing and directions to meeting locations).

*Compliment:* HCC provided excellent support for the Evaluation Committee including well-written materials and candid interviews that allowed the Committee to develop accurate perceptions of the college and its strengths and challenges.

## **II. Past Recommendations from the Commission**

The three Recommendations from the Year One Report involved: 1. setting appropriate thresholds for Mission Fulfillment [1.A.2], 2. Using Core Themes, objectives and indicators in defining Mission Fulfillment [1.A.2], and 3. Identifying specific, meaningful measures of the Core Themes and Mission Fulfillment [1.B.2].

The evaluation committee that conducted the Year Three visit concluded that HCC is meeting Standards 1.A.2 and 1.B.2. There were no Recommendations from the Year Three review.

## **III. Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations**

### **a. Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3**

Founded in 1961, Highline is authorized by state statute RCW 28B.50 to provide educational programs and services and to award degrees and certificates as a state-supported community college. The five members of the Board of Trustees of Highline Community College are appointed by the governor and have authority for the college.

The Evaluation Committee found that the college's mission approved by its governing board in April 2013. The college's core themes, approved by the board in 2010, fully align with the college's mission statement and its strategic goals.

### **b. Standard 1.A – Mission**

The Committee found that HCC has a widely published mission statement that has been developed by the college community and adopted by its governing board. The Committee further found that the purposes enunciated in the mission are appropriate for the institution and give directions for its efforts.

c. **Interpretation of Mission Fulfillment**

The Committee found that HCC has defined mission fulfillment in the context of its purposes and expectations.

d. **Acceptable Threshold and Extent of Mission Fulfillment**

The Committee found that HCC has defined mission fulfillment in the context of its purposes and expectations.

e. **Standard 1.B.1 Core Themes**

The Committee found the HCC Core Themes to appropriately manifest and incorporate the essential elements of the mission statement.

f. **Standard 1.B.2 Appropriate Objectives and Indicators**

HCC has spent considerable effort in trying to identify appropriate, meaningful and sustainable objectives and indicators. The Committee found that the current objectives and indicators are meaningful and are being maintained successfully by HCC.

**IV. Standard Two: Resources and Capacity**

a. **Eligibility Requirements 4 through 21**

4. The Committee found that HCC's programs and services are predominantly concerned with higher education and it has sufficient organizational independence to be held accountable for the Commission's standards and eligibility requirements.

5. The Committee found HCC's programs and practices to be non-discriminatory.

6. The Committee found that HCC adheres to high standards of integrity.

7. The Committee found that HCC has a functioning governing board which consists of five members who have no contractual or financial interest in the institution.

8. The Committee found that HCC employs a chief executive officer, appointed by the Board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution.

9. The Committee found that HCC employs a sufficient number of adequately prepared administrators to provide effective leadership and management for the institution.

10. The Committee found that HCC employs and regularly evaluates a sufficient number of qualified faculty.

11. The Committee found that HCC's educational programs have appropriate content and rigor, culminate in clearly identified learning outcomes, and lead to college-level degrees in recognized fields of study.

12. The Committee found that HCC's associate transfer programs and applied technology programs have appropriate general education and/or related instruction in communication, computation, and human relations.

13. The Committee found that HCC maintains a library that has resources of appropriate depth, currency and breadth to support its programs of instruction.

14. The Committee found that HCC has the appropriate physical and technological infrastructure to support its programs.

15. The Committee found that HCC maintains an environment that supports academic freedom.

16. The Committee found that HCC publishes and adheres to its admission policies.

17. The Committee found that HCC's public information includes its mission, core themes, admission and grading policies, names and preparation of its faculty and administrators, student rights and responsibilities and program descriptions with tuition and fee information.

18. The Committee found that HCC is financially stable and has cash flow and reserves appropriate to its operation and that its financial planning reflects available resources and potential risks to ensure solvency.

19. The Committee found that HCC has had a biennial accountability audit conducted as required by Washington State Law and that the results are considered by appropriate administrators and policy makers.

20. The Committee found that HCC accurately communicates all needed information to the Commission.

21. The Committee found that HCC accepts the eligibility requirements and standards of the Commission and acknowledges that the Commission may make its accreditation status known to the public or any agency.

**b. Standard 2.A – Governance**

2.A.2 The Committee found that HCC is governed by the college's Board of Trustees whose five voting members are appointed by the governor.

2.A.3 The Committee found evidence that HCC's Board of Trustees ensures HCC's compliance with federal, state and accreditation policies and procedures, including monitoring compliance with NWCCU's accreditation standards, collective bargaining agreements, legislative actions, and external mandates.

**Governing Board**

2.A.4 The roles and responsibilities of the five-member Highline Board of Trustees are specified in the board's policies, which specify the legal basis of the board, its power and duties, meeting guidelines and format, code of ethics, and other policies related to the board's functions. The board approves all policies governing the operation of Highline Community College, which are published online and widely accessible to all employees and the public.

2. A.5 The board acts as a committee and "no action [is] taken except by an affirmative vote of at least three members." In addition, the board's policy clearly indicates that no individual trustee ever has legal authority outside the meetings of the Board. Board policy specifies that no trustee "may hold or exercise as an individual the powers granted exclusively to the Board as a collective entity."

2. A.6 The board is responsible for maintaining and keeping the college policies and procedures current and for ensuring that they are reflected in the college operations.

2. A.7 The Board delegates authority and responsibilities to the college president/chief executive officer (CEO). The president has full-time responsibility for implementing and administering college policies and operating the college.

2. A.8 The Board of Trustees conducts annual evaluations of its performance.

### **Leadership and Management**

2.A.9 President Jack Bermingham holds a doctorate in History from U.C. Santa Barbara and had 14 years of progressive responsibility in community college administration at the time of his appointment. HCC also employs four vice presidents, three academic deans, three student services associate deans, and a number of directors. All administrative personnel at the college are well prepared and serve full-time.

2.A.10 President Jack Bermingham has full-time responsibility for all operations at Highline.

2.A.11 The administration of HCC has clearly delineated administrative areas that appeared to the Evaluation Committee to be functioning effectively.

Faculty, staff and students generally have representation on college search committees, recommending councils and other representative structures.

### **Policies and Procedures**

#### **Academic Free Speech**

2.A.12 -14 The college's Academic Freedom Policy and Section 301 of the Faculty Agreement 2009-15 affirm HCC's commitment to the principles of free speech and expression, and affirms the right of faculty to practice academic freedom.

#### **Students' Rights and Responsibilities**

2.A.15 Policies addressing students' rights and responsibilities are found in the college's Student Rights and Responsibilities Code. A review of the college catalog, and college website confirmed that the procedures and parameters for student records, student conduct, academic honesty, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities are clearly stated and readily available to students and staff. Interviews with students and staff indicated that these policies are administered in a fair and consistent manner.

2.A.16 Admission and placement processes are clearly articulated in the college catalog and website. Guidelines for student continuation in and termination from educational programs, including an appeals and readmission process, are included. In interviews on-site, students and staff confirmed that these procedures are administered fairly and consistently.

2.A.17 There are clear guidelines for student government, including a constitution, definition of duties and financial guidelines. The guidelines for student clubs and organizations are contained in the *2012-13 Club Handbook*. There are published guideline for free speech and publications.

### **Human Resources**

2.A.18 College policies and procedures regarding human resources are found in the college's policies and procedures which include:

Employee Evaluation Procedure

Classified see: WPEA 7-2012 (Classified, effective July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013)

Faculty (see HCEA Faculty Agreement 2009-15)  
Equal Employment Opportunity Policy  
Ergonomic Assessment Process and Procedures  
Family and Medical Leave Policy (FMLA)  
FMLA Health Condition Definitions  
Job-Related Injury or Illness Policy  
I-9 Employment Eligibility Policy  
Labor Relations Policy  
PDP - Performance and Development Plan Procedures  
Reasonable Accommodation Policy  
Restraining Orders Procedures  
Separation Procedure / Supervisor Guidelines  
Suspended Operations Procedures  
Title IX - Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.

2.A.19 Interviews with staff, faculty, and Human Resources Department employees indicated that through the New Employee Information/Orientation Session all employees are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. This information is also clearly documented in Human Resources procedures in Highline Community College's Human Resources website.

2.A.20 The Electronic Records Preservation and Production Procedures Policy clearly define parameters of confidentiality and access to faculty personnel files. Through personal observation, evaluators confirmed that the college maintains the security and appropriate confidentiality of human resource records which are maintained and held in a secured office/workroom room, with access controlled by HR staff.

#### **Institutional Integrity**

2. A.21 All college publications and announcements follow established policies and high ethical standards. The college is committed to making information about academic programs and services available to students and the public as accurately, clearly, and consistently as possible. This information is communicated in program brochures and web pages and other publications. The college also complies with current Department of Education requirement for posting "gainful employment" information for certificate programs on individual program web pages.

#### **Fair and Consistent Treatment**

2. A.22 The college applies established policies to ensure that students, faculty and staff are treated fairly and consistently. Specific policies and procedures for handling complaints and grievances are stated in the college catalog and on the website.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

2. A.23 HCC adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflict of interest on the part of all employees, including trustees.

1. Board policies, and the Highline Community College Ethics Policy, state that the college is governed by the provisions of Chapter 42.52 RCW.



2. The college's Academic Freedom Policy and Section 301 of the Faculty Agreement 2009-15 affirm HCC's commitment to the principles of free speech and expression, and affirms the right of faculty to practice academic freedom.

### **Intellectual Property**

2. A.24 HCC's grant applications procedures provide guidance on intellectual property rights. All college employees must comply with the Ethics in Public Service Act that provides, in part, that official positions and state resources may not be used for private benefit, including personal gain.

### **Accreditation Status**

2. A.25 HCC accurately and appropriately represents its current accreditation status with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Full accreditation history is available to the public on the college website and intranet. Highline Community College has been accredited by the NWCCU since 1966.

### **Contractual Agreements**

2. A.26 The Committee found that HCC engages in ethical principles in its contracts with outside entities. These entities include individuals involved in personal service contracts and companies with whom purchasing contracts have been established for goods and services as part of the total program costs. These purchasing agreements follow the terms and conditions set by the State of Washington.

The administration of all state and federal grants conform to administrative and financial controls established by the granting agencies and the college.

