

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

Bellevue College

Bellevue, WA

October 2011

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

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I. Roster of Evaluators

Dr. Edit Szanto (Chair)

Vice President of Student Services, Planning and Grant Development
College of Southern Idaho
Twin Falls, ID

Mr. Steffen A. Moller

Dean, Curriculum, Planning and Research
Clackamas Community College
Oregon City, OR

Ms. Christie Plinski

Vice President of Instruction
Mt. Hood Community College
Gresham, OR

II. Introduction

In accordance with the newly revised accreditation process of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (hereinafter “the Commission”), this report provides an overview and analysis of Standard 1 - Mission, Core Themes and Expectations for Bellevue College (hereinafter also referred to as “BC” or “the College”). As such, it reviews the eligibility requirements; mission, and extent of mission fulfillment; and Core Themes with objectives, indicators, and rationale for selection. It also addresses the College’s response to its most recent Recommendation provided by the Commission. The intent of the Peer Evaluation Team is to offer collegial input on the quality and usefulness of the report, to provide a critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College’s response to Standard 1, and to review the College’s response to the Recommendation Bellevue College received after the Fall 2009 Comprehensive Evaluation.

Bellevue College serves the cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Sammamish, Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Mercer Island, and Newport, all located on the east side of Seattle. Once a bedroom community, it is now an urban center with major employers such as Microsoft, Costco Wholesale, Expedia, and Paccar. In addition to its main campus located in Bellevue, the College also owns a facility in north Bellevue where its Continuing Education program is housed as well as property in the city of Issaquah for a future campus. As a comprehensive community college, the College offers a full range of degree and certificate programs in transfer and professional-technical areas as well as offerings in ABD/GED, ESL, and Basic Skills courses. In 2006, the College was granted permission to develop one of the first applied baccalaureate degrees in Washington State. The Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree in Radiation and Imaging Sciences began serving students in fall 2007, and a Bachelor of Applied Arts degree in Interior Design was added in 2009. Bellevue College’s FTE for the 2010-11 academic year was around 12,000 with an unduplicated headcount of 38,142 students.

Since Bellevue College’s Comprehensive Evaluation in Fall 2009, there have been significant changes. Of special note is the 25% reduction in state support. Since December 2008, BC’s state allocation has been reduced by \$8 million. Student tuition increases and reductions in college expenditures helped BC deal with these cuts by reducing the workforce by 24 exempt and classified employees and limiting the number of class sections offered. In spite of those reductions, funding was provided to fill ten full-time faculty vacancies for AY 2011-12 to improve the full-time/part-time faculty ratio. In 2011 the Washington Legislature authorized the College to offer applied baccalaureate degrees in: information technology, health care services and management, biotechnology, and pre-professional preparation for medical fields. The College has been preparing a two-year plan on offering the degrees. The College has also been planning for a baccalaureate degree in the area of health information technology.

The College, along with the rest of the community and technical colleges in Washington, has also embarked upon a two-step process for updating its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system - with the first step finished, still awaiting the state procuring a new ERP.

Since 2009, the college has experienced a period of major personnel changes in senior leadership positions: the positions of VP for Human Resources, VP for Instruction, and VP for Information Resources have all been vacated and refilled. The VP for Equity and Pluralism position is currently vacant as a result of a June 2011 retirement; and the VP for Institutional Advancement position has become vacant as of August 2011. Also, effective August 2011, the long-term President left the college and that position is currently filled by Dr. Laura Saunders, former Bellevue College VP for Administrative Services, serving as interim president while a national search is underway.

Accreditation for Bellevue College was reaffirmed in spring 2010 after a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit.

III. Assessment of Self-Evaluation Report and Supporting Materials

Evaluation Team acknowledges the administration, faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees for their intentional efforts in addressing Standard 1 - Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations. The College community has gone through a rigorous process resulting in the adoption of objectives and indicators of achievement to support the Core Themes.

Bellevue College derived its Core Themes from its mission statement, meeting its mission through its Core Themes. Mission fulfillment is measured through a weighting and scoring system for each of the objectives and indicators of achievement, with the outcome falling in one of three categories: below expectations, meeting expectations, and exceeding expectations, depending on the percentage score achieved. Identification of acceptable benchmarks/thresholds for its indicators of achievement is the next step in the College's process.

Overall, the College has set an ambitious agenda of indicators and related measures to assess its mission and the extent of mission fulfillment. Multiple data points are listed, many of which are indirect indicators that will require substantial work to provide the evidence needed to form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives supporting its Core Themes.

