

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A Regular Interim Report

Green River Community College
Auburn, Washington

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Prepared by

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and

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A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
that Represents the Views of the Evaluators

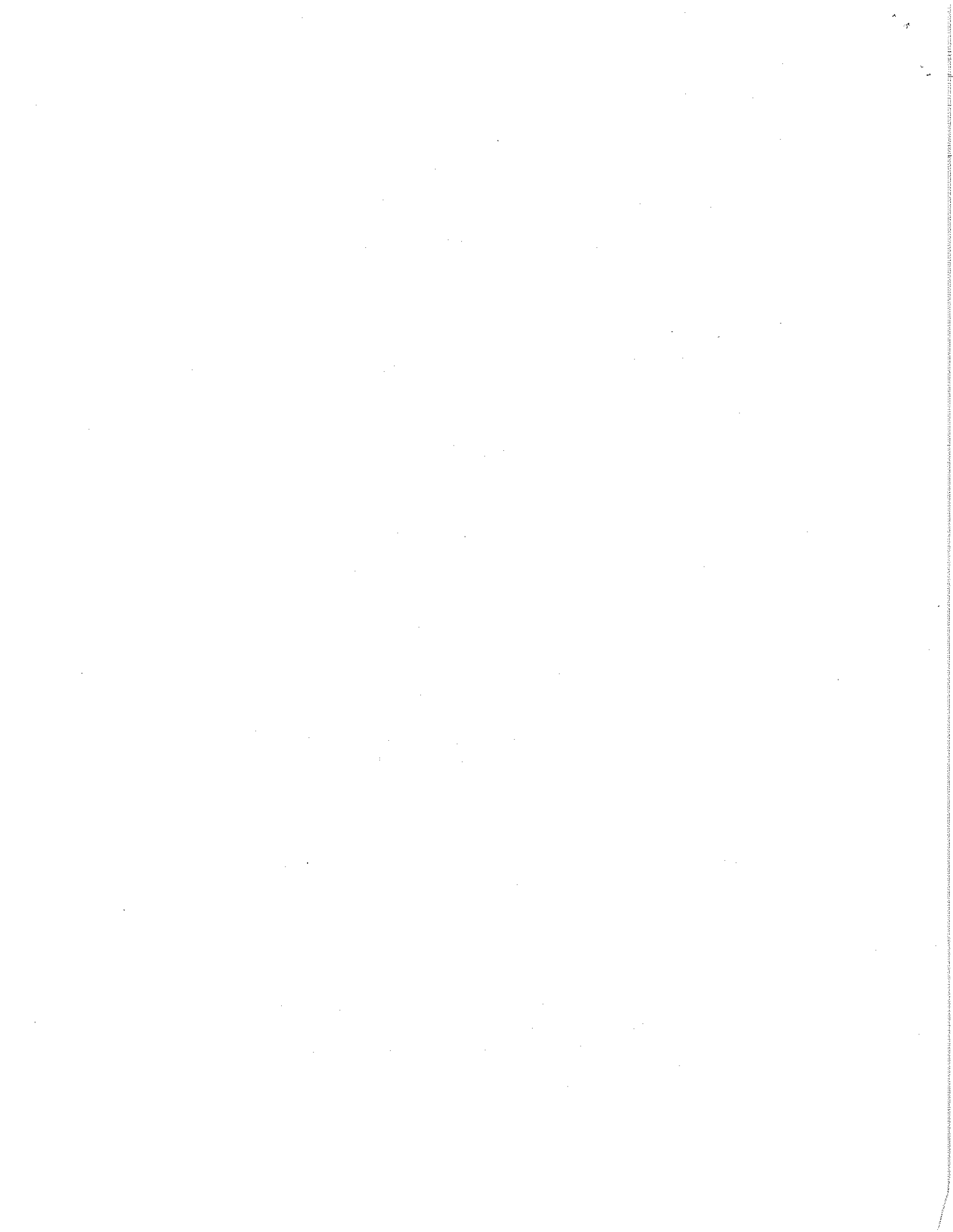


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Institutional Accreditation History