### **Academic Freedom**

A.27 Highline promotes the spirit of academic freedom and respects faculty rights:

1. The Faculty Agreement, recognizes the right and responsibility of the academic employee to insist that students be free to learn and academic employees be free to teach broad areas of knowledge, including those that may be considered controversial.
2. The Student Rights section of the Highline Student Rights and Responsibilities code specifies the academic rights of students, which include free inquiry, expression and assembly.
3. Section 301 of the college's Faculty Agreement 2009-15 includes the following provision:

Academic freedom allows all faculty to seek and present knowledge in their respective disciplines. Faculty members are free to explore problems and issues, without fear of interference from administrators, the Board of Trustees, governmental agencies, the public, students or parents of students. Faculty members have a basic responsibility to promote freedom of thought, expression and the pursuit of knowledge. Faculty members have an obligation to protect students' rights to freedom of inquiry. In using potentially controversial materials, the faculty member has the obligation to ensure the material meets the valid educational objectives of the class.

2.A.28-29 Within the context of its mission and values, HCC actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought. Instructors are free to select content and methodologies within their disciplines. HCC faculty members are expected to present scholarship accurately and objectively and acknowledge the source of intellectual property, personal views and beliefs.

The tenure process and post-tenure evaluation process both provide opportunity for peers and administrators to evaluate the fair, accurate and objective nature of the material presented by a faculty person.

Faculty Agreement 2009-15 affirm HCC's commitment to the principles of free speech and expression, and affirms the right of faculty to practice academic freedom.

### **Finance**

A.30 HCC's Board has adopted clear policies regarding oversight and management of financial resources.

## **c. Standard 2.B — Human Resources**

2.B.1, 2.B.2 The college employs a sufficient number of qualified staff and faculty to support the mission and daily operations despite having experienced student enrollment growth and significant reductions in state funding. Job duties have expanded, and new efficiencies have been identified as positions have been eliminated due to budget cuts. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated on the website. Job descriptions accurately reflect duties, responsibilities, and authority of the position, and are reviewed regularly through the evaluation process and before new job openings are published. A review of hiring documents confirmed that criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions accurately reflect duties, responsibilities, and authority of the position.

The president has a five-year contract and is evaluated yearly by the Board of Trustees. The evaluation process is "based on yearly goals approved by the [trustees] which support the established strategic initiatives of the college." Trustees use an evaluation form that calls for comments or recommendations regarding the president's performance with respect to the college's core themes. The board's standards of practice delineate specified responsibilities of the board and of the president. Faculty is evaluated based on a formula outlined in the Faculty Agreement. Full-time administrative/exempt staff members receive annual contracts and are evaluated by their supervisors on a three-year cycle with assessments at 12, 18, and 36 months. Classified staff members are hired according to the negotiated contract with the Washington Public Employees Association Higher Education (WPEA HE) and are also evaluated annually. Part time faculty evaluations are also addressed in the Faculty Agreement. They are evaluated by their students once every quarter and by their coordinator or division chair at minimum every three years. Personnel files are stored in a locked room accessed only by authorized personnel.

2.B.3 Despite limited budgets and economic constraints, Highline promotes professional growth. The college has enjoyed low employee turnover; in fact, the first Employee Satisfaction Survey which the institution administered in 2011 reported that there was "significant overall satisfaction with the working environment and campus climate." The college has been an

awardee twice from the Chronicle of Higher Education as one of the “Best Colleges to Work For” and has been an awardee as “People’s Pick” employer in the education category of NWJobs.com.

2.B.4 All faculty and staff are hired in accordance with and follow statewide minimum qualifications outlined in WAC 131-16-091. Transfer faculty members are required to have master’s degrees, and other faculty and staff are hired with the appropriate levels of experience depending upon their responsibilities. At present, faculty numbers are sufficient to achieve the institution’s objectives, participate in establishing policies, and assure the integrity and continuity of programming within the college’s service area and beyond.

2.B.5 Faculty responsibilities are commensurate with the institution’s expectations and workloads are outlined in Section 300 of the Highline College Education Association (HCEA) Faculty Agreement 2009-15. In addition to teaching, faculty responsibilities include advising, establishing curriculum, writing learning outcomes, and participating in college governance and committees integral to the growth and development of programming. These responsibilities are performed in collaboration with their department colleagues, division chair, and dean. Instructional Cabinet represents faculty to discuss instructional issues, policies and procedures.

2.B.6 Faculty members are evaluated in accordance with the Faculty Agreement and NWCCU Standards. Probationary, tenured and adjunct faculty members are all evaluated by the appropriate division chair or administrator. A number of evaluative processes are used, including student and peer feedback and administrative and self-evaluations. The evaluation process is used to assist faculty to improve the quality of their instruction and to engage in collegial conversations about resources and support for improvement.

**d. 2.C Educational Resources**

2.C.1 The institution provides programs, wherever offered and however delivered, with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission. Courses, whether face-to-face, hybrid, or online are required to contain the same content and rigor. The programs lead to collegiate-level degrees or certificates with designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study, listed in the college catalog, on the college web site, and approved by the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).

2.C.2 HCC does an excellent job of identifying and publishing expected course, program, and degree learning outcomes wherever offered and however delivered. The college’s development of Course Adoption Forms (CAFs) is very impressive. CAFs serve as master course outlines and include course-level student learning outcomes, course contact hours, prerequisites, course organization and degree requirements fulfilled by the offering. On this form, course-level student learning outcomes are tied clearly to College Wide Learning Outcomes. These forms do not, however, replace syllabi.

The Self Study was somewhat vague in discussing course-level SLOs: “Course syllabi are expected to list student learning outcomes.” Although most syllabi appear to include SLOs, some do not. Copies of syllabi reside electronically with the division secretaries and are forwarded quarterly to the Office of Academic Affairs.

In English/Humanities, instructors are given a template for their syllabi which includes SLOs. However, not every instructor uses this template. All faculty have access to a syllabus template through the Learning and Teaching Center. An example of inconsistent terminology is the use of “course objectives” or “course outcomes” rather than “Student Learning Outcomes.” Attempts to standardize syllabi more effectively are in progress within this discipline area.

2.C.3 Credit and degrees are based on documented student achievement such as completion of course requirements and internships. Degrees are awarded in a manner consistent with institutional policies that are outlined in the college catalog and student planning guides. The college offers transfer degrees that adhere to guidelines set forth by the state’s Inter-College Relations Commission (ICRC) including the Associate of Arts Direct Transfer Degree and the Associate of Science degrees. As outlined in a statewide agreement, completion of these degrees confers junior standing to students who transfer to four-year institutions who have signed the agreement. The college also offers 30 Associate of Applied Sciences degrees and 15 certificates in professional technical program areas. Credit hours assigned to instructional activities follow the policies established by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The rules for setting credit values and equivalents are listed in the SBCTC Policy Manual, Chapter 4, Appendix B: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents by Type of Instruction. The SBCTC credit policy is enforced by the Course Adoption Forms (CAFs) which details each course’s master outline listing credit hours, contact hours, along with the type of hour. This Course Adoption Form also provides the vehicle for approval of course descriptions and student learning outcomes. The quarterly course schedule is reviewed for compliance, and all CAFs are reviewed on a three year cycle.

2.C.4 Degree programs demonstrate coherent design. The transfer degrees meet guidelines outlined by the state’s Inter-College Relations Commission (ICRC) and include general education requirements as well as content coursework.

2.C.5 Faculty, through well-defined structures and processes with clearly defined authority and responsibilities exercise a major role in the design, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. New course offerings are first proposed and developed by faculty in the discipline. Faculty exert central authority over these processes through two curriculum bodies:

- Instruction Council, a standing faculty committee who reviews and approves new courses based on submission of the Course Adoption Forms (CAFs) by faculty. Before reaching the Instruction Council, CAFs are reviewed by the department coordinator, division chair, and appropriate dean.

- Faculty Senate – Like individual courses, new degrees and certificates are also developed by faculty in the discipline. Upon approval at the department level, new degrees are reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate. Degree proposals are also shared with the Policy Development Council so that other constituent groups have an opportunity for comment.

Faculty with teaching responsibilities take collective responsibility for fostering and assessing student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes. This is accomplished

initially through the development of CAFs and sharing those student learning outcomes with students through course syllabi.

Assessment occurs at both the Institutional and Departmental levels. At the institutional level, student attainment is measured primarily through the lens of Core Theme I: “Promote quality instruction and student achievement.” For data, the college relies on local analysis of the state’s Student Achievement Initiative data and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. These results are reported in the college’s Mission Fulfillment Report (2.C.5). The College has further refined use of student-achievement data by participating in “Achieving the Dream” (AtD), a national non-profit with a goal of helping community college students, especially low income and students of color, successfully earn a college degree. HCC’s Core Team serves as the steering committee for this effort. The Core Team includes three vice presidents, two instructional deans, the Director of Community Engagement, two faculty members and Highline’s institutional researcher. This team guided initial data-analysis and developed, over time, interventions that substantially improved student attainment. As a result of the team’s success in these areas, the college was named a Leader College in 2010, a national award.

Curricular guidance is also provided by program advisory committees, through the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges’ PTE approval processes, and through the Inter-College Relations Commission (ICRC). Some programs maintain external accreditation as well. HCC faculty retain final authority and responsibility for the college’s courses and programs

At the departmental level, the assessment process is supported and facilitated by the Standards, Outcomes, and Competencies Committee (SOCC). The SOCC also provides assistance to faculty in developing assessment skills and in using results to improve student learning and delivery of classes. The SOCC website provides helpful information to faculty on developing appropriate student learning outcomes, writing effective reports, and tips for making the process a bit easier. Because of the efforts of SOCC through workshops and the web resources, Highline’s assessment process has remained meaningful, faculty-driven and representative of a college-wide commitment to continual improvement.

Faculty maintain an active role in the selection of new faculty. Section 801 of the Faculty Agreement 2009-15 addresses selection of full-time faculty. Once the President authorizes the hiring of a tenure-track faculty member, the Division chair (or equivalent) consults with the faculty of the instructional department or student services unit to prepare a written job description for the position. Once approved, the College advertises the position through appropriate national, regional, and local sources. Search committees include the division chair or equivalent, the department coordinator (or nearest equivalent), one division faculty member appointed by the division, one faculty member appointed by the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and an administrative representatives appointed by the CAO.

*Compliments:* The college is complimented for being named a Leader College in 2010. The college is also complimented on making the curriculum review and adoption process open and inclusive by ensuring that all areas of the campus are aware of important changes in the college’s offerings.

