

## **Year Seven Comprehensive Evaluation**

Green River College  
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Auburn, WA 98092

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

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## VISITOR ROSTER

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## INTRODUCTION

Green River College is in Auburn, Washington, a suburban city southeast of Seattle. College operations are conducted from a primary campus and several off-campus locations. The primary campus serves a traditional mix of community college students: academic transfer, career/technical education, and transitional studies (basic skills, pre-college, and high school completion). While some customized business and industry training is held on the GRC campus, a substantial portion of the college's customized courses and programs occurs at college sites in the community. The college also offers applied baccalaureate degrees in several areas.

The college has operated in its current location for almost 50 years. Following the retirement of a long-standing president, the college underwent significant leadership changes – some of which created challenges in the areas of governance, trust, college engagement, collaboration, and vision. The team found that progress is evident in each of these areas, in large part due to efforts of the now-established president and leadership team and a willingness on the part of the college community to move forward in positive ways. There is still effort needed in meeting some specific NWCCU Standards expectations, but the team found that the college is showing a level of commitment and resiliency that will serve as a solid foundation for doing this work.

Due to current circumstances, the visitation team conducted their process through Zoom technology, a review of the self-study report, and an analysis of associated exhibits. The team believes this process supplied adequate evidence from which informed decisions about accreditation practices can be made. College employees made themselves readily available to participate in individual and group sessions, and two board members met with evaluation team representatives. Of special assistance to those undertaking this visit was a well-constructed and evidence-based self-study document that portrayed an accurate picture of the college and its operations, and willingness of the college staff to supply supplemental evidence with alacrity.

During the visit, seven members of the campus community chose to send specific correspondence to the team. This report presents responses to any concerns identified that correspond with NWCCU Standards, while maintaining confidentiality about those who shared information with the evaluation team.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Green River College exhibits strength in addressing major NWCCU Eligibility Requirements except for that for the Educational Program.

### **11. Educational Program**

The institution provides one or more educational programs which include appropriate content and rigor consistent with its mission and core themes. The educational program(s) culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes and lead to collegiate-level degree(s) with degree designation consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

#### **Analysis:**

While the institution made progress toward developing program and degree measures of achievement, these efforts are not yet fully realized. The team found that a leadership response to the previous Year Seven recommendation severely reduced faculty ability to respond. The new GRC president, once again, empowered faculty to assume a leadership role over curriculum and assessment. Strong curriculum elements are in place, and course and program evaluation components were found to actively lead to teaching and learning improvement. Faculty demonstrate a keen understanding of work necessary to fulfill outcome and assessment expectations. However, until such time as this work is complete, GRC is unable to fully demonstrate that the certificates and degrees awarded reflect acceptable content.

## **Section One (Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability)**

### **Mission**

In 2012/13 the college worked to create a new mission statement, along with accompanying mission and vision statements and core themes. The institution's mission statement underwent revision during a critical leadership transition period at the college. The board, college personnel, and community representatives engaged to create a mission statement that not only represents the purpose of GRC, but also denotes expectations and aspirations. During conversations with board members and members of the campus community, it was found that there is strong agreement that the current mission statement now more clearly guides college decisions and improvement efforts.

Progress is evident with respect to measures of institutional effectiveness and mission fulfillment. Dashboard-type tools that detail performance against core themes and the resulting tie to mission fulfillment are clear, specific, and easy-to-understand. The board and campus community note usefulness of regular reports and an increase in institutional knowledge about which college efforts show progress and which still are areas needing improvement. The 2018 town hall meeting series served to increase campus-wide knowledge, while creating a call to action for all employees to support student retention and completion efforts.

### **Core Themes**

The core themes reflect the four primary instructional areas of the college: transfer education, career technical education, college readiness education, and continuing and community education. Annual operational planning is tied to core theme planning, creating a seamless system from which to measure success. Core theme teams were disbanded in the later years of the former president's tenure, but re-instituted during the 2016-17 year by the interim president. Core theme teams have remained active since that time, and their work is augmented by the inclusion of various campus groups that support enrollment management, budgeting, college operations, and student success. GRC invests in training and support that further engages faculty and staff in core theme development and assessment work.

#### Core Theme: College Transfer Education

Through interviews it was found that College Transfer Core Theme Team members celebrate being empowered to develop, implement, evaluate, and change measures of success in the transfer area, while working toward performance improvement. College data is available to aid committee members in their work. Progress is noted in refining objectives and indicators which support reducing time to degree and increasing retention rates. Special emphasis is placed on closing achievement gaps for underrepresented student groups.

#### Core Theme: Career Technical Education

Members of the CTE Core Theme Team verified their role in development of revised objectives and indicators that focus on retention, completion (of key courses, as well as degrees and certificates), employment of students, and the alignment of GRC CTE programs with local workforce needs.

### Core Theme: College Readiness Education

The College Readiness Education Core Theme Team focuses on improving success rates for students in transitional studies (adult basic education, high school completion, English language learners, GED studies, and developmental courses in reading, writing, and mathematics. Success in this core theme area is measured by student progression and successful accomplishment of skill acquisition. As with other core theme indicators, those associated with college readiness are constantly under study to ensure they are developed in a manner that provides important data from which improvement can result.

### Core Theme: Continuing and Community Education

GRC established objectives for the continuing and community education core theme that are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable, indicating achievements that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the core theme's objectives. GRC's focus for the continuing and community education core theme is to "provide programs and services that reflect a commitment to the professional, social, and personal enrichment needs of the community." Many students enrolled in this core theme area are taking non-credit, non-programmatic, and often ad hoc classes designed to enhance skills and workplace certifications or offerings that support personal enrichment.

The NWCCU Mid-Cycle report shows regular reviews of core themes take place using the three-year data set for evaluation purposes. In previous times, there was a concern that the core themes did not measure student learning through an evaluation of outcomes. The change in administration and the subsequent work of the Core Theme Teams resulted in fewer and more concisely improved objectives and appropriate indicators. The work of core theme teams shows careful analysis and action, or proposed action compared to objectives and indicator results.

## **Section Two (Resources and Capacity)**

### **Governance**

The college is engaged in critical work to map GRC's current governance structure and engage in planning that will more clearly organize and define how governance at the college is conducted. At the time of this visit, GRC has in place 128 councils or committees, some created in response to communication and leadership challenges that existed prior to 2016

Bargaining unit agreements at GRC are in place; the faculty contract is currently due for re-negotiation. As the college moves through a time of crisis, it is reported there is consideration given to extending the current faculty contract for a specified period to have a more stable platform from which discussion can move forward.