IV. Topics Addressed as an Addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report

In October 2009, Bellevue College received one Recommendation stating that "...the academic assessment plan be fully implemented with all courses being assessed. (2.B.1) It is further recommended that all faculty engage fully in the assessment process. (2.B.1 and Policy 2.2)"

As of the writing of this report, the College has established a plan for assessment including timelines for the assessment of key course outcomes on a two- or three-year cycle that "engages all faculty in designing and administering assessments and taking actions based on the results" (p. 6, Year One Self-Evaluation Report). The plan also provides for assessment of key outcomes for both general education and professional-technical degrees, and an institutional assessment using a three-year cycle utilizing the following tools: the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) administered in 200-level courses, Survey of Entering Student Engagement

(SENSE) administered in English 101 and first college-level math classes (year 1); the Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA) pre/post assessment of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, written communication, problem-solving (Year 2); and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (Year 3).

The evaluators note that although a plan is in place, there is only evidence in the report that the assessment has begun at the institutional level (administering the CAAP during 2010-11), with course and degree assessment scheduled for implementation starting in 2011-12.

Compliment

1. The Peer Evaluation Team compliments Bellevue College for developing a schedule for implementation of an academic assessment plan addressing course, degree and institutional student learning outcomes.

Concern

1. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that Bellevue College did not provide adequate evidence in its Self-Evaluation Report to show that the academic assessment plan has been fully implemented.

V. Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirement 2 - Authority

The institution is authorized to operate and award degrees as a higher education institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, or governing board as required by the jurisdiction in which it operates.

Bellevue College was created and authorized by the Community College Act of 1967 (revised as the Community and Technical College Act of 1991), Revised Code of Washington (RCW) chapter 28B, Section 50.150. BC has been continuously accredited by NWCCU since 1970.

Eligibility Requirement 3 - Mission and Core Themes

The institution's mission and core themes are clearly defined and adopted by its governing board(s) consistent with its legal authorization, and are appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. The institution's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its students and its principal programs lead to recognized degrees. The institution devotes all, or substantially all, of its resources to support its educational mission and core themes.

The College addressed Eligibility Requirement 3 (Mission and Core Themes) in the body of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report, specifically in response to Standard 1.A and 1.B, Mission and Core Themes. The Evaluation Team found evidence within the report that Bellevue College meets this Eligibility Requirement.

VI. Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A - Mission

1.A.1 The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.

Bellevue College's mission statement states:

Bellevue College is a student-centered, comprehensive and innovative college, committed to teaching excellence, that advances the life-long educational development of its students while strengthening the economic, social and cultural life of its diverse community. The college promotes student success by providing high-quality, flexible, accessible educational programs and services; advancing pluralism, inclusion and global awareness; and acting as a catalyst and collaborator for a vibrant region.

The College's mission statement was most recently reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees on June 29, 2011. Prior to that, the mission statement was approved in June, 2008 and is reviewed for appropriateness regularly by the President's staff. BC's mission is appropriate for its purpose as a comprehensive community college with applied baccalaureate programs and has been approved by its Trustees; it is communicated to the college community through both the web site and the College's annual catalog. The Evaluation Team did not find evidence on how frequently the mission statement is reviewed, nor how the college community is involved in the review and approval of the mission statement. (1.A.1)

1.A.2 The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment

Since the summer of 2009, the College has used the Core Themes as the foundation for its institutional planning and annual initiatives. A Core Theme Task Force was charged with defining each Core Theme, including its measures. The reports were published on the College's portal for comments. The elements of each Core Theme were then reviewed and updated by the Council for Institutional Effectiveness and Research (CIER), other college committees, then the President's staff, with opportunity for comments from the College community before they were presented to the BC Board of Trustees for review. In September 2011, the Board of Trustees adopted the Core Themes and a method for articulating an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment that established a system of weighting and scoring each objective, outcome, and indicator of achievement.

Thresholds were clearly articulated. Figure 1. on page 11 of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report presented a graphical illustration of the process for determining BC's threshold for mission fulfillment. While the figure appeared complex at first glance, it did help visualize the process.

Changing the accreditation terminology throughout the Year One Self-Evaluation Report was confusing and made the report less readable. It would have been more preferable if the internally used terminology was merely mentioned but NWCCU terminology used throughout the Self-Evaluation Report itself. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that the College use the NWCCU terminology in future reports.

Compliment

- 1 The Peer Evaluation Team compliments the College for a well-articulated mission statement. (1.A.1)

Standard 1.B - Core Themes

1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes

Bellevue College has identified four Core Themes (1.B.1) that represent elements of its mission and collectively encompass it: *Student Success, Teaching and Learning Excellence, College Life and Culture, and Community Engagement and Enrichment*. Each of the Core Themes addresses a portion of the mission itself and serves as a meaningful interpretation of the mission for the communities it serves.

