

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT

GREEN RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Auburn, Washington

April 15, 2005

Prepared by

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A CONFIDENTIAL Report Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and
Universities that Represents the Views of the Evaluator



INTRODUCTION

Green River Community College hosted an evaluation team for a full-scale visit on April 14-16, 2003. The Evaluation Committee Report was generally favorable with three commendations noted on faculty evaluation, commitment to student success and business strategy development in financially challenging times. In addition, the team developed five recommendations based on their findings pertaining to college policy/procedure development, educational assessment, library services, institutional governance and fiscal forecasting. In June of 2003 the Commission reaffirmed accreditation on the basis of the evaluation report, however, stipulated that a focused interim visit be conducted in April 2005 to review progress on the five General Recommendations summarized above.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Focused interim report and support materials	1
Criteria-based analysis and evaluation (by recommendation)	1-5
Concluding Statement	5
Commendation	5
Concern	5
Recommendations	6
Appendix A- Verification methods	7-8
Appendix B- Interviews conducted	9



FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

The twenty-two page report prepared by Green River Community College provided a succinct overview of progress on the five recommendations. It clearly highlighted the pertinent activities and actions which have been initiated since the 2003 site visit. Included in the report were brief exhibits or examples relevant to each recommendation. It was clearly written and provided this evaluator with an excellent basis to determine site visit interviews and review.

CRITERIA-BASED ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Recommendation #1- The Evaluation Team recommends that the college develop a process to revise policies and procedures. Such a process must be developed and should be widely disseminated to the college community (Std. 9.A.2).

There is strong evidence that Green River Community College has addressed the recommendation identified by the site team. The college has developed and implemented a clear and concise Policy/Procedure Development Process which includes college-wide review of any proposed document. To date, college staff has processed approximately 35 procedures from several campus areas including, human resources, student services and administrative services. There were several other procedures at various stages in the approval process addressing other areas including instruction. A notable strength to Green River's approach is that in a parallel process, the Board of Trustees has developed policy to govern their functions. The co-development of policy and procedure will help to ensure consistent messaging and clarify implementation steps to the college community. While Green River will need to continue its' efforts in terms of having a complete College Procedure Manual it has addressed the recommendation completely and the requirements of Standard 9.A.2.

Recommendation #2- The Evaluation Team recommends that Green River Community College identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs where such outcomes do not currently exist, that it regularly and systematically assess student learning in all degree and certificate programs where such assessment does not currently exist, and that it provide evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching. (Std. 2.B, Policy 2.2, and Eligibility Requirement 12).

Green River Community College has made efforts since the 2003 comprehensive site visit to address the recommendation in the area of educational assessment. A core group of faculty (i.e., Learning Outcomes Committee) has led the charge to define and publish both college-wide and specific program student learning outcomes. The process was faculty driven with the leadership of the Learning Outcomes Committee believing that faculty buy-in to the outcomes and assessment methods was paramount to Green River's success. A review of exhibits indicates this task has been accomplished. Another notable

accomplishment is the development of a data base devoted to tracking which courses address specific student learning outcomes, LOTS (Learning Outcomes Tracking System) (Standard 2.B.2)..

In the area of student learning outcomes assessment, concerns are still present about the consistent application and cohesiveness of the system currently being used. While the college has developed some excellent educational assessment tools, it is not evident how they integrate into a systematic plan to ensure that all graduates of Green River would be assessed for all of the outcomes that have been established (Standard 2.B.2 and Policy 2.2, Eligibility Requirement 12). An example of an educational assessment tool is the common grading rubrics for college-wide learning outcomes that have been tested with a pilot sample of student work. Additionally, Green River has promoted student learning outcomes assessment through the well established Program Assessment and Improvement Process. Each program goes through this process on a 5-year cycle with the majority of the report assessing program health and support requirements. One section of the report requires the program to identify a subset of student learning outcomes (college-wide or program specific) and develop or use a pre-existing assessment mechanism to evaluate them. The report requires the program to then indicate what improvements were made and document the effects on teaching and learning. Lastly, Green River has good examples of specific program student learning outcomes assessment within the professional-technical areas of study. It is recommended that the college clearly define the educational assessment process as a whole, integrating tools and mechanisms that have been developed into a cohesive, systematic plan with regular timelines for completion. College-wide planning processes should be considered in establishing these timelines to ensure integration of educational assessment findings in college decisions (Standard 2.B.1).