Green River Community College hosted a full-scale evaluation and site visit in April 2003. In June, 2003, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities reaffirmed Green River's accreditation. The visit resulted in three commendations concerning the institution's commitment to student success, well-developed procedures for evaluation of full and part-time faculty, and effective business strategies and procedures to manage the college's financial affairs. The team also made five recommendations to the college and a focused interim report and evaluation visit to address these Recommendations occurred in April 2005. The 2005 evaluation determined that four of the recommendations concerning processes to revise policies and procedures, access to library and media services and collections, clarity of staff, student and faculty roles in governance, and multi-year fiscal forecasting were addressed. The April, 2005 focused interim evaluator made two recommendations involving Educational Assessment. Another focused interim report and visit occurred in April, 2007, and the evaluator found that the recommendations on Educational Assessment had been fully addressed. The college was recognized with two commendations for its efforts in this area. The college was then asked to prepare for a Regular Fifth Year Interim Report and visit in April of 2008.

Summary of Report and Visit

The Evaluators found the College's Interim Report to be informative and well organized and commends the college on its efforts to produce this report.

The Evaluators used a variety of methods to gather data and validate the College's Interim Report. These included campus tours, arranged interviews with appropriate college representatives, open door meetings with faculty and students, review of supporting and requested documents, and review of the college web site. The Evaluators met jointly or individually with the following college personnel and students during their visit:

Board of Trustees:

Lawton Case
Sherry Gates

Executive Management Team:

Rich Rutkowski, President
Dr. April Jensen, Executive Vice-President, Instruction and Student Services
Rick Brumfield, Vice-President, Business Affairs
George Frasier, Vice-President, Development
Lesley Hogan, Vice-President, Human Resources
John Ramsey, Director, Public Information

Faculty and Staff:

Kathi Anderson-Marshall, Director, Tutoring and Resource Center
Sam Ball, Dean of Instruction, Capital Projects
Ron Bayer, Fine Arts Division Chair/Music Faculty
Bill Belden, Dean, Student Services and Enrollment

Kelly Blackwood, HR
Mark Blaisdell, Faculty, Economics
Barbara Brucker, Faculty, Physical Therapy
Judy Burgeson, Dean of Instruction, English, Humanities, Sciences
Dr. Deb Casey, Dean of Students - Retention
Bonnie Christian, Bldg. Secretary
Marilou Christiansen, Program Manager, Center of Excellence for Education, Project TEACH
Julie Darrah, Intern, LAW
Susan Davis, Instructional Council Chair, Accounting Faculty
Jennifer Dysart, Acting Library Director
Fia Eliasson-Creek, Director of Research and Planning
Bob Filson, Faculty, Geology
Carol Franklin, Language, Academic Skills and Wellness Division Chair/Basic Skills Faculty
Christie Gilliland, Executive Dean of Transfer Education
Laura Griep, Assistant Dean of Language, Academic Skills, and Wellness
Donnie Hallstone, Mathematics Faculty
Jaeney Hoene, Chair, English
Diana Mamerto Holz, Family Studies/Early Childhood Education Faculty
Phil Ray Jack, Faculty Union President
Marianne Jacobs, Social Science Division Chair/Anthropology Faculty
Sandra Johanson, Philosophy Faculty
Leslie Kessler, Health Science Division Chair/Early Childhood Education Faculty
Debbie Knipschild, Director of Business Services
Tom Evans Krause, Broadcasting, KGRG radio
Shelley Leavens, Mathematics Faculty
Kathleen Loucks, Humanities Division Chair/Communication Studies Faculty
Marji MacKenzie, Reference Librarian
Ken Marr, Biology/Chemistry Faculty
Joan Mason, Executive Assistant
Erin Massimino, Interim International Activities Manager
Marcy Maurer, Executive Assistant
Jeff McCauley, Technology Division Chair/Engineering Faculty
Tim McDaniel, International ESL Faculty
Lara Michaels, Faculty, Math
Mark Millbauer, Trades Division Chair/Auto Body Technology Faculty
Leslie Moore, Dean, Branch Campuses and Continuing Education
Kim Nakano, Dean of Library and Media Services
David Nelson, Mathematics Division Chair/Faculty
Diana Pelletier, Chair, Science
Frank Primiani, Business Law Faculty
Lori Rapozo, Court Reporting Faculty
Martha Ryland, Faculty, Nursing
Julia Short, Faculty, Nursing
Patty Sikora, Director of Purchasing
Tom Weisweaver, Director of Facilities
Sidney Weldele-Wallace, Business Division Chair/Computer Reporting Technologies Faculty