2.C.6 Information literacy is woven into instruction: through embedding it as a campus-wide learning outcome, collaborations between instructors and librarians in course design and research projects, and the easy access students have to library information and research guides online. Many faculty include information literacy in their student learning objectives, especially in transfer programs. The library offers robust resources both in person and online, including research guides developed for individual classes; tutorials for exploring, organizing, and evaluating information; documenting sources and avoiding plagiarism; and multiple forms of information to meet students' needs.

2.C.7 The college has developed Credit for Prior Learning procedures that award credit when documented student achievement equivalent to HCC credit can be verified. The Prior Learning Assessment Office's policies and processes were created to meet the mandate of the State of Washington's Senate Bill 6357 regarding prior learning experience. Credit may be awarded for work training, non-accredited classes, self-study, experience, and more. Credit can only be awarded for classes offered by HCC. No more than 25% of any degree can come from PLA, and no more than 15 credits of PLA can transfer to universities in Washington.

To obtain credits for prior learning, the student is required to complete the PLA Initial Request form to the PLA coordinator. Assessment is a faculty-driven process mutually designed with the student to best demonstrate the competence in the course content. The resulting course grade based on the exam is posted to the student's transcript at the end of the quarter and is designated as PLA credit.

2.C.8 HCC has articulation agreements, consistent with college policies and reviewed on a regular basis, with many institutions in the State of Washington and across the United States to ensure smooth transfer of credit for students. The articulation agreements are posted on the college web site. The Transfer Center prepares students for a smooth and successful transition to either a two-year or a four-year college or university. The transfer policies and procedures ensure the academic quality, level and content of the transfer credit awarded.

2.C.9 HCC publishes the general education component required of all students seeking a degree in the catalogue and on the website. Adhering to the guidelines of the Inter-College Relations Commission (ICRC), the college requires general education fundamentals such as written and oral communication, quantitative skills, physical education, diversity and globalism as well as other requirements distributed between science, social science, and the humanities. Rare is the requirement of physical education any more, which reveals the commitment HCC has to providing holistic education. Embedded in the transfer degrees and professional technical programs is the requirement of diversity and globalism content reflecting the institutional commitment to the core theme.

2.C.10 For transfer degrees, HCC follows the structure recommended by the Intercollege Relations Commission's Direct Transfer Agreement. The minimum core of general education credits represents an integration of basic knowledge. Although there are some degree options that may increase the requirements, the minimum credits in each skill and distribution area include:

Written and oral communications: 15 credits

Quantitative skills: 5 credits  
Physical Education: 3 credits  
Diversity and Globalism: 3 credits  
Humanities: 10 credits  
Social Sciences: 15 credits  
Science: 15 credits

Over time, HCC has devoted considerable resources and has worked diligently to improve the assessment of general education learning outcomes. In 2008-09 the college developed and adopted a set of assessable outcomes for each of its transfer degrees. These were strengthened in 2010-11, when small teams of transfer-area faculty crafted suggested revisions to the outcomes. They often used assessment data to determine appropriate adjustments. A final version of the AA transfer outcomes was adopted in spring 2012.

*Compliment:* The college and its faculty are complimented for their diligence in developing and revising outcomes for each transfer degree. The Credentials section of the catalog is exceedingly well done, comprehensive, and accessible. It provides an excellent roadmap for students, faculty, and evaluators in understanding degree requirements and outcomes.

2.C.11 The related instruction components for HCC's professional technical applied degree and certificate programs are in accordance with the NWCCU standard that requires communication, computation, and human relations. Faculty outside of professional technical programs who teach the appropriate discipline (communication: English and Communication; computation: math, accounting, and business; human relations: business, psychology, sociology, and anthropology; and safety) provide these required courses. All student-learning outcomes are clearly identified on Course Adoption Forms. Because the professional technical courses are now mapped to all degree and certificate learning outcomes, students can easily see what related instruction is required. However, the student learning outcomes are not as readily demonstrated to link individual courses to degree or program outcomes.

2.C.12-15 HCC does not offer graduate programs.

2.C.16 The continuing education division's unit-level mission, "To enrich our community through personal and professional lifelong learning opportunities," echoes the language of the college's Core Theme 3, "Build valuable relationships and establish a meaningful presence within Highline Community College's . . . communities. They accomplish this through offering educational services in professional development and personal enrichment, customized training, economic development, and disability services.

2.C.17 The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of its continuing education and special learning programs and courses. Continuing education is fully integrated with the academic and governance structures of the institution. This is accomplished through direct reporting of the CE executive director to the vice president for academic affairs. The CE director also serves on the Instruction Cabinet. True to the mission and goals for the college, all continuing education courses are developed and taught by local

professionals who are experts in their fields. These courses, both credit and non-credit, are evaluated by students.

2.C.18 All CE credit courses include SLOs. Where academic credit is awarded for Continuing Education courses grades and credit determinations are consistent with institutional practices. These activities are consistent across the curriculum, wherever offered and however delivered. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are awarded based on the accepted proposition that one CEU is defined as ten clock hours of participation. CEUS provide a permanent record of the educational accomplishments of an individual who has completed one or more significant, non-credit courses (2.C.18).

2. C.19 The college maintains enrollment and other student records in its Student Management System.

e. **Standard 2.D — Student Support Resources**

**Student Support Resources**

2.D.1 The institution creates effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning needs. Development of programs and services is driven by the institution’s mission, vision, and core themes. A philosophy of providing a “gracious and safe place” permeates among collaborative services and programming to support students. The institution has received a number of grants to assist in fulfilling this philosophy -- to assist students to access programming, persist in their courses, and complete and/or transfer to other institutions. Outcomes from these efforts are reviewed and analyzed on an ongoing basis.

Achieving the Dream outcomes and improvements has assisted HCC in collecting and more clearly analyzing student support outcomes. Student surveys and data tracking have improved the institution’s ability to target gaps in services. As a result, the institution has become more intentional in designing its programs to support services, evaluating the results, and revising and improving services. Receiving grant funding has become essential for providing additional outreach to students, enhancing student access, delivering supportive services, and overall, improving student success

The institution, while relying on a substantial amount of grant funding and local funds to support its student services, understands that permanent reliance on grants is not sustainable. Student services staff reports that a plan for sustaining grant activities should funding resources end is in place. A Student Activities fund (S&A 522) built from a portion of student fees helps pay a bond on the student union building and is being built to further support student programming including supportive services.

2.D.2 Highline Community College makes provision for the safety and security of its students and their property at all locations where it offers programs and services. The institution has regular fire drills and maintains National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) certification for its leadership team and other key employees. The college reviews and updates its Emergency Action Plan annually. The college also works closely with the Des Moines Police Department, South King Fire and Rescue, and the City of Kent Fire departments to ensure safety and security of its constituents.



An annual report on Crime Awareness is disseminated on campus yearly and is in compliance with the Clery Act. Recently the college installed speaker telephones in all classrooms and installed new phones in a parking lot and around campus to facilitate quick notification of and response to critical incidents. The evaluation team encourages the campus to continue its endeavors to increase measures to ensure the safety of its students, faculty, staff and visitors.

2.D.3 The institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational offerings. Newly developed mandatory orientations (face-to-face and online) and programs have been developed and offered to meet the needs of the various populations the institution serves. More than 700 students participated in the orientations in fall quarter 2012. Timely, useful, and accurate information about relevant academic requirements are communicated to students through the course catalog, class schedules, program brochures, and the Student Handbook. Publications and website postings are updated annually and posted on the web and/or with the next scheduled printing of the materials.

2.D.4 The institution revises or closes programs based on program reviews by faculty and administrative committees. These committees draft a plan to implement the changes and also make provisions for students to complete their degrees by teaching out current students, providing them with effective transfer options, or working with them to identify alternate educational paths.

2.D.5, 2.D.6 The college catalog and supplemental materials, such as the Student Handbook, clearly state the college's mission, core themes, rights and responsibilities for students, and all policies, resources, program expectations and opportunities pertinent to students and student success. Specialized certifications and licensures are published within program information in the college catalog and online. This information is accessible to current and prospective students as well as the public via kiosks, and numerous general-use computers across campus.

2.D.7 The institution safely secures the retention of student records and student identity, adhering to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Policies for maintaining confidentiality and privacy of student information are published in the college catalog, the Faculty Handbook, and the Staff Handbook. An online FERPA tutorial is available to faculty and staff, before they are granted access to the student management system. Student workers participate in ongoing training. FERPA is understood campus-wide.

2.D.8 The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with the college's mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding categories of financial assistance is published, readily available and is explained to students when meeting with Entry Services and Admissions, or Outreach Services staff. The college also offers financial aid orientations. Incoming registering students, who may not have participated otherwise, have an opportunity to take part in ongoing financial aid workshops where they receive information on financial aid and services as well. Students have immediate access to their own financial aid information through the Financial Aid website.

2.D.9 Students receiving financial aid assistance are informed of any repayment obligations by letter in which a copy is retained in each student's files. Student responsibilities and requirements regarding student loans are outlined on the Student Loans webpage. The institution continually monitors and then reconciles student loan disbursements monthly. These processes are in keeping with US Department of Education's program guidelines and reports.

2.D.10 The evaluators noted that the college supports student success with a proactive group of a highly educated, passionate faculty and staff advisors. New students and students who are taking online or evening classes are typically served by EPAC and HSP advisors. Students may request a specific advisor from the advising website. Training is ongoing and overseen by the Academic Affairs Division through departments and the Faculty Advising Committee. Specialized advising and orientations are provided for international students, WorkForce Education, Athletics, and other program areas with specific requirements. The Programs & Courses webpage provides easily accessible information on major pathways.

2.D.11 As is consistent with the its mission and Core theme 1, the HCC provides co-curricular activities that offer cultural enrichment and intercollegiate and intramural competition designed to enhance student out-of-classroom learning, promote student community as well as "advancing the college's diversity and global initiatives." The associate dean for student programs and leadership delegates financial monitoring to budget managers for programs offered. Budget managers are also accountable to the Associated Students of Highline Community College (ASHCC).

2.D.12 The institution operates three auxiliary services, Hospitality Services, Highline Bookstore, and Food Services (Catering), that enhance the quality of students' experiences while attending the college. These services support the institution's mission by contributing to student learning by providing employment and internship opportunities to students and book rentals in order to reduce costs for students. Auxiliary services support core themes by participating in co-curricular events such as Global Fest, and Unity Through Diversity week. Students, faculty and staff provide ongoing feedback about services through the Auxiliary Services website. A Textbook Advisory Committee provides feedback and input to the Bookstore. Administrative Services receives input from constituents campus-wide regarding the food service contracts.