### **Governing Board**

GRC is led by a strong and well-informed governing board who are active in the community and serve as advocates at the state and national level. Based on interviews, the evaluation team found that board members are strategic in their thinking and invest time in understanding the performance of the college and associated needs for improvement. The board evaluates their own performance as well as the performance of the president, and examples of performance improvement that starts from both processes were provided during discussions with team members.

### **Leadership and Management**

Based on interviews and a review of written documents, the institution's system of leadership is strong and capable. Some correspondence received by the evaluation team questioned administrator qualifications; a review of position descriptions and interviews of campus leaders show full qualifications for assignments and associated duties. Many employees note that GRC leaders demonstrate ethical conduct, support employees, are accessible, and engage in collaborative solution-building. Performance of these leaders and their employee teams played a major part in the recent pandemic response – a response that is heralded by both employees and students as being swift and effective.

### **Policies and Procedures**

#### Academics

Institutional Policies and Procedures, Academic Freedom, faculty contracts, the Student Code of Conduct, the Student Complaint Process, and copyright rules are clearly documented and communicated to students, faculty, appropriate administration, and staff. Current resources related to these policies are easily accessible through the college website.

Library policies are comprehensive and clear, available on the library website. Students, faculty, staff, and the public have access to library resources under policies governing acceptable use and modes of access. Library policy resources are linked or otherwise referenced in campus associated policies.



Participating in several statewide consortia (ICRC, SBCTC, and WSAC), the college follows an effective transfer-of-credit policy that maintains the integrity of its programs while facilitating articulated transfer between institutions. Information is clearly presented on the website (policy SA-89), and students' transfer rights and responsibilities are clearly expressed in the catalog and on the website to aid transfer advising and decision-making.

### Students

Policies and procedures regarding students' rights and responsibilities – including academic honesty, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities – are clearly stated, readily available, and administered in a fair and consistent manner. Policies and procedures about the rights and responsibilities of students are detailed on the college website and in the student handbook and college catalog. New student orientation includes curriculum on the Student Code of Conduct. The Office of Disability Support Services works closely with students, faculty, and staff to ensure compliance with the ADA, providing equal access and support to students with documented disabilities.

The institution adopts and adheres to admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to assure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. The policy about continuation in and termination from educational programs – including the appeals process and readmission policy – are clearly defined, widely published, and administered in a fair and prompt manner. Green River is an open-door institution that admits all applicants age 18 and above or those who have completed high school or the equivalent. The college maintains a policy on conditional admission for other applicant groups. Applied baccalaureate and Running Start programs are among those with specific admission requirements that evaluate applicants' prerequisite knowledge and probability of success.

Green River Campus Life offers a variety of co-curricular activities to its students including clubs, organizations, and leadership opportunities. The institution maintains and publishes policies that clearly state its relationship to co-curricular activities and the roles and responsibilities of students and the institution for those activities including student publications and other student media. The college offers both a student newspaper and literary and arts journal. The Associated Students Constitution and the Clubs and Organizations Handbook define the respective roles and responsibilities of students and the college. GRC intercollegiate athletics is governed by the Northwest Athletic Conference (NWAC) and the Student Code of Conduct.

### Human Resources

Human resources policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, maintained, and published to ensure consistent, fair, and equitable application; these policies are accessible on the GRC website. Policies are reviewed and updated as required by changes to negotiated contracts, state or college policy, or legislative action.

Green River employees are formally apprised of their conditions of employment upon hire., and related information is outlined in the respective negotiated agreements and college policies. All new hires attend HR's employee orientation which details benefits, health, and safety, FERPA, and the college's mission, values, and core themes.

As verified through individual interviews, Human Resources staff maintain confidential employee records in locked cabinets accessible only through authorized access. GRC complies with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' Records Retention Schedule.

### Institutional Integrity

The college worked diligently to ensure publication contents are clearly focused and comply with expectations for ethical and accurate content. Program and academic policy information is accurate and readily available to internal and external audiences.

Multiple individuals and groups attest to the honesty and ethical nature of dealings at GRC. Many stated this is in stark contrast to practices in place at the time of the last Year Seven visit. When behaviors or practices are challenged, those interviewed attest to the willingness of leadership to listen and, when appropriate, enter into formal processes to resolve differences. No instances of conflict of interest were identified during the visit. Intellectual property policies are clearly outlined, faculty attest to institutional adherence to these policies.

Contractual agreements are well-documented and clear with respect to roles, responsibilities, and expectations. The college engages in authentic bidding processes associated with small and large contracts.

### Academic Freedom

Policies regarding academic freedom are addressed in the faculty collective bargaining agreement, and in Instructional Policy (IN) 6. The student complaint process regarding academic freedom is clearly articulated and applied. The institution supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to examine thought, reasoning, and perspectives of truth. Supporting evidence from the Intersections Program on campus demonstrates that the college is encouraged to engage in thought-provoking work. The faculty contract ensures that sources of intellectual property, personal beliefs, and opinions are identified and protected.

### Finance

The evaluation team found evidence in the self-study report, exhibits, and virtual interview discussion demonstrating the institution has strong internal controls and talented fiscal management leaders who regularly monitoring financial details and are guided by policies with regular governing board oversight. Reserve policies require a 10 percent balance of annual operating budget expenditures, 50 percent of gross annual Running Start revenue, and 50 percent of gross annual international programs and extended learning revenue be maintained. Management consistently meets reserve policy target requirements.

## **Human Resources**

The evaluation committee determined through employee forums and interviews that GRC maintains enough qualified employees to support its mission, vision, and core themes, which center on student learning and success. The Office of Human Resources (HR) ensures that job postings clearly state position responsibilities as well as qualifications. Employment opportunities are widely posted, both on the college website, as well as through other venues. Hiring processes are collaborative and transparent, involving cross-unit involvement. The college encourages screening committees to include an ex-officio equity representative and is building the capacity to increase the number of equity representatives available to serve. GRC's Diversity and Equity in Hiring and Professional Development handbook was developed in part by a Green River full-time faculty member and has been increasingly used across the state at other colleges.