Additionally, while some assessment activities have been linked to improvement of teaching through a newly established Summer Institute, it is less clear what the effect has been on student learning. Lastly, in consideration of specific program student learning outcomes it is not evident how transfer students will be assessed in comparison to professional-technical students (Standard 2.B.3).

Members of the Learning Outcomes Committee recognize that additional work is necessary including developing a uniform campus-wide assessment process improving the LOTS database and creating assessment protocols for use of the rubrics.

Recommendation #3- The Evaluation Team recommends that:

- 1. The library make resources readily available to all students and faculty at satellite campuses and all students enrolled in Distance Learning classes (Std. 5.C.1);**
- 2. The library adopt an assessment and improvement schedule with the results focusing on improvement of services (Std. 5.E.3); and;**
- 3. Media Services develop collection development policies, regulations, and procedures for systematic collection development of media, and are available to the institution's constituents (Std. 5.B.3).**

Library staff has made significant effort to ensure students at the Enumclaw satellite campus have access to both electronic and printed materials. In Fall 2005, Green River established a library resource computer center at the Enumclaw site and there is evidence that the services are being used by both faculty and students. The virtual center allows patrons to easily request printed materials and seek reference assistance from a librarian in an on-line format (Standard 5.C.1).

In reference to distance learning students Green River has made some significant changes to expand services including a substantial budget commitment to expanding electronic data bases over the past two years. While a significant majority of students taking distance learning classes are also registered in on-campus classes, Green River is moving forward to ensure equal access to exclusively on-line students. Library staff are developing a webpage that describes the most commonly used electronic databases, in coordination with English faculty they are developing an on-line information literacy class and lastly, they are considering implementing a student portal (Standard 5.C.1).

The library staff has developed a Program Assessment and Improvement (PA &I) process for non-instructional units that is to be completed by the end of this academic year (June 2005). Much like the instructional model for PA & I the process allows a unit to focus on a particular area of concern, define assessment measures and report improvement. The library is targeting improving/increasing library services to current non-users. They have developed a survey and identified a non-user population to administer the tool which will be done in May 2005. Additionally, the library regularly administers a patron survey and provided examples where feedback had resulted in change in facility use and library procedure. These methods of evaluation are in accordance with the requirements of Standard 5.E.3.

Media Services has successfully developed a collection development policy that is readily accessible to faculty on the web. Faculty members were aware of the policy and have been actively engaged in collection development of media in accordance with Standard 5.B.3.

Recommendation #4- The Evaluation Team recommends that the college clarify the role of faculty and staff in institutional governance and should make the decision-making process regarding budget, capital equipment and staff allocations clear and visible to the college community. Structures need to be established that encourage meaningful participation of faculty, staff, and students in the governance of the college and the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder must be defined clearly and publicized widely. Further, a system that facilitates two-way communication between faculty and the administration should be established to promote coordination and cooperative working relationships. (Std. 4.A.2, 6.A.3, 6.C.6).

Green River has made good progress on the portion of the recommendation dealing with communication.. There was strong evidence that the entire college community observed improvement in internal communication of college information and decisions (Standard 6.C.6). The establishment of the CommuniGator on-line daily newsletter, Rap with Rich sessions and restructure of the President's Cabinet have been viewed as positive moves in developing new communication venues within the past two years. Many of these changes were based on input received from the greater college community during in-service sessions on governance held during Fall 2003. A review of exhibits supports these statements.

