

Standard One - Mission and Purposes

The institution's mission and purposes are appropriate to higher education, consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and implemented in a manner that complies with the Standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The institution's mission gives direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness.

DESCRIPTION

Washington County Community College's (WCCC) mission statement is "to serve the State of Maine and the region with comprehensive, post-secondary, transfer and/or technical education, culminating with the Associate Degree, Diploma, and/or Certificate. WCCC's programs and services prepare and sustain a diverse student body as competitive members of a world-class workforce and contributing members of society." The statement reflects the evolution the College has gone through beginning in 1999 with the offering of its first transfer programs, an expansion of the liberal arts, and the offering of an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies.

In 2003 the Maine Community College System was established and the Washington County Technical College mission was formally expanded to include the new community college purpose of being a comprehensive community college with technical, career and transfer programs, as well as support a more diverse student population with a broad range of services. The changes and evolution of the College's mission rest upon a thirty-nine year history of providing outstanding and vitally important trade and technical education to the region and State of Maine. As a comprehensive community college, WCCC maintains a strength and focus on technical, occupational and career education while expanding upon its new mission as a community college in providing associate degrees in liberal studies leading to transfer to four year institutions. Today the College continues to enrich the general education curriculum increasing the offerings in math, science, social science, arts and humanities.

The mission statement strives to recognize the balance of multiple purposes inherent in being a comprehensive community college. It speaks of "transfer" and "technical education", and providing services for a "diverse student body". It

further mentions the role of the College in developing the “workforce” and “members of society”. All these characteristics are hallmarks of community colleges. Yet, beyond the mission statement the College holds a vision that expands how it defines its purpose as a community college. The vision of the College is:

- To foster the development of academic, technical and leadership skills of students seeking degrees in technical fields;
- To provide students with the academic foundation to transfer to 4-year colleges;
- To instill an understanding and appreciation for individual responsibility for citizenship and leadership in a multicultural society;
- To provide lifelong educational experiences for individuals;
- To provide out-of-class learning experiences in the environment of a quality campus community;
- And to develop strategic alliances and partnerships with government, business, and industry with which to enhance the economic development of the state and the region.

WCCC is unique because of the region we serve. Washington County is experiencing a demographic change in that it has an increasing population of seniors and declining population of youth. An out migration of young families due to significant decrease in manufacturing contributes to this indicator. Plant closings and downsizing are identified as the primary cause of this effect. In the area of population growth, while Maine’s population grew by some 3.7% from 2000-2005, the primary service area of Washington County decreased by 1.5%. The median age within the county grew from 33.4 years in 1980, to 40.5 years in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006) thereby giving Washington County the distinction of being Maine’s second oldest county. The school age youth population continues to decline while their out migration from the county grows.

The region’s population has the lowest level of educational attainment in the state. The College’s enrollment reflects that many of the areas populace just simply cannot afford the cost of higher education. Washington County's residents exceed the States median household income at \$28,311 by \$2,000 more than the next lowest county Sagadahoc at \$30,311. The county leads Maine in the percentage of people receiving food stamps and in subsidized school

lunches. Thirty-four percent of all personal income is derived from “transfer payments” from state and federal government allotments.

One purpose of WCCC is to serve the local economy and job market needs. Unfortunately, the economic drought continues as the county sees what seems to be an endless line of business downsizing or closures. This has been most recently born out in the area of wood manufacturing with the closing of an oriented strand board plant, shutdown in paper making operations, cutbacks in pulp operations and an aquaculture industry struck with the devastating effects of an infectious salmon anemia. The result of these and other setbacks to the county have resulted in a net loss of 1,017 jobs from 2000-2005 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Market Information). Washington County’s unemployment rate is consistently at or near the highest rate of all of Maine’s counties. No single industry dominates the economy of the area. Currently, education, health, social services and public administration provide for 33% of all jobs (Maine Department of Labor, 2006).