Administrators, faculty, and staff are evaluated regularly regarding performance of work duties and responsibilities. This was validated in forums and individual interviews. Staff indicated their satisfaction with the evaluation process as fair and equitable. Human resources are working toward continued improvement to the evaluation process. The college identified the need to improve and make consistent evaluations of exempt employees. A model is ready for pilot-testing but has been delayed due to current COVID-19 demands. The college will move forward with the exempt evaluation process as soon as circumstances permit.

GRC demonstrates a commitment to professional development to enhance employee effectiveness. In 2018 HR hired a learning and development manager to create a culture of professional development throughout the college. Enhanced and new opportunities for employees now include Gallup Strengths Quest, Generations in the Workplace, and communications training. Under the leadership of the learning and development manager, the college has launched a cohort-based new employee orientation and is in the final stages of developing a leadership academy aimed at providing professional development opportunities for mid-level managers. This new initiative was scheduled to begin May 1 but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis and campus closure.

The Classified and Exempt Staff Training Committee awards funds for their respective members to take classes, attend conferences, participate in workshops, and engage in activities to support their professional goals. College administrators are also allocated funds for professional development. Opening Week, just prior to fall quarter, is a four-day long campus event that includes speakers and workshops. HR also sponsors winter professional day. GRC faculty and staff are eligible for tuition waivers at participating colleges and universities.

GRC employs faculty who meet or exceed the qualifications outlined for Washington State community college faculty in both academic and career technical positions. Faculty are actively engaged in creation and oversight of academic policies and assessment of student learning. Through interviews it was verified that faculty and instructional leaders are working to "aggressively invest" in closing the cycle of assessment to improve the culture of continuous improvement related to student learning and success.

Faculty responsibilities and workloads are outlined in the faculty contract. All tenured and tenure-track faculty, Librarians, and counselors are assigned to an instructional division to

include participation in division meetings; curriculum development and evaluation; course scheduling; program development; textbook selection; and adjunct faculty observations. There are numerous opportunities for faculty to serve on various committees. Faculty are encouraged to seek college funding for professional development opportunities that enhance teaching, learning, advising, research, service, and/or artistic creation in support of student success. Funding is allocated to the Faculty Development Committee.

Faculty are evaluated regularly per the negotiated contract. The evaluation process is designed to identify areas for improvement and to strengthen effectiveness of teaching and student learning. Non-tenured (probationary) faculty can be reviewed for tenure after nine quarters of instruction and the contract outlines the timeline, criteria, and makeup of the tenure committee. Final tenure decisions are made by the GRC Board of Trustees. Tenured faculty are evaluated at least once every five years. A post-tenure committee conducts reviews which include peer observations and student evaluations; contract provisions address concerns that arise between evaluation periods and provide for remediation if needed. Oversight of the review process for tenured faculty falls under the Vice President of Instruction, while the actual evaluation process is conducted by the various academic divisions.

### **Education Resources**

The evaluation team finds that programs offered reflect appropriate content and rigor to meet the mission of the college. Student learning outcomes are consistently listed in course syllabi, and program outcomes lead to recognized content in specific fields of study. Interviews with faculty show a program improvement process that allows program review to occur in a periodic, constructive, meaningful way, targeted at program improvement. Students attest to the ready use of course and program outcomes that help them prepare for academic expectations, while also reporting that course and program evaluation results lead to improvement.

While no longer an explicit part of the NWCCU Standards, evaluators reviewed distance education practices considering the movement of multiple courses to solely on-line instruction. Evaluators found evidence the college responds to and generally satisfies expectations for distance education quality. In 2019, the college reorganized eLearning to be under the aegis of the Dean of the Library, eLearning, and Media Services to ensure online, hybrid, and face-to-face classes reflect academic quality in both design and delivery. The college hired full time staff and has plans to further expand services and support for faculty teaching online curriculum. It is worthy to note the value of this enhanced support as the recent pandemic response shifted most instruction and services to online formats. Evidence notes that the college supported faculty, staff, and students in the successful and effective online delivery of coursework and services, accomplishing much of this work within a 72-hour period.

Green River College provides each student with a unique ID number, PIN, and student email address. Students must authenticate their identity when accessing student account programs, including the Canvas LMS. Green River has contracted with Respondus to ensure the integrity of their online exam proctoring system, including options for photo ID verification and browser lock down. Costs associated with online courses (e.g., test proctoring) are detailed on the eLearning webpage, in the course syllabus, and in Canvas.

Interviews and documentation indicate that students are well-prepared for transfer and work in their technical fields of study. Evaluators found evidence that GRC's courses, regardless of delivery modality, are consistent with its mission. Evaluators further verified student learning outcomes at the course and program levels represent evidence of course achievement leading to the appropriate college-level degrees and certificates.

Student learning outcomes are published on course syllabi and in the course catalog. For consistency, syllabi are modeled on the college's syllabus template. The college catalog lists all course, program, and college-wide outcomes, and each course listing identifies not only the course outcomes, but the associated program and college-wide outcome(s).

Credit is awarded based on a clearly defined credit hour model that is consistent with federal regulations and NWCCU guidelines. Requirements for degree programs and undergraduate and certificate programs are included in the GRC catalog. Evaluators found evidence that credit and degrees are based in documented student achievement and awarded in accordance with appropriate institutional policies reflecting generally accepted higher education learning outcomes, norms, or equivalencies. Evidence also indicates successful external articulation agreements with schools in the state system of higher education. The college has in place applicable policies awarding of credit, transferring credit, credit equivalencies, and credit for prior learning. Moreover, there is evidence supporting the college's attention to high school completions, alternative certifications, and workforce programs using NWCCU and SBCTC guidelines and requirements.

The institution shows evidence of well-designed degree programs. Entry and graduation requirements are clear and easily accessed. Evaluators found indications that the college's adherence to course content design reflects appropriate college-level breadth, design, sequence, and synthesis of learning. Evaluators also found admission and graduation requirements to be clearly defined and clearly published.

Faculty are now encouraged to again assume responsibility and rights related to the college's learning outcomes. Previously, college leadership proposed that these rights be assigned to the institutional research function at GRC. While realigning curricular and assessment rights and responsibilities took time and effort – reducing the opportunity for further progress on refining learning outcomes and achievement measures – individual faculty and collective governance groups express deep appreciation for the effort to rightly restore faculty leadership in this area. The work of the Learning Outcomes Committee (LOC) is a particularly important and strong component of the faculty-led curriculum process. There is ample evidence that teaching faculty are significantly engaged in promoting and assessing student achievement connected to clearly defined learning outcomes.