2.D.13 The institution's intercollegiate athletic program is consistent with the institution's mission and is conducted with appropriate oversight. The institution belongs to the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) and the college wrestling program is a member of the National Junior College Athletic Association. Student athlete admission requirements and procedures, financial aid awards, academic standards and degree requirements are the same as for all students. Athletic-related financial aid is distributed following policies set by NWAACC.

2.D.14 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for distance students via its Learning Management System (LMS). Online instructors utilize short written assignments to develop a sense of each student's voice as well. 2.D.1 A comprehensive array of appropriate programs and services to support student learning needs are available to Highline Community College (HCC) students — though often on a limited basis — across the college.

Interviews with students, staff, and faculty confirmed that the student services staff is skilled, knowledgeable and caring. A dedicated administrative staff supports these programs.

*Concern:* In recent years, budget related personnel cuts have been reflected in the elimination of some services and programs, reduction or reassignment of some services (academic advising, tutoring), and the increase in turnaround time for standard student processes (transcript evaluation, financial aid processing, etc.). However, the resiliency and dedication that the staff has exhibited should be commended. Students speak highly of customer service.

**f. 2.E Library and Information Services**

2.E.1 The print collection is adequate for the needs of the students at Highline Community College. Several specialized collections are housed in service points across the campus. Additional materials are available to students from two nearby universities. Electronic holdings are adequate for both on and off campus student needs. Several specialized collections include status as a selective federal depository library and the Stanley P. Owen Native American Collection. Spot checks of several subject areas and the nursing collection indicated both currency and in depth holdings, with evidence of systematic weeding. Special funding from the college has been provided to develop base collections for several planned four year degrees. The library's weeding procedures are well defined. Overall the library exhibits a high level of organization in its approach to both collection development and maintenance.

2.E.2 A well developed, comprehensive collection development policy is posted on the library website. A detailed weeding policy including weeding procedures is present with evidence of a sophisticated weeding effort. There is also evidence of an effort by library faculty to solicit input from faculty for both collection development and weeding. Reports detailing collection usage by subject, title and other are available to library staff. Feedback from data usage analysis has been used to reduce periodical holdings.

2.E.3 The importance the college and library place on information literacy is evident in that one of the five college learning outcomes is dedicated to information literacy. Librarians utilize a variety of methods to implement information literacy including traditional instruction sessions, the IRIS tutorial and one on one student interactions. All full and part time library faculty are actively involved with information literacy. Librarians work closely with teaching faculty in a variety of venues, often in what appears to be a symbiotic relationship.

An examination of the library web site revealed an extensive web presence devoted to information literacy. The site is organized using a student focused, conceptual instruction model of the research process. Tutorials are provided in each concept with a clear emphasis on information literacy elements appropriate to each step in the process. Several web based subject guides are devoted to evaluation of information. Overall, the web site is indicative of the library's adoption, or more accurately stated, embrace of information literacy as the primary focus of reference services.

*Compliment:* Reference staff have done an exception job adopting and implementing information literacy into all of their activities.

2.E.4 Evaluation efforts are embedded throughout library services. A systematic effort was launched in 2010 with a department by department analysis of existing assessment activities.

Activities not being assessed and those in need of improvement were identified. Rather than just counting things, data collection itself was assessed for effectiveness and refocused on improving library services. A notable change was the integration of the college's core themes into library work plans. Plans now link to the core themes and include objectives, responsibilities, measures and benchmarks.

The reference department played a lead role in the development of assessment efforts in the library. Reference staff have embraced the concepts of the new accreditation standards and incorporated the college's core themes into their outcomes based work plans. This effort has been extended to other library departments through the development of departmental work plans. An impressive outcomes map links library functional areas to outcomes based on activities specific to departments and also those shared by one or more departments.

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

2.F.1 Despite reductions in Washington State legislative funding of 8.8 million dollars in recent years, HCC has remained fiscally sound through wise budgeting and management practices. In the face of the reduction of its total budget, the college has continued to support all necessary functions and has dealt with deferred maintenance of facilities, has developed new curriculum, has continued to provide a quality educational experience for its students and has maintained a financial reserve of approximately 10% of its annual budget. The college has been thoughtful in developing new sources of income, including increased local enrollments, a large number of Running Start co-enrollments, an increased number of international students and targeted grant funding.

The college follows sound business practices including regular reconciliations, substantial unrestricted fund balances and frequent reports including quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees on cash, budget balances, and all revenue sources including enrollment and FTE projections.

2.F.2 The college follows an annual resource process that is overseen by the Budget Office. The process begins with conservative estimates of tuition and other revenue for the coming year. For example, the college has determined that it will use 2009 enrollments, rather than the substantially larger enrollment number for the subsequent years as the basis for its estimates of tuition for the coming year. This practice recognizes the economic and sociological realities that suggest that the near-term enrollment increases are likely to be short-lived. The differential between actual and projected tuition revenues have been set aside to deal with any additional state cutbacks that might occur during the coming year.

2.F.3 HCC's budget process provides for adequate opportunity for staff input in the development process phases. Structurally, the formal process follows the institution's organizational framework, but there is an ad-hoc budget committee which includes the budget director and budget managers that meets several times through the year to discuss budget development. During the Winter Quarter, local budget managers develop requests that take into account any anticipated reductions. There is a separate process through which they may request increases to enhance programs. After the data is collected, the vice presidents review the

requests from their respective areas. After that review, the entire Executive Staff reviews and approves the budget which is then presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

2.F.4 The college ensures timely and accurate financial information by using the Washington community and technical college system's Financial Management System (FMS). FMS is an integrated system supporting cashiering, customer accounts, accounts payable, inventory, and chart of account management. System-generated monthly financial reports are available to campus users, as are ad hoc reports generated through FMS's reporting module. The college also uses a utility that provides budget status, revenue, and expenditure updates daily. The vice president for administrative services is responsible for the fiscal functions of the college. Financial functions reporting through the vice president include financial accounting and reporting, banking and investments, accounts payable, customer accounts, budget, purchasing, grants and contracts, contract administration, risk management, and payroll.

The direct administrators of the financial systems are very experienced and well prepared. The director of finance and auxiliary services, who has twenty years of experience in Washington's community college system, is responsible for the quality of financial information recorded in the college's management system. The associate director of finance, who is responsible for general ledger accounting, financial reporting, and adherence to generally accepted accounting principles, is a certified public accountant with over twenty years of experience in higher education accounting.

Responsibility for internal controls is distributed throughout the college. However, Financial Services is responsible for internal control assessment, monitoring, and reporting. All major college departments complete risk assessments annually. Additionally, finance and purchasing management review and monitor several functions, including cash receipting, inventory control, and procurement-card transactions. Throughout the college, individual budget managers are required to reconcile accounts under their area of responsibility and to report discrepancies to Financial Services staff in a timely manner. Budgets are monitored regularly by the college Budget Department.

2.F.5 The college develops capital budgets following guidelines prescribed by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Fund sources may be legislatively-allocated or local. 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 college's Master Plan. That plan is closely aligned with the college's core themes, particularly with our focus on providing quality learning environments.

2.F.6 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 Services 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

2.F.7 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.

Beginning with fiscal year 2010, the SAO adopted a new approach to auditing state government, including higher education. Historically, SAO regulations called for biennial audits, with each audit covering the prior two fiscal years. Because of significant budget cuts and unfunded legislative mandates, however, the SAO shifted its focus to auditing and reporting on statewide audit topics, rather than conducting separate accountability audits of individual agencies. For fiscal year 2010-11, the area chosen for review in higher education was tuition waivers. The SAO selected ten community colleges for on-site audit work, focusing on eligibility and legal limitations (Highline was not one of the colleges chosen for initial review). Overall the colleges examined during the audit were found to have awarded tuition waivers in compliance with state law or policy. As a state agency, the college is also part of the state's Single Audit Report, an entity audit that examines both the financial statements and the expenditures of federal awards by all state agencies, including institutions of higher education.

*Concern:* Although the control of the audit function is a state, rather than a college issue, the evaluator expressed concern that the current audit approach of the State of Washington may require a decade or more to complete a full cycle, which may not meet the letter or spirit of the NWCCU audit requirement.

2.F.8 Fundraising activities at Highline Community College are coordinated through the Highline Community College Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization supporting the educational mission of the college through scholarships, emergency need awards, and special projects. In addition, 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.

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

2.G.1 Although challenged by a relatively large number of smaller, older and inefficient buildings, Highline Community College maintains an attractive campus with sufficient physical assets to support the college's instructional programs. However, Highline has one of the lowest square foot to student-FTE ratios in the state. The majority of campus buildings were constructed in the 1960's, are expensive to operate and lack common spaces important for student engagement and informal interaction. The resulting crowding leads to stress for both students and faculty. Outside only entrances to many faculty offices and classrooms limit student to

student interaction. Faculty spaces in particular lack privacy and hinder private faculty-student conversations.

Although a fair portion of the physical infrastructure design is not optimal for either student and faculty interaction, Highline staff have made progress in mitigating deficiencies in its physical plant. A notable renovation effort leveraging funds from federal sources for airport noise abatement along with some state funding has allowed Highline to upgrade many of its older classroom buildings. Adding to the complexity of an older physical plant is the college's siting on a hillside. The combination of a sloped site and an aging infrastructure such as an underground hot water based heating system pose many challenges to the Facilities Department. While the above design issues remain, the renovated classroom buildings and newer structures are adequate and equipped with sufficient technology to meet the needs of the Highline student population and teaching faculty. The Facilities Department is complimented on its many innovative efforts to mitigate an older, poorly designed physical plant and infrastructure.

The hillside location and older campus design also pose accessibility challenges for the Facilities department. Accessibility issues arising from a 2008 Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges audit were addressed over a period of time with addition funds provided by the college. Accessibility issues were fully resolved by the summer of 2013. Access services have been concentrated in the most accessible building on a campus. Services and procedures for obtaining services for qualifying students are published and available on the college website.

The campus is considered generally safe although an examination of crime reports indicate past problems with theft in the parking lots. At the student forum concerns were expressed about campus crime, specifically cell phone theft and students not feeling safe on campus. Lack of sufficient lighting in the parking lots and campus lighting in general were mentioned in the faculty forum. A rekeying project has increased physical building security and eliminated a classroom equipment theft problem.