Ron Wheadon, Executive Dean of Professional Technical and Workforce Education

Students:

Livia Muller

Marco Becerra Nunez

Ayca Akhum

Pamela Nogales

Alycia Hendrickson

Citra Inaray

Jibril Leigh

Marie Dunning

Wing Yu So

The evidence room was well organized and provided excellent background documentation for the visit. The documentation was thorough and detailed, providing the evaluators specific information and examples. The evaluators were provided with requested access to all areas of the college campus, college documents, and college staff, and wish to thank the college for its openness and hospitality during the team's visit.

Part A

The institution received the following recommendations from its 2003 Full-Scale visit and the 2005 Focused Interim visit:

Recommendation One (2003)

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 (9.A.2).

Since its 2003 comprehensive site visit, Green River Community College has developed and implemented a Policy and Procedure Development Process. Anyone can propose a new policy by submitting it to their representative on the President's cabinet. It is reviewed by the cabinet, sent to union representation for review, and then distributed to the college community for review. Final recommendation comes from the President's cabinet to the President, who makes a final decision. There is a parallel process for the Board of Trustees to govern their processes. Current policies have been reviewed using this process and new policies have been developed. This recommendation was addressed in the 2005 focused interim visit, and the practice continues. Green River has addressed this recommendation completely and meets the requirements of Standard 9.A.2.

Recommendation Two (2003)

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 (2.B, Policy 2.2, and Eligibility Requirement 12).

Recommendation One (2005)

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 (2.B.1).

Recommendation Two (2005)

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 (2.B.2, 2.B.3, Policy 2.2, Eligibility Requirement 12).

This report will respond collectively to all three of these recommendations from the 2003 and 2005 visits.

Green River Community College identifies and publishes four expected learning outcomes, with associated competencies, for its degree and certificate programs: Written Communication, Critical Thinking, Responsibility, and Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning. In addition, there is an Oral Communication outcome and competencies for transfer degrees and a Human Relations outcome and competencies for applied degrees. Program-level learning outcomes have also been developed and published.

The Learning Outcomes Committee (LOC), comprised of one faculty member from each of the 11 instructional divisions and two instructional administrators, is charged with managing the College's educational assessment process, with the Office of Research and Planning providing vital support. Under the direction of the LOC, the College has implemented a systematic plan that incorporates assessment at course, program, and college levels. In addition to its oversight role, the LOC offers institutes, workshops, and online resources to support faculty in their teaching and assessment of learning.

Cornerstones of the College's educational assessment efforts are Program Assessment and Improvement (PA&I) reviews (conducted by programs every five years) and college-wide projects related to assessment of the Written Communication, Critical Thinking, Responsibility, and Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning outcomes/competencies (either in progress or slated to be conducted on a three-year cycle). Review of exhibits and discussions with involved parties during the Regular Interim Visit revealed the PA&I reviews and college-wide assessment of the four expected learning outcomes to be meaningful processes that are being conducted as prescribed and contributing to evidence-based improvement of teaching and learning.