Evaluators found that the library and faculty work to promote library use training and resource awareness. Those participating in the faculty forum confirmed the active support provided by library personnel. Students noted the critical part library faculty play in their ability to successfully negotiate courses, especially in the newly adopted online format. Faculty work collegially with library staff and faculty librarians to ensure that information literacy; print and electronic collections; and other available library resources are integrated into the learning process.

Library faculty provide research assistance and reference help and are invited by department faculty to visit classrooms and regularly provide students with tours detailing services and spaces. In addition to providing comprehensive support to department faculty, the Holman Library assists eLearning with Canvas modules that support accessibility of learning resources, academic integrity, and citation help. The recent reorganization of e-learning under the Dean of the Library, eLearning, and Media Services is a significant new responsibility for this area, and the department appears to be well situated for that challenge.

Evaluators found evidence the college grants credit for prior experiential learning in accordance with the guidelines of NWCCU Standards. Conversations with faculty verify that the processes for assessment, documentation, review, and transcription are consistent with the evidence presented in the report. The process and detail of such granting of credit is defined in college policy and the college catalog.

Based on evidence presented in the report, the college website, and the catalog, the college follows statewide policies governing transfer of credit and reciprocity. Transfer credit accepted from other regionally accrediting institutions is based on a review of course descriptions, learning outcomes, and syllabi. There are easily accessible transfer guides and policies that guide the institution's receipt of credits from other institutions.

### **Undergraduate Programs**

The college's associates and Bachelor of Applied Science degrees require clearly defined general education courses integrating coursework in the humanities; fine arts; mathematical and natural science; and social sciences. There is evidence showing applied and certificate degree programs contain a recognizable body of instruction with appropriate outcomes in communication, computation, and human relations.

Evaluators found evidence the college demonstrates identifiable and assessable learning outcomes for both its baccalaureate and transfer degree programs. Applied degree and certificate programs have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that align with program goals and intended outcomes, mostly as stand-alone courses in related areas. The related education component of the applied degrees is overseen by the Related Instruction Committee and supported by advisory boards unique to each program.

### **Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs**

Evaluators found evidence the college's credit and non-credit continuing education and other special programs (workforce training, for instance) are compatible with the college mission and goals. Specifically, the college's corporate and continuing education unit is active in developing various offerings in response to community and workforce need

There is evidence indicating continuing education course development and delivery is executed by appropriately qualified instructors. Classes and programs are closely monitored for financial sustainability. Student evaluations and other forms of feedback help inform course and program improvement activities. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for continuing education courses and special learning activities follow generally accepted norms, connect to the college's mission, are effectively delivered, contain appropriate course objectives, and are evaluated through

student achievement of identified learning outcomes. The college's CEU processes and credit equivalency awards are guided by the International Association of Continuing Education and Training and governed by Washington Administrative Code 181-85-077.

Evaluators discovered a system of archiving records for course and learning information of continuing education courses, in part guided by state requirements for retention of records set forth by the Washington Secretary of State and college policies. Continuing education and non-credit programs support the college's mission, goals, and core themes. The continuing education programs are evaluated to ensure quality programming that meets the needs of those enrolled. Community education instructors have their own training manual and a course evaluation model that provides for ongoing review and improvement.

### **Student Support Resources**

Green River College provides learning environments that promote engagement for its diverse student population. Programs and services are aligned with the institution's mission, vision, and core themes. The college provides a variety of services to students and faculty to support continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The evaluation team learned of numerous academic and student support services in the self-study and heard evidence of the efficacy of those services from participants in the student forum. Examples of student supports mentioned in interviews with the evaluation team include the Violence Prevention Center; Running Start, Career and Advising Center; the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; campus computer labs; and tutoring. The college website provides information on services, hours, locations, and contacts for students at all campus locations including online learners.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, GRC developed an online virtual assistance lobby making one stop style service available to students during the campus closure. Staff are available to assist students remotely via email, phone, and Zoom drop-in sessions. Through interviews with Student Affairs leaders the evaluation team learned that the college intends to maintain the extended service to students even after the campus can re-open to the public. Several other community colleges across the nation have contacted GRC to learn about best practices for service delivery.

The evaluation team saw evidence of GRC's commitment to maintaining a safe and secure campus for its students, employees, and the community. The Green River Student Handbook includes a section on campus safety. The campus safety department provides services that include enhanced 911, staffed information booths, vehicle unlocks, vehicle jumpstarts, and safety escorts. GRC campus safety provides training to the campus community and works closely with the college's Emergency Operations Committee to provide operational support during major disturbances affecting the campus. The college utilizes an emergency text messaging system and maintains a building captain system that trains volunteer leaders on evacuation processes.

GRC works with its local police departments in support of a comprehensive emergency response system for overall safety at all its locations. The behavioral intervention team brings together key personnel to evaluate reports of student behavior and assess if that behavior constitutes a potential threat.

GRC maintains a Clery Compliance Committee which is tasked with ensuring that safety is the responsibility of all employees. The evaluation team viewed evidence that Green River follows the Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Act of 1998 by posting campus crime data on its website. Through forums it was verified that both students and staff feel confident in the safety and security of the campus and its facilities. Many participants shared with the evaluation team that emergency planning efforts led to a successful transition to online learning and student support services in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Consistent with its mission, core themes, and characteristics, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational offerings. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advising about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

Green River's recruitment and outreach staff promotes the college to local high schools and community organizations within their service area and hosts recruitment events on campus. Staff conduct high school visits, presentations, and community visits. All prospective students receive information about educational programs and support services.

GRC offers an online orientation as part of the onboarding process for new students. In addition, there are orientation sessions for students enrolled in programs such as International Programs, adult basic education and English language learners, Running Start, workforce, Open Doors, and others. Student onboarding for degree-seekers includes a new student advising and registration (NSAR) session facilitated by the career and advising center. Students meet with professional advising staff to discuss program and graduation requirements, review transfer policies, and to register for their first quarter classes. All new students pursuing a transfer degree and undecided students are encouraged to set up a one-on-one advising appointment in the career and advising center. Transfer students are assigned a faculty advisor for continued advising, while career technical students receive advising from program faculty. Targeted advising is also provided through programs such as athletics, Running Start, workforce, International Programs, and TRiO.

