

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

DESCRIPTION

Washington County Community College (WCCC) is an institution that engages in planning and evaluation. Planning activities such as strategic planning, academic program planning and master planning are obvious, useful and provide direction and continuity for the College. Other planning activities – enrollment planning, financial/budget planning, academic master planning, and technology planning are less obvious, but none the less significant. There are also individual services, projects, initiatives, and ad hoc groups that undertake meaningful and purposeful planning.

In concert with the Maine Community College System (MCCS), every five years WCCC develops a Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is part of the broad MCCS and institutional planning process that includes, an Envision the Future process, strategic priority development, and goals and measures identification. The planning process also includes the model of analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), as well as doing an environmental scan. The College has just begun its 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. At the MCCS level, the strategic priorities have associated goals and measures in the areas of access and affordability, envisioning the future, economic development, rural opportunity and accountability. WCCC, through its Envision the Future process, identified the following strategic areas: enrollment, educational offerings and delivery, student services, facilities, technology, finances, and economic development. The evaluation of effectiveness in meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan is done on an annual basis.

Academic planning and evaluation have several areas of focus. For new program planning and development, WCCC has a four step process based upon internal curriculum procedures and MCCS policies and procedures. The four step process is: 1. Intent to Plan, 2. Research and Planning, 3. Intent to Implement and Program Development, and 4. Notification and Approval Process. A proposal is reviewed and commented on at each step in the process. New program

proposals, including new courses, are subject to review and approval by the College's Curriculum Committee and the President. Programs also need approval through the MCCS including the MCCS Community College Presidents, MCCS President, the Education Policy Board MCCS Board of Trustees, and MCCS Board of Trustees.

Academic planning is also done by program faculty and Department Chairs in collaboration with the Academic Affairs Office. Academic planning within the College can include curriculum, budget, facilities, resources, enrollment, and professional development. Curriculum Committee is involved in the broader academic planning for the College. The Committee takes on larger academic initiatives such as general education, program/degree credit distribution requirements, and developmental education. Each year, the Committee reviews standing or new curriculum issues that may need to be addressed in the next academic year and it develops a priority work plan.

Programs are subject to comprehensive periodic reviews by the College and the MCCS. The purpose of such program reviews is to provide reports to the College and the Educational Policy Board of the Board of Trustees of the MCCS to apprise of academic program outcomes. Program review reports include program profile, program data, student achievement to graduation, program successes, and conclusions and recommendations. Program reviews are completed by program faculty and department chairs with assistance by relevant departments, and under the coordination and direction of the Academic Dean.

WCCC is increasingly aligning program standards and outcomes with national and state professional accrediting agencies. College programs also align with external credentialing bodies on both the course level and the program completion level. Currently, the Automotive and Engine Specialist programs are aligned with National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) and Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) standards which require external professional accreditation. Upon recommendation of the Curriculum Review Board of The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and American Medical Association (AMA), the College's Medical Assisting program is to prepare for accreditation by the Commission on the Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). The goal for the Medical Assisting program is to be accredited in the 2009/2010 academic year. A component of program assessment and outcomes assessment is meeting goals related to students attaining industry

certification, credentialing, and licensure. Programs with associated certification, credentialing, and licensure include Automotive, Welding, Electrical, Heating, Plumbing, Building Construction, Culinary & Baking, Medical Assisting, and Adventure Recreation and Tourism. Programs working with specialized accrediting bodies incorporate standards for program evaluation. The College tracks the industry certification, credentialing, and licensure data of its students. WCCC's goal is to meet or exceed 85% success rate of its graduates taking certification or licensure examinations as required for employment. The College has met or exceeded the benchmark for the past three years.

The College's Master Plan was completed in 2005. The plan addresses guiding principles, demographics, enrollment, facility inventory, goals and recommended actions, summary of program needs, and detailed analysis and options. The College's Master Plan Committee worked with an outside company, Harriman Associates, to develop the plan details. The WCCC Master Plan goals and recommended actions address the following areas: 1. program development, 2. evaluating campus resources and strengthening programs, 3. capital improvements, 4. enhanced campus esthetics, 5. identify and implement College efficiencies, 6. growth strategies, and 7. Washington County leadership. The Master Plan is frequently referred to in other planning activities and is annually reviewed for goal attainment and further action.

The College undertakes Strategic Enrollment Planning as a means to address recruitment and admissions, enrollment, retention, and persistence. The College's Strategic Enrollment goal is to support all students to achieve their education at WCCC. College wide commitment to student support, programming efforts, and institutional and student strategies are vital to the achievement of the goals of the Enrollment Management. The College's Enrollment Plan sets goals for recruitment, admissions, enrollment, retention persistence, and graduation/transfer. The College biweekly tracks admission and enrollment data as it is meaningfully available for semesters and academic years. Enrollment institutional research provides a basis for long range and short range planning.