The College is to be applauded for devoting considerable time, effort, and resources to affect improvements in educational assessment relative to the 2003 and 2005 Recommendations. It was apparent during the Regular Interim Visit that college employees are committed to this work, and it is expected they will persist in developing, adapting, and implementing creative and effective assessment strategies in the coming years.

Recommendation Three (2003)

3. The Evaluation Team recommends that:

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

The Library implemented a delivery system to its satellite campuses soon after the 2003 Recommendation. Remote student access has also been facilitated in recent years by revisions to the Library's web site and greater availability of e-books and e-journal articles.

The Library participated in the Program Assessment & Improvement (PA&I) process in 2004-05. A student survey was administered as part of the review, resulting in helpful feedback from users and non-users. Overall, the PA&I process revealed a high level of satisfaction on the part of library patrons.

Finally, the Library established separate policies on Collection Development and Media Resources Collection Development following the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation (the two policies previously existed as one). The two policies are available to the institution's constituents on the library web site.

Recommendation Four (2003)

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 administration should be established to promote coordination and cooperative working relationships (4.A.2, 6.A.3, 6.C.6).

Evidence indicates that Green River has made significant progress over the past five years in moving to a collaborative model in sharing information, making decisions, and communicating across the institution. Extending the President's cabinet to include broader representation of the college constituency, on-line newsletters to disseminate information and regular communication sessions with the President and Executive Vice-President have all helped move the college to a clearer understanding of critical issues and decision-making processes. The scope, roles and responsibilities of many campus committees are outlined on the intranet, and agendas and minutes are available for all to read. At the time of the 2005 Focused Interim Visit, a concern was raised that the clarification of individual roles and involvement in institutional governance was still in a developmental state. The institution's understanding of these roles has matured, and a transparent governance model is in place. This clarity is always a work in progress, as improvements are made. A review of exhibits provided evidence that Green River's efforts in the area of sharing information and inclusive governance are continuing.

Recommendation Five (2003)

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 facilities master plans (7.A.2, 7.B.5, 7.B.7).

The college continues to use multi-year forecasting in its budget development process and links budget decisions to college goals and the strategic and facilities master plans.

Summary

The five Recommendations from the 2003 Full-Scale visit have been addressed. The college has instituted new processes, opened communication channels, and conducted a variety of activities to address these recommendations. There is strong evidence that Green River Community College has made progress on all five recommendations.

Commendation: Green River Community College is commended for its diligence in addressing recommendations in the 2003 Full-Scale Accreditation visit and subsequent Focused Interim visits. The college has initiated planning, effectiveness and educational assessment processes to enhance the college's ability to meet its vision, mission and goals for students. (Standard 1.B.1; Policy 2.2)

Part B

Standard One: Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

Since the 2003 full-scale visit, Green River Community College Board of Trustees has reviewed the college vision and mission, and extensively revised the college goals. This process included all constituents and resulted in five institutional goals that focus on the outward benefits and impacts on students and the community. The revised goals have accountability measures attached to them and the Board of Trustees receives Monitoring Reports throughout the year to monitor progress on the goals. There is also a college-wide council for each goal. The councils prepare the monitoring reports, with the help of Institutional Research, and provide context and analysis to the board on each goal.

Employee groups report that the college continues to improve and streamline its unit planning and goal setting processes. Each unit identifies goals that are aligned with the college's strategic planning and priority initiatives. This unit planning is also tied to budget development, providing the opportunity to tie budget development to the strategic plan. Recently, performance evaluation processes for managers have been changed to include accountability for planning and goal achievement.

With the revision of its goals, Green River also improved and aligned its processes for planning and evaluating effectiveness. This systematic process, which is participatory, includes setting college-wide priority initiatives for improvement of the college goals. The initiatives become the basis for unit planning and goal-setting as well as for budget allocations. This past summer, a large college retreat was held to thoroughly examine and discuss recent performance on goals. This group set increased enrollment as the priority for the year. The process of holding a retreat was deemed successful, and is being considered again this summer.