*Concern:* Students and staff express concerns about their personal safety while on campus.

### **Hazardous Materials**

2.G.2 Highline Community College has published an extensive Hazardous Waste Standard Operating Procedure manual covering all aspects of hazardous waste handling on the campus. Science labs and the maintenance shop are the primary generators of waste. Students are provided with lab safety manuals prior to beginning lab classes and specific instruction in lab safety by teaching faculty and lab personnel. They are required to read and sign informed consent and safety agreements. Students are regularly monitored by faculty and lab staff. Under the direction of the warehouse manager, waste is stored and picked up for disposal by licensed vendors. The college also requires outside contractors to assume responsibility for disposing of any waste generated by their work through licensed disposal vendors. MSDS master files are maintained in the campus warehouse and location specific MSDS files at the chemistry and biology labs. An examination of staff training records indicate a systematic training program is in place. There was no evidence of periodic inspections of facilities housing hazardous waste.

Periodic inspections of facilities housing hazardous materials are not required under Washington state law but constitute a “best practice” that the institution may want to consider.

*Concern:* A lack of regular inspections of campus facilities housing hazardous wastes.

### **Physical Infrastructure - Planning**

2.G.3 Highline College has developed an excellent, comprehensive campus master plan based on its mission, core themes and long range educational and financial planning. In 2010 the college contracted with an architectural firm to assist in developing a comprehensive master plan that was a departure from its previous funding cycle and capital project focused plans. The planning group, composed of representatives from the administration, faculty and staff conducted their work within the framework of the college’s strategic plan. An examination of the plan indicates Highline’s master plan is consistent with the college’s core themes. For example, Highline’s Core Theme Three’s goal is to “build valuable relationships and establish a meaningful presence with Highline Community College’s communities”. During the development of the plan the work group met with local government officials, elected officials, and service group. Additional input was solicited from the general public via questionnaires and surveys. Several issues dealing with zoning, traffic patterns and parking were identified as affecting the local community and included in the master plan.

The college has also been involved in a more “inward” review of the master plan that involved an examination of the college’s physical spaces in light of program needs in the future. An analysis of future job growth in the area and student goals has guided capital expansion and renovation planning for the college. Programs supporting job growth and transfer students were identified and prioritized in the master plan based on the need for new capital funding or renovation. An examination of the college’s physical assets relative to programs identified as future growth areas indicated the facilities for Life Sciences, Performing Arts, and Health and Wellness were in need of improvement or replacement. A demographic analysis of the college’s student body revealed a significant number of non- native English speaking students. These students typically need additional assistance from Student Services and a new Student Services building was established as a priority in addition to new structures or renovations for the areas mentioned above.

### **Equipment**

2.G.4 Highline Community College possesses sufficient equipment resources to support its programs, mission, core themes and goals. Funding appears to be adequate for timely replacement of assets and a regular process is in place to identify areas in need of equipment upgrades and replacements. The cycle occurs on an annual basis and requests are open to all in the college community. External funding from sources such as grants has been used to supplement the college’s annual equipment budget. A regular cycle of replacement has been developed by Instructional Computing and classroom equipment has been standardized with input from teaching faculty. All instructional rooms on campus have been equipped with standardized audio-visual/computer setup.



## **Technological Infrastructure**

2.G.5 The technology infrastructure at HCC provides adequate support for the college's management and operational functions, academic programming and support services. Support for the college's systems is divided administratively into two logically functional areas.

Administrative Computing supports desktop systems and the college's technical infrastructure, including the network, internet access, telephone, security, email and administrative systems. The local LAN possesses sufficient bandwidth to support increased use of video, videoconferencing and voice over IP, although issues with internet traffic have required the use of bandwidth shaping software to keep speeds at a reasonable level. Recently the 100mps connection was doubled to 200mps with an additional 300mps capacity for future growth. The physical network is supplement by a campus-wide wireless network open to all in the college community. Email services have been outsourced to Microsoft and an off-campus backup site has been established in Spokane. Evidence of faculty input into services is indicated by the installation of telephones in each classroom in response to a faculty expressed need for quicker technical support during classes.

Complementing Administrative Computing, the Instructional Computing department is responsible for classroom technology and instructional computing resources such as the open computer labs and library Information Commons. Open computer labs and computer classrooms are concentrated in the Instructional Computing Center located in building 30. Other significant student computing resources are located in the library Information Commons. Two different lecture capture systems are supported along with the college learning management system, Angel and its soon to be successor Canvas. Instructional Computing staff regularly solicit faculty input concerning classroom technology needs through individual contacts, divisions chairs and analysis of help desk queries. In order to provide more immediate assistance in classroom situations, telephones have been installed in each classroom for timely technical support. A virtualization project has simplified lab management and saved money with initial lower costs, and project significant power savings along with reduced maintenance requirements over the lifetime of the project.

2.G.6 An IT Helpdesk located in the Instructional Computing Center is a joint effort by both computing departments and is open to all students, faculty and staff. A robust web site provides links to many FAQ's, tutorials and training resources. A telephone help line open to all in the college community is staffed seven days a week with the same hours as the computer labs. Training workshops for staff are offered at the beginning of each year on the college's Professional Development Day. Although outside providers have been utilized for training their services were discontinued due to the high cost and lack of use.

The Instructional Design Department supports faculty teaching web, hybrid and web-enhanced classes. Training is available to faculty either one on one or in scheduled training sessions. A unique approach to training in the department is its Faculty-in-Residence program. Faculty are allowed release time to work in the Instructional Design department to assist fellow faculty in their online class efforts. This appears to be a very effective approach to providing assistance to teaching faculty. Teaching faculty are uniquely qualified to understand and address

the issues of online instruction with their peers. External educational resources such as Quality Matters are available to faculty as well as resources provided by grant funding.

2.G.7 and 2.G.8 Technology planning at Highline is coordinated under the umbrella of the Technology Advisory Committee. The committee is composed of representatives from the four major college divisions and relevant technology staff from both IT departments. The committee has published a strategic plan and administers a technology budget for computer replacements and other selected projects. Successful initiatives such as emergency power for the server room, a campus wireless network and thin client technology began as issues identified by the Technology Advisory Committee. On a more tactical level, a committee composed of staff from both IT departments meet to discuss issues such as standards for computing equipment and computer replacement schedules. Currently computers are on either 3, 4 or 5 year replacement schedules depending on type of use. Overall, the dual IT department structure works well at Highline in part due to the guidance and planning efforts of the Technology Advisory Committee.

### **V. Standard 3 - Institutional Planning**

#### **a. 3.A Institutional Planning**

The description in the Institutional Self Study that described Highline Community College's highly decentralized decision-making process as a "bee swarm" worried the evaluators before the visit, the evaluators found an environment with remarkably well integrated Core Themes where the institutions' central directions and data inform all parts of the planning and decision making processes. The Core Themes reflect the Mission successfully. The objectives, outcomes and indicators correspond to the Core Theme with which they are identified. In turn, the institutions strategies complement and extend the Core Themes. The consequence is an institution that can and does make local decisions that are informed by relevant data and are fully consonant with the Core Themes and the strategic plans of the institution.

The college planning process allows input from a broad range of constituent groups including the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and community members.

#### **b. Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning**

The four core themes were approved by the College's Board of Trustees in 2010. The evaluation team repeatedly marveled at how well the core themes fit the College and the community it serves. The committee also noted the strong commitment by members of the college community to the core themes as well as how deeply they spanned every aspect of the College. In fact, the commitment to the core themes provided the impetus for the college to realign its mission statement in May 2013 to more closely align its core themes and mission statement.

The College has adopted a systematic planning process for assessing HCC's effectiveness in achieving mission fulfillment. This planning process included the establishing of objectives designed to guide the College as it assessed its responses to its core themes. Each objective includes a set of indicators, measures, and benchmarks which can be used to assess its efforts. The College produces an annual Mission Fulfillment Report to the college community as evidence of its progress for fulfilling its mission.

The College planning process allows input from a broad range of constituent group including the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and community members.

The accreditation committee noted that the entire college community has invested itself in the core themes.

Staff, faculty, and administration proactively promote student engagement, leadership, learning, and achievement. This commitment encompasses student services, faculty, and students themselves as well as several noteworthy organizations. The College is clearly data-driven and actively looks for solutions to mitigate areas of concern. Responsibilities for each core theme are clearly delineated and were developed collectively by the college.

## **VII. Standard 4 –Assessment and Improvement**

### **a. Eligibility Requirements 22 and 23**

#### **Eligibility Requirement 22**

All degree and certificate programs that require 45 or more credits have identified program learning outcomes to articulate expected student achievement. These program learning outcomes are published in the college website on each program’s web page.

#### **Eligibility Requirement 23**

To improve institutional effectiveness, college-wide committees, including the Board of Trustees, use the evaluation results each year to consider the strategic goals and objectives for the following year.

### **b. Standard 4.A -- Assessment**

The College has developed a culture of evidence and a commitment to assessing its progress toward achieving the objectives of its core themes. The accreditation team confirmed that the institution regularly and systematically collects data related to the core themes, analyzes the data, and formulates evidence-based evaluations of the achievement of the core theme objectives. Institutional and programmatic/departmental assessment of clearly identified program goals has become part of HCC’s data-driven culture. National benchmarks are used to measure college-wide student attainment and satisfaction while local data is measured from “Achieving the Dream” and faculty assessments of student learning. As mentioned earlier, the annual Mission Fulfillment Report communicates the progress toward fulfillment of the objectives of the core themes.

Educational programs have a well-designed system for course assessment and program assessment. The Student Outcomes and Competencies Committee (SOCC) is tasked with oversight of the educational assessment process. The mission of the SOCC Committee is to promote “an outcomes assessment cycle at Highline Community College that is constantly adjusting to student needs, consistently improving student success rates, and always helping the institution to realize its own mission”.

A well designed Course Adoption Form places an emphasis on mapping individual course outcomes to the college wide outcomes. Program outcomes are clearly published on the college web site and in the college catalog under the appropriate degree. A number of professional technical programs have also mapped their individual courses to the program outcomes.

Course outcomes are given to students via the course syllabi. The evaluation team did express a concern that course outcomes are not always included in the course syllabi for all faculty members and encourages the College to strive for consistency in all course syllabi.