In order to better plan, allocate and manage College resources, WCCC instituted a zero-based budget planning process. The detailed zero-based budgets are submitted to the Dean of Finance who reviews the submissions for consistency and reasonableness. Once this review is completed, the budget requests are submitted to the College's Executive Managers who review each department

budget. All budget requests are expected to be justified in detail and the executive committee may request additional information or invite the department manager into committee to justify the budget request. Capital equipment and professional development requests are submitted separately. On occasions when no new resources are available, managers are asked to simply “hold the line”, however meetings are always encouraged. The College Executive Officers prioritize and allocate resources in keeping with College strategic planning. A Technology Plan is the responsibility of the Information Technology Department, but is worked on, in partnership, with the Technology Committee. The IT Coordinator chairs the Technology Committee and leads it through the planning process to shape and develop a broad based four-year Technology Plan. The planning process is an opportunity for the College to identify its strategic direction, priorities, and needs related to infrastructure, capital expenditures, programs, and instruction.

Additional College planning and evaluation are related to several long range grant projects. The TRIO – Student Support Services project is a U.S. Department of Education funded initiative focused on providing academic and other support services to first generation, low income, and disability students, with the goal of having students graduate and transfer to four-year institutions. The WCCC TRIO project is at the end of its second funding cycle and is preparing its third grant application to be submitted in early summer 2009. Each grant cycle provides the College the opportunity to engage in long range academic support services planning. Based upon the grant’s request for proposal requirements, goal development and corresponding evaluation are built into the project design.

Similarly, the Carl D. Perkins IV grant is a five-year grant to support career and technical education programs and students. The Perkins grant requires the College to do annual planning related to career and technical program alignment, articulation agreements with secondary institutions, student support services, skill attainment, technology improvement, retention and program development. Bi-annual assessment and evaluation of attainment of grant goals and objectives is required.

WCCC also engages in a range of assessment and evaluation practices to monitor institutional effectiveness. These include the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Accuplacer

academic skills assessment, Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE), and Student Course Evaluations. The College assesses the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. These appraisals assist in revising and enhancing the College's initiatives to successfully achieve its mission and purposes. The College also provides the opportunity for informal and formal planning and evaluation through various committees, staff meetings, and department meetings.

APPRAISAL

The College uses the Strategic Plan to guide decision-making, develop priorities, and allocate resources. For example, to address the improvement of retention and persistence the College over the past four years has instituted two Student Service programs, First Year Experience and New Student Admitted Day. Both programs were implemented to help student's better transition into the College and therefore positively affect the students' experience and their persistence through to graduation. The New Student Day was also implemented to ensure greater timeliness in solidifying student commitment to the College and to more effectively advise students for their entry into the College.

One of the most significant areas of planning involves the improvement of residential life facilities and campus life. This was identified by the College as a high priority in facilities planning. Resources were committed to the improvement of the residential apartments, and the renovation of the student lounge, workout room, and laundry facilities. Additionally, a stronger commitment was made to providing an increase in the quantity and quality of student life activities.

The College completed a Campus Master Plan in August 2005 with the assistance of Harriman Associates. This plan envisioned further expansion of the Administration/Classroom/Shop building to include a new Mechanical and Construction Technology (MCT) wing. This MCT wing would house the HEO/HEM, Engine Specialist, Welding, and Plumbing and Heating program. To the degree feasible, these projects will be accomplished in 2009 with \$1.2 million in funding provided by a bond issue approved in 2007. Included in the plan are interior and exterior renovations to the Engine Specialist, Welding, and Plumbing and Heating shop and classroom areas. New electrical, HVAC, and lighting systems are to be installed.

In the Envision the Future plan, the College identified the priorities of enhancing the use of instructional technology and an expansion of online education. WCCC has increase the number of courses offered online 57% from 2007 to 2008 and 86% of faculty utilize online courseware to augment the delivery of traditional campus based courses or the use computer technology in the delivery of courses. There have also been improvements to the instructional technology available to faculty in classrooms and labs. The expansion of technology has also been identified as a priority within the Perkins grant and has allow for resources to be committed to improving the use of technology in the delivery of instruction.

The College systematically evaluates its academic programs. Through the program review process, the College can identify strengths and weaknesses and has made changes to programs to improve curriculum, service, and delivery. Recently, through the program review process, the College changed the sequencing to the Plumbing and Heating programs to alternating year programs to strengthen enrollment and more effectively use resources. In addition to the Noel-Levitz Survey, in 2009 the College is beginning the use of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, which will be delivered on alternating years with the Noel-Levitz.

PROJECTIONS

1. Pursue the goals and benchmarks established in the WCCC and MCCC 2008-2013 Strategic Plans.
2. Review the Campus Master Plan for goal and outcome attainment and determine the necessity for an update to the plan.
3. Make all appropriate WCCC plans, evaluations, and assessments available for community access online.
4. Continue to strengthen Campus Safety and Emergency planning.
5. Prepare and complete a four-year Technology Strategic Plan.