GRC's Faculty Curriculum Review Committee reviews course and program changes which are routed to the Vice President of Instruction for approval. In the event of program elimination or significant change in requirements, the college notifies the State Board (SBCTC) and the NWCCU. In the case of program elimination, the college ensures that enrolled students have an opportunity to complete the program in a timely manner with minimal disruption. Evidence provided to the evaluators included documentation of the closure of the auto body technology program in 2015. The dean, faculty, and advising staff worked collaboratively to ensure every student could transition to other program at Green River or other colleges or graduate using prior learning assessment.

Green River publishes an annual online catalog and most of the contents also appear on the appropriate department web pages. Current and accurate information available to students and the campus community includes:

- Institutional mission and core themes
- Entrance requirements and procedures



- The grading policy
- Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings
- Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty
- Rules, regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; g) tuition, fees, and other program costs
- Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment
- Opportunities and requirements for financial aid
- The academic calendar

Green River makes eligibility for licensure and employment information accessible via individual program web pages. Examples reviewed by the evaluation committee include Phlebotomy, Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Aviation.

GRC adopted and adheres to policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records in accordance with the general retention schedule as approved by the SBCTC and per RCW 40.14. Student admission, registration, and financial transactions are stored in Washington's statewide student management, financial aid, and finance databases. Electronic data existing within GRC's student management system is hosted, secured, and backed up by the SBCTC in Olympia. The SBCTC can recover that data in the case of an emergency. Additionally, a subset of that data is downloaded into local Green River databases where it is backed up and can be restored by Green River information technology staff in the event of an emergency. Green River publishes and follows established policies for confidentiality and release of student records. The college follows the requirements of the FERPA, as well as institutional policy GA-17 Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The college publishes information about FERPA on its webpage, catalog, quarterly class schedule, and student handbook as well as quarterly emails to currently enrolled students. Since June 2019, employees requesting access to the college student management system must complete an online FERPA training provided through Green River's Law Room by Verfi, or in person, if requested, by the Registrar. No student information, other than student directory information, is released to a third party unless specifically required under FERPA. Students may opt out of disclosure of their information by notifying the Registrar in writing.

Green River is a Title IV college awarding more than \$14M in federal aid, \$3.9M in Washington State aid, and \$1.2M in institutional aid. The GRC financial aid office works with other departments, including Work Force education and the college foundation, to streamline communication and disbursement of funds to students. Students can find information regarding the categories of financial assistance on the GRC website and in printed materials made available to prospective and enrolled students. According to the self-study and supported by individual interviews, financial aid uses a file review process to reduce manual work, potential for errors, and individual student file processing time. As of fall 2017, the financial aid office moved away from manually packaging awards to utilizing available technology to minimize human error and increase efficiency and timeliness. This improvement resulted in a 30.4% increase in financial aid files reviewed in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18.

Financial aid staff are available to assist students via the financial aid portal, email, phone, and in-person. An Express Lane is available to students the first few days of each quarter, offering quick service to answer simple questions and improving wait times for service. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic offices are currently closed to students and the public. However, employees working remotely are available to assist students (except in-person) and students now have the option to connect with financial aid staff through Zoom video conferencing.

Student loan borrowers complete promissory notes and loan counseling is required to acknowledge loan repayment obligations before receiving funds. Online exit counseling is available to students when they leave the college, and hard copies of loan documents are sent to those who need them by staff in the financial aid office. As noted in the self-study and supported by a review of the website and individual interviews, Green River has implemented effective measures to improve its loan default rate, including financial literacy curriculum and structured outreach to students. The rate has improved over the past 4 years from 17.3% to 12.3%.

Green River has a shared advising model where advising occurs in a centralized office and is also performed by faculty. The career and advising has used the Council for Advancement of Standards to review the efficacy of its model of advising for students and to plan for continued improvement. An internal review found a positive correlation between the number of advising visits and student retention.

Professional advising staff have GRC curriculum expertise, completion, and graduation requirements, as well as how student planning for transfer degrees for the college's degree and certificate programs takes place. Professional advising staff attend local, regional, and national conferences to stay current with best practices in advising and student development. Student advising and registration responsibilities are communicated through the NSAR process, a requirement of all degree-seeking students.

Green River offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities to foster personal and professional relationship building, provide enriching cultural experiences, cultivate community connections, and support a healthy school-life balance. Student leadership groups organize hundreds of events annually including alternate spring break service-learning trips, a diversity and equity series, a pride prom, and the Lunar New Year celebration. Campus life staff members advise and monitor student organizations and groups and their related budgets to ensure adherence to the ASGRC Financial Code, including those related to student-led allocations of the services and activity fee that students pay upon course registration.

Green River operates auxiliary services through conference services, food service, bookstore, and student housing. Conference services manages meeting and event space on campus. Food service is provided by Spectra Catering and operates a cafeteria, catering, and vending machines. GRC solicits feedback from students annually on food costs, hours of operation, and the quality of service. The Paper Tree Bookstore works with faculty to provide course learning materials for students and strives to publish information on required materials at least 30 days prior to the start of the term. Students expressed concern over the rising cost of textbooks and course materials; the bookstore has responded by researching alternatives and implementing an inclusive access model including digital course materials for rent. The College Foundation owns student housing,

which is operated by a third party. Housing is available for up to 340 students, and housing staff provide a supportive learning and personal development environment.

Green River athletics is a member of the NWAC and adheres to its eligibility requirements. Athletics staff review students' academic records at least twice per quarter and solicit faculty feedback throughout the term. Student athletes adhere to the Green River Athlete Code of Conduct. Student Affairs provides institutional oversight for athletic programs. As an ASGRF funded program, student athletes are governed by the same admissions procedures, academic standards, degree requirements and financial aid policies as all other Green River students. Athletics-related financial aid is limited by the number of grant-in-aid allocations allowed per sport as mandated by the NWAC and is subject to annual reporting. Staff and students involved in athletics also adhere to Title IX as described by college policy.

### **Library and Information Resources**

The Holman Library holds and provides access to library and information resources with an appropriate level of currency, depth, and breadth to support the institution's mission, core themes, programs, and services. Library staff and faculty collaborate with department faculty to support a wide range of curriculum at the college.