4.A.1 and 4.A.2 The evaluators found the process to be systematic and the data to be meaningful, assessable, and verifiable whether the metrics were quantitative or qualitative. The college’s assessment report form provides a vehicle for assessing both course and program

outcomes. Department/program level faculty members submit assessment results annually to the VP for Academic Affairs and division chairs. The narrative aspect of the assessment report structure encourages reflection, analysis, and planned changes.

The accreditation team found a commitment on the part of the faculty to assess their course outcomes on a regular basis. What the accreditation team did not find was the same effort in program assessment. Leaders of the SOCC articulated that the academic faculty has primarily focused on the course assessment process. Academic Affairs has created a well-defined process for program review. This review process is not on a regular cycle but instead relies on a “trigger” event such as changes in enrollment or community needs.

Student support services have adopted a holistic approach to assessing its services provided to students as they strive to achieve their educational goals. A rich assessment process ensures that all programs are regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

*Concern:* The accreditation team does express a concern that this trigger cycle may occur too late for programs to implement a remediation plan and that the system does not promote a continuous improvement cycle, but does acknowledge that this cycle is working well for the College.

c. **Standard 4. B Improvement**

**VII. Core Themes - Planning, Assessment, and Improvement**

a. **Core Theme 1: Promote Student Engagement, Learning, and Achievement**

The first core theme of the College is drawn directly from its mission statement. This core theme focuses on three objectives which address student engagement, teaching, curriculum, and student support. The objectives are tied directly to pathways for students as they progress toward fulfillment of their educational goals.

Measurement of this core theme is collected through the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Washington State’s Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), as well as several measures linked to internal College-Wide Outcomes. The achievement of this core theme is identified through three institutional objectives, and nine indicators of achievement. Benchmarks established for each indicator measure the College’s progress toward fulfillment of this core theme. Progress on the achievement of this core theme is reported annually to the campus community via the annual Mission Fulfillment Report.

Primary oversight of this core theme has been assigned to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Student Affairs has a secondary responsibility.

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

The two indicators for this objective are derived from the CCSSE survey. The measures look at student interactions with faculty and student engagement in organizations and activities. Benchmarks were established using national norms.

Improvements in student engagement have been linked to the creation of “leadership centers” throughout the campus. The centers focus on training students who perform key roles on campus by providing them the tools to build a sense of community among HCC students. The leadership centers were described as a “hub and spoke” with the leadership training focusing on empowering students to serve others as opposed to helping others.

A mandatory orientation program (CORE) for all degree or certificate seeking students who have never attended college was implemented in 2012. The program is too new to have been programmatically assessed.

Engagement of faculty in advising was targeted as the primary vehicle for increasing interaction between students and faculty. While students within degree areas have always been supported by faculty advisors, the attention is being redirected to undecided students.

The Mission Fulfillment Report indicates that the measures adopted for this objective were achieved.

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

This objective is substantiated by three indicators with four measures; percentage of academic departments reporting faculty assessment of course level student learning outcomes, CCSSE survey responses from students about their learning experiences, CCSSE survey responses regarding support for students, and percentage of departments reporting student services delivery and learning outcomes. Once again, the CCSSE scores were compared against national norms while the internal reporting benchmarks were set at 90%.

Activities for this objective have centered on a variety of areas but the most noteworthy focus has been on faculty development in best practices. Several examples include improving access by all students particularly those with disabilities, encouraging multiple modes of instruction in response to different learning styles, and developing different ways to demonstrate competencies in course content. The Learning and Teaching Center recently reached out to faculty by offering daily best practice sessions at lunch which consisted of ten minute discussions among faculty. The LTC has also established inquiry communities to promote peer exchange of teaching ideas.

Members of the accreditation team were at first surprised by the setting of the assessment benchmark to 90%, rather than expecting all faculty and student services departments to report course level assessment and delivery of student services respectively. However, the realization that many departments are very small and may often not have the resources available during a single year makes this benchmark more realistic. In fact, there appears to be an unspoken goal of all faculty and student service departments to report over a multi-year period even though the Mission Fulfillment Report is an annual event.

The Mission Fulfillment Report indicates that all benchmarks were achieved for Objective Two.

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

This objective has four indicators with six internal measures all focusing on traditional measures of student progress within their educational pathway.

The State of Washington's Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) forms the basis for the data collection and the assessment of this objective. One point is awarded each time a college student meets pre-established steps.

- Makes nationally recognized standardized test gains in math or in English language reading or listening as measured by pre- and post-testing or by earning a GED or high school diploma
- Passes a remedial math or English course with a qualifying grade to advance toward college-level work
- Earns the first 15 college-level credits
- Completes the first 5 college-level math credits
- Earns a certificate backed by at least one year of college, earns a two-year degree or completes an apprenticeship.

These points along with the traditional IPEDS graduation rate were selected as benchmarks for this objective.

The measure of the percentage of advanced basic skills students who transferred to college level courses during an academic year was the only measure that did not achieve its benchmark. The College's response provides an excellent example of how HCC is committed to meeting the measures established to evaluate the effectiveness of its core theme objectives. The response included first delegating the issue to the Vice President of Academic Affairs who brought the issue to his Instruction Cabinet. After an analysis attributed the loss to a reduction in the I-BEST course offerings and a staff vacancy created by a budget reduction, resources were allocated to a more cost effective model called JumpStart and to temporary funding to replace the lost position. This example as well as several others outlined in the Self Evaluation Report provides clear evidence of the College's commitment to its core themes.

b. **Core Theme 2: Integrate and Institutionalize Diversity and Globalism Throughout The College**

Staff and faculty are passionately committed, both individually and collectively, to this theme. Students are loved and valued. Faculty truly see the wealth of each student's potential and are passionate about creating successful lifelong learners who will leave HCC empowered to change their own lives and that of their community.

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

Responsibility for Core Theme 2, is shared by Student Services (primary), Academic Affairs (secondary), and Administrative Services (secondary). The College's curricular emphasis on diversity and globalism is maintained through the work of Instruction Cabinet along with the Learning and Teaching Center. HCC has significantly exceeded their mission fulfillment benchmarks (35%) for Core theme 2. The goals of diversity and globalism have been a college-wide learning outcome since 1994, indicating a long-term, strong and consistent commitment of the college since 1994. As a result, 75% of courses link at least one SLO to the college-wide outcomes on diversity and globalism.

This commitment is evident throughout the curriculum. What began in 1998 as a Culture, Gender, and Global Studies Department is now the Diversity and Global Studies (DGS) Department, which offers 23 courses meeting degree distribution requirements in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Courses across the curriculum can be submitted for review and designated by the DGS as meeting the DG graduation requirement. In this way, courses from a variety of disciplines are infused with diversity and globalism outcomes (3.B.2).

Course adoption forms (CAFs) link course-level student learning outcomes to College-wide outcomes and the CAF database proves the multitude of courses which carry diversity outcomes. In 2012, the Faculty Senate approved revised graduation requirements for Associate in Applied Science degrees, requiring diversity and globalism course credits for professional-technical students as well as transfer students (3.B.1).

HCC does an excellent job of collecting and evaluating data related to core theme objectives and making appropriate plans to improve or sustain excellence based on the data (3.5.3).

*Compliment:* The College is to be commended for its long-standing commitment to and success in the integration of diversity, globalism, and student leadership into curriculum, the college community, and through outreach, into the wider community. This validates the experiences of many students and creates a greater awareness of contemporary issues, historical contexts, and personal relevance.

Faculty efforts are supported by the Student Outcomes and Competency Committee (SOCC).

In regard to Core Theme 2, the college does an outstanding job of assessing and improving services to an increasingly diverse population of students. Special compliments must be given to the Multicultural Affairs (MCA) office for their long history (since 1996) of using data to improve practices in Student Services and Academic Affairs. They have proven to be nimble in training staff members in “cultural competence” so they can serve the student population with greater sensitivity and navigational support (4.A.4).

The Access Services Department has also conducted program assessment to address in-classroom accommodations to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. The College has made a concerted effort to employ bilingual student workers in admission as well as full-time employees who are bilingual. Clearly the college is proactive in addressing every aspect of student learning from admissions, registration, and financial aid to success in programs. All service improvements are ongoing, and are the results of continuous assessment and planning (4.A.4).

Course Adoption Forms (CAFS) link course level student learning outcomes (SLOs) to the college-wide outcomes in the CAF database. This ensures the alignment and holistic support of resources, capacity, practices and assessment with respect to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered. It also clearly demonstrates the College’s commitment to Core Theme 2: Diversity and Globalism in that it reveals all courses which carry diversity outcomes. This, in turn, affirms that HCC curriculum is reflective of a longstanding commitment to diversity and globalism in all degree programs, including professional technical AAS degrees (4.A.5).

HCC appears to “walk the walk” when it comes to assessment and striving for continuous improvement. First, communication appears to be a priority in all aspects of the assessment process. For example, each department compiles an annual assessment report based on student learning outcomes. Both the assessment report and the SOCCC rubric used to evaluate these reports have gone through substantial revisions with the intent of helping faculty maintain focus on meaningful assessment of course-level student learning outcomes and to report clearly the planning, assessment, and improvement process in their department’s instructional activities (4.A.6)

The departmental report, which matches the structure of the evaluation rubric, includes qualitative questions that encourage respondents to document a complete assessment loop. Prompts may include, “Reflect on the results of this assessment activity. What do the results tell you about student learning for this . . . outcome?” and “What specific changes in your teaching, curriculum, or department did you make because of the results of the assessment activity?” These types of reflective questions help faculty interpret results of learning outcomes through the lens of their own unique perceptions and teaching experiences (4.A.6)

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

HCC’s *Mission Fulfillment* Report data shows strong performance in support for all learners. Because of this, the focus of planning, assessment, and improvement efforts is on refinement and improvement. Key to success is the Multicultural Services (MSD) department. MSD has had a long history of using data to inform improvement practices throughout the college. In 1996, it was reorganized to report to both Student Services and Academic Affairs to address evidence that the student demographic at Highline was changing significantly. In response to growing numbers of under-served students and students of color (68%), MSD began

providing cultural competence training for everyone in Student Services. This broadened the number of staff who could effectively provide college navigation support for its students.

In 2012, the Multicultural Services Department (MSD) provided not only specific services for students, but also facilitated system changes in Student Services. Renamed Multicultural Affairs (MCA), the office now addresses institutional changes that support diversity initiatives on a macro-level. They are charged with responding to the ever-changing demographics of the community and the institution. Using ongoing planning and assessment processes to guide decision-making, in 2012 the Student Intercultural Center (ICC) moved from Building 6 into the Highline Student Union Building, a more central location to enhance programs in leadership development and social justice education.