Although there are significant challenges for Washington County and WCCC, the economic and social conditions illustrate the importance of WCCC playing a more proactive role in the economic development of the county. The communities served by the college highly value the institution for its long and proud tradition within the community and the vital economic role it plays in the region.

The Mission Statement is found in the WCCC College Catalogue and on the College’s website. It also appears in the student handbook and faculty handbook.

APPRAISAL

The College’s evolution of role, purpose and mission over its thirty-nine years has culminated in its current comprehensive community college mission. This has placed the College in the role of serving all components of its missions, not just specific aspects of it. Community Colleges historically are everything to everybody and in attempts to serve a wide range of roles and purposes spread themselves too thin. WCCC has at times wrestled with its expanded comprehensive mission and vision. The College, at times, experiences competing institutional identities. There are the identities of technical/vocational education and liberal arts education, and the concepts of education as training versus the educated person. The conflict of the competing identities has lessened over time through the realization that the College’s priorities lay with both identities and

that as a comprehensive community college we are both technical and liberal, and that we train students in vocations as well as broadly educate through general education. While those we serve expect much from the College in its expanded comprehensive role, there is a general understanding that parts of the community still view the College as the Vocational Technical Institute. Although the College's identity and true mission has evolved over time there is within our community a fundamental unity in the value of WCCC and its programs to students and the community.

The current Mission Statement provides a strong sense of our purpose as a community college, but does not fully speak to the College's unique strengths, vital role and fundamental activity of teaching and learning or to the broader community development role the College brings to its constituents. The College's dual identity as a technical education college and a comprehensive community college can also be reconciled in a message and mission for all to understand and identify with.

While we recognize that it is important that each person in the College community understand our mission, we need to formalize a process through which the mission statement guides our activity and provides a framework to assess our effectiveness at the delivery of our mission. In order for this to happen, a mission statement must be widely understood. According to a 2006 PACE Survey the College scored high in people believing their job was relevant to the mission. We can all find where the mission statement is and there is an understanding of the Mission's relevance, but the question on our campus is do we all have the same understanding of our mission and is our mission truly reflective of who we are and what we strive to do for our region and state.

The College re-examines its mission and purposes occasionally as was most recently done in the 2006-07 academic year through an "Envision the Future" strategic planning initiative commissioned for each of Maine's Community Colleges by the System's Trustees. However it is recognized by the WCCC community that a review of the College's mission and vision should be an ongoing element of its work to continually improve its programming for those the College serves. As the basis for strategic planning, the mission statement provides guidance for administrative and academic decision-making, for planning for the future, and for resource allocation. More frequent reflection upon the institution's mission and purpose and their importance in planning would improve

the institution's effectiveness. In November 2008 the College community, as part of a two and a half day professional development activity, reviewed the mission and vision of the College. It was the consensus of the staff and faculty that the current mission and vision, while accurately describing some of the work of the College, does not fully address the role the College plays in the community or the services it provide its students. The College should and has begun undertaking a more comprehensive review of the mission and vision statements to more fully describe the work of the College.

PROJECTIONS

1. The President of the College will assign Community Council the task to annually review and assess the visibility and effectiveness of communication of the College's mission and vision statements and provide recommendations. The review and assessment will be reflective of various constituencies including students, faculty, staff, and public.
2. The President will follow up a November 2008 professional development meeting where a consensus of the faculty and staff agreed the College's mission and vision statements needed to be reviewed, updated, and made more reflective of the College today and where it sees itself evolving into the future. The President will charge an ad-hoc committee to develop a process for the review and update of the mission and vision statements of the College. The process will be undertaken and completed in the 2009/2010 academic year.
3. The Senior Management Team will ensure the mission and vision of the College is used and incorporated in directing activities, undertaking initiatives, guiding policies, supporting decision making and aligning the overall direction of the College with the mission and vision statements.
4. All college committees will review their bylaws to ensure the work of the committee is reflective of the College's mission and vision. Committees will update bylaws to state how they support and further the mission and vision of the College. The Dean of Academic and Student Affairs will present all updated bylaws to the Senior Management Team and Community Council by end of the 2009 calendar year.