The library expanded its physical collection of materials to meet the changing needs of the student population, including a basic college skills collection to support Running Start and essential college skills to support GED and adult basic education students. The library has access to a wide range of materials through Interlibrary loan borrowing and lending. Faculty and staff are encouraged to make requests for books, journals, audiovisual content, and online databases, which are reviewed by library selectors in a liaison model which supports each area of the college curriculum. The library collection is regularly maintained based on age, usage, and faculty input. Policies displayed on the library website include borrowing; collection development; copyright; patron behavior and expectations; room and building use; and interlibrary loans. Usage data, cost, and faculty and librarian input are regularly evaluated to inform acquisition, update, and removal of materials.

Library faculty and staff are proud of their One Book program that provides a conversation and learning opportunity for the entire college community. It includes a community-selected title with a diversity and equity focus, an author visit, co-curricular engagement with faculty, and many inclusive learning opportunities throughout each year.

The library routinely evaluates the effectiveness of their services, programs, and information resources by including feedback from all segments of their user population. They collect quantitative and qualitative data regarding the use of student spaces within the library, library instruction sessions, circulation, collection trends, and programming. Faculty and staff analyze requests and questions asked to inform planning and make changes to services and programs. Library staff routinely consult with departmental faculty about library resources. Library faculty also use student surveys, feedback from library instruction sessions, and regular peer review to plan, assess, and modify library services and information resources. Library faculty and staff serve on committees and participate in shared governance in a robust and engaged manner.

Librarians support classroom instruction, online instruction, and teach customized face-to-face information literacy sessions at all the campuses and centers of Green River College. Numerous research guides on individual topics to support student learning are locally created and available for use. Library faculty teach several sections of credit-bearing information literacy courses each year. Online “How Do I…” guides support research and citation needs. These publications explain how to find articles, books, and eBooks, as well as how to evaluate sources. Video tutorials have been recently enhanced for remote and online learning. Faculty can embed the tutorials and other resources into their Canvas shells to support information literacy learning.

Students have access to a wide range of support services to include silent study rooms; research and homework assistance; a technology help desk; laptops for term loan; Wi-Fi hotspots; and webcams to support online learning needs.

The Evaluation Committee commends library personnel for developing and maintaining an inviting and welcoming atmosphere for student study, research, and technology needs, and for their extensive library instruction program including credit bearing information literacy courses.

The library enjoys strong technology support from IT staff who collaborate with hardware, software, and student help desk services. The physical library collection is secured with 3M Detection Systems technology. Staff and students reported feeling safe in the library spaces and buildings. Library employees receive support and assistance from Campus Safety officers whenever needed. The library recently migrated their ILS (integrated library system) to ExLibris Alma with Primo Discovery Service, which is a major accomplishment for the entire team.

## **Financial Resources**

Documents provided in the self-study report and confirmed through virtual interview discussions demonstrate that financial resources support the institutions mission and programs. Regular monitoring of budget versus actual results, compared to short-term projections, inform appropriate debt and risk management. Efforts to align a realistic expenditure budget with annual revenue addressed a \$3 million budget deficit without requiring actual expenditure reductions.

Budget transparency and college-wide inclusiveness developed budget knowledge and improved institutional trust. Budget 101 training is offered in one-on-one and group sessions. Annual budget training is provided for the board of trustees. Strong institutional planning and a focus on building reserves provided the institution with considerable advantages and the ability to adjust to future State and enrollment funding reductions.

Reserve policies require 10 percent of annual operating budget expenditures; 50 percent of gross annual Running Start revenue; and 50 percent of gross annual international programs and extended learning revenue. Management consistently meets policy target requirements.

Resource planning and development includes realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and responsible projections of grant, donation, and other non-tuition revenue sources. Based on the evaluation committee review of the self-study, and confirmed in virtual discussion, the college successfully focused on resource planning and developing a realistic budget using transparency

and accountability. Realistic budgeting enabled the budget deficit to be addressed without unnecessary expenditure reduction while increasing budget ownership and responsibility. The annual budget document has been enhanced to include historical budget information and more detail for greater transparency.

In FY2018-19 the budget office created a budget development website to enable budget managers to review and modify proposed budget detail. Budget development focuses on core themes; goals and institutional priorities; strategic intentions; and institutional needs. A rubric is used to prioritize budget requests based on innovation, growth, and student success, while maintaining a balanced budget.

Evidence verifies that appropriate opportunities for college-wide participation in the financial planning and budget development – evidence such as a thorough review of the policies, guidelines, budget development process artifacts, budget town hall(s) minutes, department meetings, and training for employees and the board. An emphasis on transparency and accountability was shared by participants during virtual group and individual meetings, as well as a positive change in “budget culture.” The annual budget is presented to the board of trustees, first in one-on-one sessions, allowing for detailed questions, and then presented to the entire board of trustees for approval.

The self-study report and group and individual virtual discussions confirmed quarterly financial reports are presented and discussed at board of trustee meetings. A director of internal control provides oversight by reviewing accounting transactions, cash receipting, inventory control, procurement card transactions, and risk assessment. Key components of the internal controls include routine financial reconciliations, timely bank reconciliations, segregation of duties, and robust oversight.

It is confirmed that capital budgeting supports the college’s mission and core themes by providing adequate learning and working environments. Debt financing is limited to the Certificate of Participation (COP) program managed through the office of the Washington state treasurer. Each biennium the college has a state-performed comprehensive facility conditions survey that assesses the condition of the physical plant and makes recommendations for repairs, minor projects, and maintenance. The college can also request funds for major capital projects through the annual SBCTC process. Building COP debt represents an annual cost of \$4.9 million with a \$43.855 million debt balance remaining to be paid over 10-16 years.

GRC auxiliary enterprises are self-supporting and receive no general fund resource allocation. Resources and expenditures are reviewed quarterly to ensure spending is within available resources. The enterprises exist to benefit students and employees by providing a needed services or activities.

The institution undergoes an annual external financial audit conducted by professionally qualified personnel in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Results from the audit, including findings and management letter recommendations, are considered in a timely, appropriate, and comprehensive manner by the administration and the board. The evaluation committee confirmed that the annual external financial audit is conducted by the Washington

State Auditor's Office (SAO) in accordance with governmental auditing standards. Audit results show an unqualified opinion, with state auditors noting the college president and board chair have a good knowledge base and understand their role in supporting strong internal controls.

It was confirmed that the college and its foundation have in place an operating agreement describing how the foundation supports the mission and core themes of the college. The foundation incorporated in 1975 as a 501(c) (3) and internal policies that further govern the relationship with the college. One third of the Foundation Board membership is comprised of college representatives. In addition, the foundation undergoes an annual audit, conducted by an external independently licensed certified public accountant.