The MCA, in conjunction with the ICC creates an inclusive, supportive work area that encourages equity in learning. Focus is in three areas: 1) Helping students become agents of social change, 2) elevating consciousness, and 3) creating and sustaining institutional change.

Additionally, the Access Services Department conducts program assessments to better understand how students with disabilities access in-classroom accommodations to meet their learning needs. For example, when the department studied the effectiveness of students' Letter of Accommodation, staff discovered that students often requested accommodative services without this official letter. This meant that students did not receive services at the appropriate levels. As a result, Access Services has developed a new training where students learn the process for correctly using the letter.

Additional revisions that demonstrate how the college supports the needs of students from diverse backgrounds include:

1. Hiring student workers in the Admissions office who are bilingual. The Admissions office has also revised Highline's "Get Ready! Getting Started" online admission checklist, making steps easier for prospective students to follow and successfully enroll.
2. Cashiering added two full-time bilingual employees, and the bookstore also employs a number of students who reflect the demographic of the student population.
3. The Educational Planning and Advising Center (EPAC) created an online catalogue of "how to" videos that teach students how to register for classes, how to check on their waitlist status, and how to check on their registration time (to list just a few), with the intention of providing this information in multiple modalities.
4. Financial Aid (FA) offers thirty-minute information sessions for students before all College Orientation and Registration Experience (CORE) sessions as well as during ESL Night (an evening event for ESL students to learn about higher education opportunities) in both English and Spanish. FA also collaborates with individual ESL instructors in High-Intermediate and Advanced ESL classrooms, presenting workshops along with providing one-on-one advising on financial aid.

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

Data generally indicates that most students from diverse backgrounds progress, achieve goals, and complete degrees and certificates. The Mission Fulfillment Report identified only one area where achievement is not equitably represented across groups. This indicator is 3.1 where results are below the benchmark for students who self-identify as African/black. This deficiency then automatically becomes an item for Executive Staff where it is then delegated to the appropriate VP. The Achieving the Dream Core Team is involved improvement planning to address overall achievement gaps. For example, the Director of Community Engagement, upon seeing this gap, initiated the first Black and Brown Male Summit four years ago. It aims to help



young men of color in school and life. This year's theme is "Reviving our Roots through Courageous Conversations." Each year attendance has increased and the program has built bridges both on campus and in the community, where many high school students attend the summit.

The ACHEIVE program is a very unique and comprehensive Post-Secondary Transition Program for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities administered by Access Services. It assists students in starting a path as lifelong learners and provides a bridge to further education or employment.

TRiO is a grant program that improves success for students who are low-income, first generation, and/or students with disabilities. The college has sustained this grant since 2011 and has steadily increased participation and success. Additionally, the Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program was launched in 2009 to serve underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. These students are provided academic support and professional development, a dedicated space to study, and advising. The goal of this program is for students to excel academically and transfer successfully to four-year institutions as STEM majors.

**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.*

College data show that HCC is above their benchmark in hiring and retaining faculty of color. The college has been extremely nimble in adapting to their ever changing demographics. In 20 years, Highline has moved from a predominantly Caucasian-serving institution to serving the most culturally diverse student population in the state, which includes hundreds of international students.

The College is sensitive to the needs of faculty and staff of color and strives to create a comfortable climate. The Faculty and Staff of Color professional group provides ongoing support and opportunities for professional development.

c. **Core Theme Three: Presence within the college's communities**

The college's core theme of community engagement extends the scope of the 2006 strategic initiatives and indicates that the planning, assessment, and improvement of community engagement efforts have been ongoing for many years. The value of serving the needs of the community and partnering with businesses, agencies, school districts, and families is woven inextricably into the entire institution.

For instance, the Student Services Assessment Task Force has developed assessment activities to demonstrate college services that align with Core Theme 3. Eight of the 37 assessments completed in 2012 measure community engagement at the college. Not only do they provide assessment tools, they assess their effectiveness and the satisfaction that stakeholders have in the tools. This core theme assessment loop does not draw attention in the 7-year report, but supports the measurement of indicators within the core theme specifically and improves the institution generally. Student services plans their annual strategic plan around the core themes. In the same way, the library has also embedded their annual strategic plan around the core themes. In interviews, stories repeatedly emerged of staff members meeting and exceeding the objectives of this core theme, but through the planning process the college had chosen to measure only three objectives. The successes were too numerous to include. This evaluator infers that the core theme is so embedded in the institution that staff and faculty expect community engagement in all they do. "It's just what we do here," many said.

The definition of community engagement at HCC is very broad because it is such a deeply held value of the institution. Continuing education, adult basic education, workforce

development, community outreach, customized training, marketing and communications, all contribute to the planning, assessment, and improvement of the core theme. Following a business model for strategic planning, institutional advancement decided to focus on three main objectives: effective communication with the college's communities, creating connections in the communities in order to understand community needs, and contributing to meeting those needs. According to their measures, they meet or exceed those benchmarks. However, they have found that too many factors are involved in one of their indicators to provide an accurate measure and are, therefore, re-examining the indicator, and in another area, they have found a critical need for immediate improvement.

*Objective 1: The College communicates effectively with its communities.* As a result of the planning and assessment of the objective of communication with their multiple communities (objective 1), the college has created more intentional and targeted communication strategies as part of their outreach and have narrowed their outreach to particular populations. Through tools such as the Hebert Community Perception survey, the National Media Preferences Survey, and other means such as direct contact with constituents, the college discovered that:

1. Communities rely on the website more than they had realized.
2. The success of Running Start programs came at a cost to some underserved populations.
3. Some communities, like certain Latino communities, were not aware of the college.
4. High school students who were not bound for college at all did not know about the college.
5. Many businesses did know about the college and 3 of the 4 focus areas of the instructional areas.
6. Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, would be the most effective tools to keep alumni and students engaged.

Some improvements to communication include resource allocation to modify the college website, more specific targeting of mailings to fragile populations, translating web and printed publications into Spanish, seeking employees with bilingual skills, and using social media with current students and alumni. The perception survey data has added a layer to the targeted service district to help outreach and marketing activities become more intentional, informed, and effective. The office of Institutional Advancement is continuing its effort of assessing these methods to determine how best to allocate their resources and capacity. The college is to be commended for its continuing commitment to create relationships with the communities it serves, especially when measuring indicators of success are extremely difficult. One staff member articulated that the community perceives the college as engaged in learning as much from the community as the community is in learning from the college. This reciprocity fosters trust and growth. Because community engagement is such a difficult process to quantify, the college has applied to participate in the Carnegie Engagement Classification process in 2014 in order to use evidence-based documentation of institutional practice for self-assessment and quality improvement. If the college is granted the status of a community-engaged institution, it will undergo the evaluation process every five years.

Because of the assessment of community perception, the college has changed its target student populations. After analyzing traditional recruitment methods such as college fairs and Running Start programs, Institutional Advanced found that these means do not connect the college with the underserved communities to which the college is committed: specifically the first generation prospective and Latino traditional-aged students. In response they created Senior

Signing Day, which brings college seniors to campus, provides them immediate access to student support by registering them, and offers them contact with current students and staff. Outreach coordinators are in the process of tracking the effectiveness of this event.

*Objective 2: The College initiates community connections to understand community needs.* Most impressive is the college's commitment to the second objective of initiating connections to understand the communities' needs. After receiving data from the perception survey and evaluations done through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Customized Training, and other workforce initiatives, like StartZone, and the Washington Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), the college has exceeded its benchmark of both the awareness of the college's role in the community and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the local business communities.

From the recurring community perception survey, the college also gathered and analyzed aggregated and ethnically-specific participation rates of traditional-aged students. The overall rate exceeded the benchmark. When research showed that participation rates met or exceeded targets for most ethnic groups but fell far below one ethnic group (17% under the benchmark), specifically the Hispanic/Latino age group, the college launched a comprehensive campaign to connect with the Latino community. Efforts included:

1. Creating a Latino Advisory Committee that brought together key members from within and without the college to guide, assess, and direct the targeted efforts.
2. Allocating resources, including funds, staff, and facilities, to creating *El Centro Latino*, a clearinghouse for outreach, referrals, and support in English and Spanish for prospective and current students
3. Partnering with agencies like Latinos for Community Transformation and conducting focus groups
4. Increased offerings in Spanish GED, Business Technology in Spanish, and off-campus instruction in more accessible locations within the communities
5. Seeking and winning grants from agencies like the College Spark Foundation to develop an action plan based on community research
6. Reaching out to community groups through radio programming utilizing current Latino students, campus visits from high school Latino organizations, innumerable visits off campus to local high schools with concentrations of Latino students, new Heritage Spanish offerings.

One of the most innovative activities is the Black & Brown Male Summit that brings young brown and black men to campus in order to motivate and support them to excel in academics. Because of the assessment of this event, the event has moved earlier in the academic year in order to establish repeated contact with the participants, whose numbers have increased exponentially since the start of the event. The college is tracking college enrollment of participants.

The way that the college exceeded its benchmark is laudable; to see how the college devoted extraordinary resources, research, and capacity to investigate and remedy the one area needing improvement is stunning and exemplifies the unity, coherence, dedication, and passion of its members.

While planning for objective 3 of this core theme, the college wanted to use data from regional economic development to set benchmarks and assess impact. As noted in the report, the impact of the college on the community is more than economic and difficult to assess, and economic development falls prey to larger influences than those in the scope of the college. The measures are being revised.

A community college cannot be everything to everyone, but HCC is incredibly innovative and comprehensive in the partnerships and services it seeks and creates to meet the community's needs. They include:

1. Port Jobs provides airport workers career and educational pathways through HCC. One example is a \$75,000 scholarship from Alaska Airlines for workers to attain certificates in business technology and business.
2. HCC's Community & Employment Services partners with numerous local businesses for training and placement of students with disabilities after they have received inclusive and comprehensive supported education and vocational training.
3. HCC's Small Business Development Center offers training for small businesses, including underserved entrepreneurs in micro-businesses, established large corporations, and international trade, transportation, and logistics companies in government grant procurement, professional research, grant writing, and so much more. These efforts do more than generate jobs and income, but there is no guarantee that businessmen and women will complete their efforts or succeed.
4. The Marine Science and Technology Center (MaST) partners with local schools and colleges to provide speaker series, internships, volunteer programs, and a summer science camp for local children that not only educates, but provides them lunch that might otherwise be missed.
5. Faculty members from communities find ways to connect, like an instructor offering a class in Somali at a satellite educational site within the Somali community
6. Faculty also connect courses to communities through service learning

The impressive integration of Community Engagement with workforce programs, student-centered grants and services, and industry and service partners is a result of effective planning and resource allocation. The holistic attention to students through workforce related grants and I-Best programming is both innovative and significant. The evaluators observed several co-located agencies, grant officers, and service directors working together to the great benefit of many students. Collaboration and coordination with many individuals are values not only shared but practiced.