With regard to the portion of the recommendation regarding role definition and employee/student involvement in decision-making processes, the college has made some progress; however, it is evident that governance structure is still in a state of change to a more collaborative model. The newly restructured President's Cabinet extended membership to a broader college constituency (i.e., includes representation from all employee groups). The model of operation allows the president and his staff to educate members on key college indicators and provide a global overview to how decisions are made. Members of the cabinet do not formally approve agenda items but serve as an advisory body to the president. Meetings are well attended and minutes are taken and published to the greater college community. Topics which have recently been discussed by this body include budget and equipment requests, strategic enrollment strategies and hosting bachelor's degree completion on campus (Standard 6.A.3, 6.C.6). While the formation of the cabinet is perceived as a positive move, there still appeared to be some confusion around roles and responsibilities on particular issues including the student complaint process, international student education and selection criteria for cabinet appointments.

To clarify scope, roles and responsibilities of campus committees, Green River has reviewed and documented all established campus-wide groups and defined decision-making pathways. Additionally, they have defined minimum operational requirements for all committees that include using agendas, documenting minutes, and outlining required membership. This information is readily accessible to all college staff on the GatorNet (Standard 4.A.2, 6.C.6).

Lastly, evidence suggests that students have been routinely consulted in college-wide decision processes. They attend board meetings regularly, serve on faculty tenure committees and student conduct hearings and are frequently asked to make recommendations on college-wide policies (e.g., Smoking Policy).

Recommendation #5- The Evaluation Team recommends that the college develop and maintain a multi-year fiscal forecast of the major categories of revenue and expenditures that is fully aligned with the college's strategic and facilities master plans (Std. 7.A.2, 7.B.5, 7.B.7).

Green River has successfully developed a multi-year fiscal forecast in accordance with Standard 7.A.2. Additionally, within the last two years the college has adopted an integrated approach to budget development linking Board of Trustee goals and strategic and facilities master plans to budget decisions (Standard 7.B.5 and 7.B.7). This approach has been recently recognized by the State of Washington as exemplary.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Green River has demonstrated progress in addressing the five recommendations identified in the Fall 2003 full-scale visit. They have instituted new processes, opened new communication venues, and conducted other supportive activities that have strengthened the college as a whole. There is strong evidence that Green River has made significant progress on three of the five recommendations and associated standards, namely recommendations 1, 3, and 5. In reference to recommendations 2 and 4, progress has been made but some concerns still exist as outlined in the report.

COMMENDATION (Recommendation 5)

1. Green River Community College is commended for the efforts they have made to address fiscal forecasting and budget alignment practices. It is notable that the practices they have adopted over that past two years have received praise from the State of Washington and have been held up as a model to other institutions.

CONCERNS (Recommendation 4)

1. The college community recognizes the significant improvements in communication practices. However, clarity of individual roles and involvement in institutional governance is still in a developmental state. The college is encouraged to build upon their efforts to date and find ways to further clarify roles/responsibilities and the transparency of the governance model.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Recommendation 2)

1. It is recommended that the college clearly define the educational assessment process as a whole, integrating tools and mechanisms that have been developed into a cohesive, systematic plan with regular timelines for completion. College-wide planning processes should be considered in establishing these timelines to ensure integration of educational assessment findings in college decisions (Standard 2.B.1).
2. It is recommended that the college ensure that its educational assessment program is comprehensive and consistently applied to all degree programs or offerings and leads to evidence-based improvement of teaching and learning (Standard 2.B.2, 2.B.3, Policy 2.2, Eligibility Requirement 12).