### **Physical Infrastructure**

It was found that strong planning and thoughtful budgeting for future physical plant needs serves the institution well. The college has been successful in securing state and other funds to improve and develop facilities that enhance student learning and employee well-being. Facility needs for on-campus and satellite site locations are considered in a fair and equitable manner.

The original college master plan was developed in 1964 with the latest update completed in 2016. The facilities master plan serves as the blueprint and for guiding the college in developing, renewing, and expanding its physical spaces. The master plan is purposely aligned with the academic master plan, the SEM, plan, and the technology plan. There is a focused commitment to sustainability and access with planning for emergent technology; optimizing safety and security; and supporting community outreach. Financial planning has established reserves to be used as local funding for capital projects due to limited state capital funding.

The college established a new position, environmental safety manager, in 2018-19 to provide college-wide professional development, training, and support in meeting health and safety compliance requirements. Environmental safety is a college-wide responsibility and the environmental safety manager continues to advance understanding and participation.

The college planning process demonstrates thoughtful consideration and strategic funding to meet equipment needs. Planning and financial resource allocation for operational needs is strategic and well defined. All capital projects include equipment and technology, regardless of funding source. Such planning allows the college to create spaces to support current industry standards and anticipate future requirements.

### **Technological Infrastructure**

It was confirmed that the college provides a comprehensive technological infrastructure. The information technology department works as a strategic partner in a college-wide robust collaboration to serve all stakeholders. Strategic and thoughtful visioning allowed the technology infrastructure to respond to an immediate need to move to online instruction and remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The development and implementation of the My Green River student dashboard that provides a one-stop online tool for students is an excellent example of proactive planning that led to the ability to support students during the pandemic crisis.

The institution provides appropriate instruction and support for faculty, staff, students, and administrators in the effective use of technology and technology systems related to various programs, services, and institutional operations. The robust technology provided by the college aligns technical training for all employees through new hire orientation and customized training opportunities identified through a college-wide survey. The new public website and employee intranet (Gator Net) greatly enhanced information access and ease of use.

The information technology department works in collaboration with college stakeholders to research and identify technology solutions. The Information Technology Plan is developed, implemented, reviewed, and updated to adequately support college operations, programs, and services. As a college-wide strategic partner, the IT Department utilizes best practices and innovation to support college stakeholders.

### **COMPLIMENTS**

1. The Board of Trustees is complimented for their strategic and adaptive practices that support college progress toward goals and responses to emerging budget and operational changes.
2. College leadership is complimented for their work to restore trust and integrity into performance at all levels of the institution.
3. The college is complimented on recent efforts to expand opportunities for students to earn credit for prior learning. The institution supported research, development of new assessment models, and provision of resources for faculty to make student-facing information easy to find on the college website.
4. The Evaluation Team compliments GRC for proactive emergency response preparation that aided the college in addressing the COVID-19 emergency. Of special note is the dedication of employees in exhibiting care and concern for all individuals (students, employees, and community members) impacted.
5. The Evaluation Committee compliments the faculty and staff of the Holman Library for the provision of educational resources and outreach to college and community partners with a diversity, equity, and inclusion focus.
6. The college is complimented for engaging in critical work to develop a realistic budgeting process, using accountability and transparency, that restored trust and engendered ownership over budget planning results. The college financial planning processes led to a balanced budget with adequate reserves to respond to current financial challenges.
7. The IT Department is complimented for engaging in proactive planning and college-wide collaboration; responding to operational, academic, and service needs across the campus; and quickly adapting processes to an online environment.

8. The Evaluation Team compliments GRC for a strong commitment to professional development and innovation that contributes to enhanced institutional creativity and strengthens opportunities for the college and its students. By dedicating funds for these purposes, GRC underscores the importance placed on support for all employee groups.

### **CONCERNS**

1. The college is encouraged to continue a review and, as appropriate, revision of the current overly complex governing system. It is strongly suggested that the college move its governance structure work forward as soon as current circumstances allow.
2. While faculty have made progress in all areas of assessment, there is work yet to be completed. With assessment once again clearly defined and authorized as faculty work, forward progress is necessary to fully develop assessment mechanisms.
3. The college has not identified learning outcomes that pertain to the General Education component of program instruction.



## **Section 3 (Planning and Implementation) and Section 4 (Assessment)**

### **Institutional Planning**

Based on a review of the self-study and institutional documents, as well as conversations with campus constituent groups, it is evident that GRC engages in thoughtful and effective institutional planning processes that guide college efforts and improvement. Through individual and group interviews, participants attest to the inclusive and collaborative nature of institutional planning. The college is engaged in early phases of updating its current strategic plan – an effort delayed by current operational constraints. Discussion about how to move this initiative forward in a timely and effective manner is already underway. Evidence of other planning in areas such as finance, master planning, and enrollment, and the use of such plans to guide and inform college decisions, is well-documented and readily available for review.

### **Core Theme Planning**

The institution has in place a collection of data sufficient to inform the planning process. Throughout the visit college employees offered positive comments about the strength of having clearly defined goals and priorities that guide decision-making and resource allocation.

Evaluators found evidence that the college's core theme planning is aligned with the institutional planning and thus contributes to and guides accomplishment of core theme objectives. The NWCCU Mid-Cycle evaluation noted the original core themes generated in 2013 needed revision and focus. The college revived its core theme team structure in 2016. Teams focused on revising the indicators of achievement, making them more meaningful and measurable than the prior metrics. This work then led to a clarification of priorities for each core theme team. The role of faculty in development the new metrics and targets was significant, as described in meetings with the core theme team members and reinforced in several meetings with faculty, division chairs and deans.

Core theme work led to the adoption of three college priorities, namely increased enrollment, improved retention and completion, and improved diversity and equity initiatives. There is ample evidence that the college then acted to provide and align core contributing services and program components. Several examples of successful alignment are noted, including alignment with state and national program guidelines in certain areas connected to baccalaureate degree offerings; high school program review and revision; and CTE planning that includes internal and external advisory group and marketing support.