In the area of workforce partnerships and professional technical programs engaging the community, core theme planning, assessment, and improvement processes are currently being revised due to the thorough and data-rich report generated by Professional Technical Education's Enrollment, Marketing and Outreach Report of June, 2013. This report calls for greater collaboration between outreach and "in-reach" efforts, institutional and market research, professional technical curriculum, marketing and communications efforts, and naturally occurring connections of faculty, staff, and current students in diverse communities.

*Compliment:* HCC cannot be commended enough for the way it has woven the core themes into the fabric of the institution. Clearly evident in the holistic approach to community engagement, the college carries out its mission and values in its herculean efforts to communicate, listen, and serve its communities. Through innovation, diligence, passion, and best practices the college is helping the surrounding communities participate in its "culture of yes," as one educator described the vibrant culture on campus.

**d. Core Theme # 4 Model sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning.**

Core Theme Four is in direct alignment with the college's mission and is stated within the mission statement:

*“...sustains relationships within its communities, and practices sustainability in human resources, operations and teaching and learning.”*

The focus of Core Theme Four is to use its “resources—human, physical, and financial—to improve the future success of the college, minimize [its] impact on the environment, and model sustainability for students.” From this focus, three objectives emerged: 1) to recruit, retain and develop a qualified workforce, 2) to demonstrate good stewardship of financial resources, and 3) to demonstrate stewardship of environmental resources. Indicators for accomplishing the objectives, methods for measuring the success of each, and benchmarks for the level of satisfactory performance for them were developed for assessment and improvement purposes. At present, the college has met or exceeded its goals for sustainability.

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

Highline Community College states that “Education is a service-oriented industry where the quality of the professional instruction and support services has significant influence on student success. Thus, our people are our most important resource.” The college supports ongoing professional development to not only develop but retain its employees. Several events and many activities on campus, plus funding designated for professional development of all employees—including part-time—are an expression of the value the college places on developing their employees and “growing their own” leaders.

Professional development activities on campus are planned by faculty and staff based on feedback by their colleagues. This effort at continuous improvement results in ongoing positive employee satisfaction as indicated by surveys. In addition, the college believes that designated funding provided to encourage all employees toward continuous improvement also plays a significant role Highline Community College’s low employment turnover.

In the process of assessing its hiring processes, the college discovered that several issues contributed to its inability to fill positions in an efficient and timely manner. Another problem was that staff was unable to clearly determine whether efforts to recruit applicants who were representative of the community at large were successful and whether candidates were actually representative of the community at large.

To assist in better recruiting and determining whether candidates truly were reflective of the community, the college purchased and implemented a web-based recruitment management system. The process is now streamlined so that applications are processed electronically and applicant qualifications are reviewed with minimized staff resources. Data produced by the new system and process allows the college to collect higher quality recruitment data, allows applicants from across the country to search for jobs at HCC in specific fields and locations. A result is that the college can now more efficiently recruit a highly qualified workforce.

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

This objective has been an important and significant goal for some time. Prior to 2006-2007, budget monitoring was the responsibility of each vice president. Little analysis was taking place to ensure that revenue was in line with projections. In 2005-2006 this decentralized process and lowered enrollment contributed to a significant and unplanned gap in the budget. The college had exhausted \$1.5 million in surplus in order to balance its funds. In response to these events, new leadership in administrative services redesigned the budget planning process.

The new process of budget planning and assessment incorporates short-term and long-term forecasts of local revenue. Enrollments are monitored and reported to the college’s Executive staff daily. Tuition revenue is monitored and reported monthly to the team. Trend analyses are performed on these data providing accurate and timely information for budget

planning and decision-making. Trustees are kept abreast of local budget comparisons to state allocations. As a result of these changes, the college is able to manage its board approved 10% reserve, and how to best target those funds. In addition, the college has been able to navigate state budget cuts without substantial effects on services to students.

**Objective 3:** The College demonstrates stewardship of environmental resources

This objective began with the college identifying sustainability benchmarks in 2009. Monitoring, assessment, and reduction of resource usage is in collaboration with many external partners including utility companies, local community organizations, micro-enterprise entities, and school districts. The data show ongoing success in meeting goals for this objective, so most efforts are toward refining and enhancing processes.

The college monitors sustainability benchmarks in the area of waste consumption, electricity and fossil fuel usages. Students, faculty and staff formed teams to collaborate on strategies to address the goal of better utilizing environmental resources across campus and the college has enjoyed many positive effects from these efforts. The college improved storm water management, began an organic recycling program, and developed a recycling program for fluorescent light bulbs, batteries, and electronics. The college also began a construction material recycling program and reached out to the community to collaborate with local organizations to promote sustainability. Examples of these community outreach efforts are a partnership on an organic farm stand and an education program at MaST to teach local low-income children and families about maintaining the environmental health of the Puget Sound. The college's waste stream is now reduced and cost reductions to capital projects have helped the college retain its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) construction principles. Because of its stewardship of environmental resources, Highline has been able to obtain federal energy grants, has seen a reduction in overall utility consumption, and has improved energy efficiency. Student stewardship involves real-world experience outside the classroom with service learning activities in the community. A goal is to eventually incorporate environmental sustainability into graduation requirements.

*Compliment:* The college should be acknowledged for its inclusion of its campus and community to address environmental sustainability. It is a role model as well as a leader in teaching a wide population about the benefits of environmental stewardship.

## **VIII. Standard 5 -Mission Fulfillment, Monitoring, Adaptation and Sustainability**

### **a. Eligibility Requirement 24**

The Evaluation Committee found that HCC has appropriately maintained its operational scale to fulfill the college's mission and achieve core themes. Despite significant decline of approximately 8.8 million dollars in state funding since 2008, the college has effectively restructured its human and financial resources. While the college has to rely increasingly on tuition revenue to offset the decline in state appropriations, it has also been expanding local revenue sources, appropriate grants, and new enrollments, including an increased number of international students, to ensure fiscal stability. The college has continued to maintain a financial reserve account, with a current balance of almost ten percent of the total annual operating budget.

### **b. Standard 5.A – Mission Fulfillment**

**Ongoing, Regular, Systematic, Participatory, Self-Reflective, and Evidence-Based Assessment of Accomplishment**

5.A.1 The college collects data at multiple levels to assess indicators of achievement to support the accomplishment of outcomes and core theme objectives. These data are also used to evaluate the status of goals and objectives for various operational plans. In addition, many of HCC's departments, programs, and divisions collect monthly, quarterly, and annual data to ensure continuous review and improvement. These include surveys to assess student needs, service satisfaction, and feedback.

#### **Analysis of Extent of Mission Fulfillment**

The college's data indicates that the college has accomplished all of its Core Theme Objectives with an attainment rate of 83% or above. While that result is laudable, it also resulted in discussions between the evaluators and the college leaders about whether the threshold levels had been set at a level high enough to encourage continuous improvement.

*Concern:* At HCC, the results of the mission fulfillment analysis have been shared and discussed at meetings across campus. These groups have reported that the review offered them the opportunity to provide suggestions for improvement, so perhaps the thresholds are not discouraging change, but it was a concern for the Committee.

The Evaluation Committee recognizes that there is a natural tension between establishing threshold levels that ensure success, with thresholds that may reflect greater aspiration. Since this is a discussion that is occurring throughout the Northwest, as all institutions try to understand what a threshold is intended to reflect, the Evaluation Committee did not feel that it was appropriate to develop a recommendation addressing this issue, but urges the college to reconsider its thresholds and the incentives or disincentive that they create for change.

#### **c. Standard 5.B – Adaptation and Sustainability**

##### **Regular Evaluation of Adequacy of Resources, Capacity, and Operational Effectiveness**

5.B.1 The Evaluation Committee found that the college has established structures and processes to ensure the ongoing and regular evaluation of adequacy of resources, capacity, and operational effectiveness. The college appears to be very committed in its efforts to integrate its planning processes, including the Core Theme and strategic planning activities to get a data-informed understanding of the needs and challenges of the institution.

5. B.2 The college has documented its extensive planning efforts which include regular review of the strategic plan, developing a new strategic plan every five years, and an effort to integrate the planning processes with budget allocation. Although there is a procedure for program reviews, there did not appear to the evaluators to be a policy that provided for regular schedule or systemic program reviews.

As noted other places in this report, HCC has had a very accelerated cycle into the new standards and its associated changes in planning and assessment, and the Committee recognizes that this cycle has not allowed for all new assessment and planning efforts to become fully mature and precisely evaluated. The Committee is satisfied that the college will continue to improve the integration and effectiveness of these processes.

5. B.3 The Committee found that HCC understands the dynamic nature of the internal and external college environments. The college has made great strides, in the midst of economic challenges, to ensure that it has remained sensitive to the needs and issues of those environments.

**IX. Commendations**

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the faculty and staff of the college for its high level of sensitivity and commitment to its students.
2. The Evaluation Committee commends the college for its long-standing commitment to and success in integrating diversity, globalism and student leadership into the curriculum to get students ready to work in a diverse workforce.
3. The Evaluation Committee commends the college imbedding the core themes seamlessly into the planning and decision making processes of the college.
4. The Evaluation Committee commends the Administration and Board of Trustees for setting the future direction of the institution through involved, active engagement in the campus and surrounding community.
5. The Evaluation Committee commends the college for its stewardship in creating financial reserves policies that help ensure financial strength and fiduciary integrity that will provide stability for future college operations.
6. The Evaluation Committee commends the college facilities personnel for their dedication in improving and renovating an aging physical plant located on a difficult setting.
7. The Evaluation Committee commends the Library personnel for developing and maintaining a research-friendly website.

**Recommendation:**

1. In the spirit of continuous improvement as contemplated by the standards, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the college gather and maintain evidence that the depth, breadth, coherence, content and sequence of programs are appropriate. (Standards 2.C.4 and 2.C.5)