Documentation provided by the institution supported planning and goal setting across the institution. The college should continue to improve their planning and evaluation process, paying particular attention to the alignment of priority initiatives with monitoring report data provided to the Board of Trustees and alignment of unit planning goals with priority initiatives. Evidence of planning across the institution is strong. Evidence of evaluation across the institution is strong. Evidence of improvement based on evaluation results is evident in many areas of the institution. Additional time is needed to move forward on improvements, based on goals and core indicators, across the college.

Standard Two: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Green River Community College offers a wide range of associate degrees and certificates consistent with its mission as a comprehensive community college. It is notable that a large number of new degree options have been implemented since the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation due to a statewide initiative to specify courses in various majors to ensure students are well-prepared for transfer to four-year institutions. New programs added since 2003 include Natural Resources-Wildfire (AAS degree) and Retail Management (certificate). Several programs have been

discontinued since 2003, with most having effectively been replaced by the major-specific transfer degrees described earlier in this paragraph.

In general, the College possesses the human, physical, and financial resources necessary to support outstanding educational programs. While the equipment request process was identified by faculty interview subjects as positive, there were concerns that the process for requesting funds for non-equipment program needs is not as clear. There are diverse continuing education and non-credit offerings, as well as courses via distance learning and at satellite locations. The College anticipates the completion of the Kent campus expansion in 2009.

Policy 2.2: Educational Assessment

As noted in Part A of this report, student learning outcomes are identified and published, and assessment activities that lead to improved teaching and learning are in place and functioning well.

Standard Three: Students

Student Services at Green River Community College encompasses many auxiliary and support areas. The Office of Recruitment and Outreach is a new initiative since the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation and is proving successful in attracting both traditional and adult populations to the College. A Welcome Center, slated to open in June 2008, will consolidate entry services for new students. Other recent student development and retention initiatives include a new Student Code of Conduct and establishment of crisis response and critical incidents teams.

A restructuring of Student Services (an executive dean position was eliminated and two assistant deans were named co-deans) in the past year would seem to be having a positive effect. In addition to flattening the organizational structure somewhat, the change has allowed for reallocation of staff positions to bolster some areas. Furthermore, a new Student Services Leadership Council and monthly Student Services staff meetings have facilitated enhanced collaboration, communication, and training.

In 2007, the Associated Students of Green River Community College approved a student fee in support of a student center facility. The College subsequently submitted a state funding request for replacement of the current Lindbloom Student Center. While this was not funded for 2009-11, the plan is to resubmit the request for the following biennium.

Annualized student enrollment trends from 2002-03 to 2006-07 presented in the Regular Interim Report revealed a drop from 5,549 to 5,167 in state FTEs; a rise from 6,691 to 7,237 in total FTEs; and a rise in headcount from 12,337 to 13,051. (Figures exclude student-funded enrollment such as Continuing Education or enrollment in non-credit bearing courses.)

Standard Four: Faculty

Green River Community College employs qualified full-time and adjunct faculty. Those interviewed during the Regular Interim Visit expressed general satisfaction with their inclusion and involvement in a range of college decision-making functions. Faculty salaries and benefits are

deemed adequate to attract and retain strong faculty. Some concern was noted regarding the ratio of full-time to adjunct faculty, although it was acknowledged the College is committed to hiring two new full-time instructors per year in accordance with its collective bargaining agreement with faculty. An Adjunct Faculty Advisory Committee has been formed since 2003 to monitor and address issues related to that group of instructors, and there was consensus among interview subjects that a new assistant dean position devoted to adjunct faculty is proving to be beneficial in many ways.

The College has well-established processes for evaluation of full-time and adjunct faculty utilizing multiple indices. It is also apparent the faculty evaluation mechanisms at Green River serve mentoring and support functions, as well.