In reviewing the four Core Themes, it is clear that considerable work went into the design and development of a conceptual framework leading to the establishment of the Core Themes, and their accompanying objectives and indicators. However, the Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that in some areas the indicators chosen do not comprehensively measure the fulfillment of the objectives or Core Themes. For instance, in ***Core Theme 1, Student Success***, the objectives related to this Core Theme include a commitment to open access; a diverse portfolio of programs and courses; and a pledge to help students reach their educational goals. While the College chose to include successful transition from pre-college to college-level course work as one of the indicators of achievement, the Evaluation Team found no indicators that addressed successful transition for those who transfer from the community college to four-year institutions. While it is not the role of the Evaluation Team to suggest specific indicators, the indicators selected by the College should form a solid basis for evaluating the accomplishment of objectives, without any obvious gaps. ***Core Theme 3: College Life and Culture***—relates to the following portion of the missions statement: “*Bellevue College... advances the life-long educational development of its students while strengthening the economic, social and cultural life of its diverse community. [Promoting student success by] providing high-quality, flexible, accessible educational programs and services; advancing pluralism, inclusion and global awareness...*” Whereas the objectives of this Core Theme address a number of the elements in the mission statement, there is no evidence of trying to measure how the College strengthens the “social and cultural life” of the community.

Finally, in **Core Theme 4, Community Engagement and Enrichment**, there are a number of indicators that the evaluators would encourage the College to review to ensure that they are assessable, meaningful, and verifiable.

Compliments

1. The Peer Evaluation Team compliments Bellevue College for its efforts to develop Core Themes which comprise essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass it. (1.B.1)
2. The Peer Evaluation Team compliments the College for creating a set of objectives to support each Core Theme. (1.B.2)

Concerns

1. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that there are “gaps” in the objectives and indicators of achievement needed for a comprehensive measurement of mission fulfillment. (1.B.2)
2. The Peer Evaluation Team is concerned that not all indicators of achievement are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable to allow for the evaluation of the accomplishment of the objectives. (1.B.2)

VII. Summary

The Standard 1 – Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations Peer Evaluation Panel reviewed Bellevue College’s articulation of its purpose, Core Themes, and its parameters for mission fulfillment. Identification of Core Themes with related objectives and indicators were also assessed as a basis for evaluating accomplishment of the Core Themes. As indicated above, both Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 were met.

Bellevue College’s accreditation was reaffirmed in spring 2010 after a Comprehensive Visit during the fall of 2009. The Commission had one recommendation related to course, program and institutional assessment of student learning outcomes. The college has since created a plan for assessment at all three levels, but the Year One Self-Evaluation Report provided no evidence that the academic assessment plan had been fully implemented with all courses being assessed and all faculty fully engaged in the assessment process.

Just prior to the completion of its decennial accreditation cycle in the summer of 2009, the College reviewed its mission statement during a leadership retreat, a process which also started the development of BC’s Core Themes. The process included vetting through several college

committees, staff input, and the Core Themes were eventually submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Bellevue College defines mission fulfillment in terms of reaching a certain overall institutional percentage based on a combined percentage of all four Core Themes. The percentage for each Core Theme is, in turn, based on weighting of the scores of the indicators of achievement for each of the objectives. Mission fulfillment will be reported for each of the Core Themes in one of three categories depending on the percentage score achieved: Less than 75% reflects substandard performance; between 75% and 90% reflects acceptable performance, and above 90% indicates optimal performance.

The College's report provided a conceptual framework that is attempting to align all elements of the mission. The report was consistent with the guidelines and expectations of a Year One Report. While considerable efforts have been made to align the objectives and indicators, further refinement will ensure that indicators are meaningful and assessable measures of the achievement of objectives and respective Core Themes.

VIII. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. The Peer Evaluation Team commends Bellevue College for a well-articulated mission statement. (1.A.1)
2. The Peer Evaluation Team commends the College for its efforts towards developing Core Themes which comprise essential elements of the mission and collectively encompass it. (1.B.1)

Recommendations

1. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that the College ensure that there are no gaps in objectives and indicators of achievement to allow for measuring the accomplishment of Core Themes and mission fulfillment. (1.B.2)
2. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that Bellevue College continue to review and revise the indicators of achievement to ensure that they are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable. (1.B.2)
3. The Peer Evaluation Team recommends that the College fully implement the academic assessment plan with all courses being assessed and all faculty fully engaged in the assessment process. (4.A.3)