APPENDIX A-VERIFICATION METHODS

Printed Exhibits

Recommendation	Exhibit Title
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green River Community College Policies and Procedures Manual Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy Development Process Flowchart ○ Purpose, Scope and Definitions ○ Policy Template ○ Policies & Procedures Master List ○ Proposed Polices ○ Policies in Review Process ○ Policies Reviewed by President ○ Policies Adopted ○ Committee Membership ○ Committee Meeting Notes ○ CommuniGator Articles
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Learning Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Campus-wide and Degree/Certificate Outcomes ○ Optional Learning Outcomes ○ Program Level Outcomes • 2004 Summer Assessment Institute & Community Rubrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2004 Summer Assessment Institute Report ○ 2004 Summer Assessment Institute Follow-up Summary ○ Rubric Development Toolbox ○ Community Rubrics ○ CommuniGator Articles • Program Assessment & Improvement for Instructional Areas (Blank Form) • Program Assessment & Improvement for Economics • Learning Outcomes Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual Comprehensive Assessment Plan for 2004-05 ○ Goals and Budget for 2004-05 ○ Annual Outcomes Assessment Report for 2003-04 ○ LOC Application for Program Assessment Projects
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holman Library Statistics for Program Assessment & Improvement Process • Program Assessment & Improvement for Non-Instructional Areas

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President's Staff Meeting Notes • Campus-Wide Committees (Committee Information Sheet including Decision-Pathways and Product of Authority) • "Rap with Rich" CommuniGator Articles • President's Cabinet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structure and Function ○ Appointment of Membership ○ 2004-05 Membership ○ Meeting Notes ○ CommuniGator Articles • 2003 Opening Day Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interview with Rich on Governance ○ Panel Discussion on Governance ○ Faculty and Staff Survey on Governance ○ CommuniGator Articles
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2004-05 Budget Material Presented to the Board • 2005 Draft Facilities Master Plan Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2005 Instructional Plan • Green River Community College Strategic Planning Documents (2000-2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Critical Issues and Priority Initiatives

Online Exhibits

Recommendation	Exhibit Title	Type of Website
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green River Community College Policies and Procedures Manual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy Development Process Flowchart 	College Website
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Outcomes Committee (LOC) Website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LOTS Database 	College Intranet
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holman Library Website 	College Website
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CommuniGator Newsletter • Cabinet Meeting Notes • College Organizational Chart • College Committees 	College Intranet
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities Master Plan 	College Website

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

The following individuals were interviewed during the visitation as identified in the attached schedule:

Fia Eliasson - Interim Manager of Research & Planning
John Avery - ESL faculty member and chair of Instructional Council; member of Cabinet
Hank Galmish - English faculty member and division chair; vice chair of Instructional Council
Colleen Maloney - Graphic artist in publications and member of Cabinet
Mary Edington - Financial aid director and member of Cabinet
Laura Leyde, Student Government Officer
Ashley French, Student Government Officer
Lorenzo Ortiz, Student Government Officer
Kim Nakano - Dean of Library/Media and ABE/ESL/PE division
Jennifer Dysart - Manager of Library/Media
Brenda Philip - Library collection development faculty member
Leslie Moore - Executive Director of Continuing Education, including Center at Enumclaw
Jerry Marshall (Ph.D) - Psychology faculty member, coordinator of distance learning, member of Cabinet
Rich Rutkowski - President
Larry Brown - Board of Trustees chair
John Ramsey - Director of Public Information and assistant to the president
April Jensen (Ph.D) - Executive Vice President (over instruction and student services)
Julie Moore - English faculty member and chair of Learning Outcomes Committee
Frank Wilson - Math faculty member, current serving as Special Assistant to the Executive Vice President on outcomes
Rob Sjogren - Natural Resources faculty member
Mary Jo Adams - Wastewater Technology faculty member
Noel Hepler - Occupational Therapy Assistant faculty member
Debbie Knipschild - Director of Budget
Louise Hull, Sociology faculty member
Kirk Walker, Human Resources administrative assistant
Sam Ball - Dean for Capital Projects
Brent Jones (Ph.D) - Vice President of Human Resources
Jeff McCauley - Engineering faculty member and chair of Technology division; member of Policies Committee