Primary workload concerns identified by faculty interviewed during the Regular Interim Visit related to (1) the ratio of full-time to adjunct faculty and the heavy committee load that can create for full-time instructors, and (2) the high percentage of international students in some classes and the burden that can place on faculty as they endeavor to meet distinctive needs of that group. Faculty also expressed concern they have limited input in matters related to international student policies/quotas at the College.

Standard Five: Library and Information Resources

The Library provides critical support for teaching and learning at Green River Community College. The collection is comprised of a range of electronic and print materials, and detailed collection development policies are in place. Furthermore, the library web site is a helpful resource and was found to be user-friendly.

The Holman Library facility offers a very inviting, dynamic environment as many students were found to be present in the building and engaged in learning activities during the Regular Interim Visit. It was also apparent library staff work very hard to anticipate and accommodate the needs of various constituents and strive to be pro-active in staying abreast of current library resources and trends.

Standard Six: Governance and Administration

Governance at Green River appears to be a transparent process involving students, staff, faculty, administrators and Board members. The changes that have occurred in the last five years include expansion of the President's cabinet to include exempt, faculty and classified representatives; a new process for the development of operating policies; a parallel process, implemented by the Board of Trustees, for the development of board policies; and revision of the vision, mission and goals of the college to focus outward to students and the community. Documentation indicates that the Board has reviewed all Board policies using the new policy development process.

Student representatives report that the College is open and interested in their opinions. Their input is requested and considered when making decisions. They are represented on committees and recently completed a student survey to better represent students' needs within the college governance structure.

Faculty and staff report leadership and management at Green River to be strong and responsive to their concerns. They are asked for input and are included in resource allocation decisions.

Standard Seven: Finance

Conservative financial planning and strategic use of reserves have allowed the college to weather the economic changes and have left the college in good fiscal condition. The college has experienced a decline in its state FTEs. The college is addressing this decrease through its priority initiative planning process and the college is experiencing an increase in FTEs at the time of this visit. The college has diversified its funding through increased international student enrollment, private foundation development, and state allocated capital construction resources. The Foundation has expanded its financial support beyond scholarships to include development and operation of student housing.

Budget processes have changed to incorporate the strategic plan initiatives and multi-year forecasting for capital construction. The college is planning to use local fund balances and increased COP financing to support some of the upcoming planned construction projects.

Standard Eight: Physical Resources

The college has received funding and used local resources to build, remodel and update many of its facilities in the past five years. The college has a well developed Facility Plan which has received input from the entire campus community.

Overall, the college should be commended for an excellent job of maintaining and expanding its physical facilities. They have strategically used financial resources based on instructional planning to support remodel, replacement and new construction of instructional facilities.

Standard Nine: Institutional Integrity

Green River Community College adheres to high ethical standards in its representations to its constituencies, in its teaching and service, and in its treatment of students and staff. It has clear statements and policies relating to conflict of interest and academic freedom. The open communication climate allows employees to express opposing opinions about controversial issues with respect and professionalism.

Student publications are readily available, clearly articulated, and every attempt is made to ensure that information is accurately portrayed. Green River has a well developed web presence and many student publications are readily available on the college website.

Summary

In summary, Green River Community College is continuing to plan, evaluate, and improve its processes, policies and procedures to better achieve its mission, vision and goals for students. It

has worked diligently to address recommendations from the 2003 and 2005 visits, and continues to look for ways to better serve the community it serves.

Commendation: The College is to be commended for systematically and strategically planning for facility improvement and closely aligning the facility planning process to instructional program planning. (Standard 8.C.1; 8.C.3)

Commendations

1. Green River Community College is commended for aligning strategic facilities planning to instructional program planning and providing on-going coordination to ensure involvement of faculty and staff in the planning processes. (Standard 8.C.1; 8.C.3)
2. Green River Community College is commended for its diligence in addressing recommendations in the 2003 Full-Scale Accreditation visit and subsequent focused interim visits. The college has initiated planning, effectiveness and educational assessment processes to enhance the college's ability to meet its vision, mission and goals for students. (Standard 1.B.1; Policy 2.2)