The college also conducts support programs such as MESA, STEM-related initiatives, and student support. These initiatives add to retention and progression efforts in structured ways. Core theme-based planning is evident in CTE, with Deans and Division chairs (a group with significant overlap with the CTE Core Theme Team) meeting quarterly to identify needs and prioritize opportunities

Evaluators found evidence that the college uses various data (IPEDS, statewide transcript exchange programs, National Clearinghouse, and internal data-based dashboards) to inform core theme planning, and, when necessary, revisions. Of note is the Integrated Student Portal, “My Green River,” as one exemplar, developed as a means of providing student support and collecting data connected to the core themes and student success in transfer, CTE, college transition and continuing education. Inherent in these results are examples of the revised focus of core themes to include increased enrollment; improved retention and completion; and improved diversity and equity initiatives.

Evidence of core theme planning based on appropriately defined data was offered, notably the development of an integrated student portal and advising redesign that emphasized first quarter advising and development of student academic plans. Collaborative efforts to improve student retention and completion are well-documented and data informed.

### **Core Theme Assessment**

Evaluators found evidence that the college engages in ongoing and systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data to evaluate core theme objectives. Many stakeholders cited the generation and availability of meaningful data via the Office of Institutional Effectiveness as a new and invaluable strength of the college. In addition to the higher-level core theme indicators, more granular reports are made available to divisions and departments upon request, and regularly available for the program assessment and improvement (PA&I) reports.

Evidence attests to college use of the results of core theme assessment to support academic and student support. Several examples of data-informed changes to improve core theme objectives are provided in the self-study document. Interestingly, the first such example focused on 2017 marketing efforts to enhance enrollment, even though enrollment is not identified as an objective for any of the 2016/17 core themes (the objectives focus on retention, completion, and post-program goals). The second and third examples, changes to the college website and HR business processes, appear to be out of alignment with the core theme objectives as described in the report. The other three examples (auto-awarding completed credentials, improving financial aid service, and developing supports for students experiencing food and/or housing insecurity) would support student retention and completion, and thus align with Core theme objectives. Evaluators note that more careful definitions of objectives and alignment with associated core themes may be needed.

An effective system of evaluation to measure program goals and intended outcomes is evident, and faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs. However, evaluators are concerned that assessment of college wide outcomes is still in a developmental stage. One outcome has been assessed via CCSSE results, resulting in some meaningful changes in instructional practices. Simple rubrics for two of the CW outcomes have been developed but not used to evaluate student work, and the fourth has not been developed beyond a basic conceptual framework.

The PA&I process resumed in 2017, with the rebuilding of a robust template for program level self-study and increased opportunity to identify strengths, plans for improvement, and program

needs. Instructional program reviews have been organized and documented, reflecting a 5-year cycle, with 7-12 programs participating each year. Ample evidence exists to attest to the effectiveness of this process.

Evaluators found evidence that the college documents, through its comprehensive evaluation system, student achievement of course objectives. Moreover, there is evidence teaching faculty have defined responsibility for these student evaluations as referenced in the faculty contract. The college demonstrates evaluations at course and program levels but lacks consistent assessment at the college-wide outcomes level.

There is evidence the college regularly reviews its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and lead to meaningful results for improvement. College employees, and most especially faculty, note the progress made since 2017 through campus-wide engagement in planning and assessment. The evaluation of the alignment, correlation and integration of programs and services; resources and capacity; and assessment and planning are developing at Green River College, with emphasis on engaging the college community via a series of town hall meetings. Core themes are evaluated on an annual basis, and specific areas of focus are developed in response to this assessment. There is an intentional move on the part of the administration to improve communication, transparency, and engagement, which was often cited in individual and group meetings with GRC faculty and staff.

### **Core Themes College Transfer and Career Technical Education**

The results of core theme assessments are connected to institutionally identified indicators of achievement; are often used to inform planning and improvement; and are widely published and shared with appropriate constituencies. Evidence of the effectiveness of this process is found when reviewing the various units of the college who engaged in processes focused on the improvement of enrollment, retention, and completion.

As confirmed in meetings with core theme team members and CTE directors and deans, the review of core theme objective results leads to focused action. For example, several programs implemented practices to improve both short term (first to second quarter) and longer term (first to second year) retention, even though results were within the tolerance of 5% of baseline. Some documented results were confusing. For example: Objective 2.1: 2017-18 = 31% (CTE Students who complete a degree or certificate within three years) showed a decline from the 2015-16 baseline of 35%, and that appears to be outside of the 5% tolerance of the acceptable performance range. ( $4/35 = 11.4\%$  decrease; and  $6.0\%$  decrease from 33% in 2016-17) yet was not noted as such. It is strongly suggested that the college review baseline indicators to ensure they reflect appropriate levels of achievement, thereby effectively measuring both achievement and room for improvement.

Disaggregation of the data from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 showed a decrease in performance of Asian and Black/African American students while that of other demographic groups increased slightly. The IE Director noted that these results were likely a result of small numbers of students in those categories, and that looking at trends over a longer period may provide a clearer picture. This will be important for the college to think about when reporting on the new standards, which

require disaggregation by race/ethnicity and other factors. The college provided several examples of appropriate actions taken and plans for next steps for all the key objectives.

### **Core Theme College Readiness and Continuing/Community Education**

There are three objectives with associated indicators for Core Theme College Readiness. For the most part, these objectives and indicators focus on success and transitions. This emphasis establishes expectations for students, faculty, and staff that lead to stronger programming and services. The college should review baseline indicators to ensure they reflect appropriate levels, thereby effectively measuring both achievement and room for improvement. It is strongly suggested that IE, faculty, and staff serving college readiness students be especially observant about early trends identified through assessment efforts. For instance, a 4% decrease in English language learner progression, while within an acceptable range, could herald future challenges. Conversely, progress of Open Door students (high school completion) is notable as exceeding established targets. There may be lessons learned from this indicator that can be applied to other college readiness populations. Several examples are given for improvements to advising, curriculum, or service that also have the potential to realize improvements against goals for this core theme.

The college identifies the Continuing/Community Education Core Theme as providing “services and programs that reflect a commitment to the professional, social, and personal enrichment of the community”. There are three objectives identified: health of programs; revenue generation; and responsiveness to community needs. Evaluators found excitement and pride on the part of continuing/community education leadership and employees about the impact of collaborative planning and assessment efforts, believing efforts lead to an increased understanding about the focus of this unit. The engagement of various college and advisory committee members make assessment efforts even more relevant and accurate. It is strongly suggested that Continuing/Community Education revisit indicators and benchmarks given recent changes in the external workforce and continuing education environments.

### **Summary**

Robust core theme planning and assessment efforts are evident at the course and program level. Yet to be fully developed is a comprehensive model for assessment at the program and degree level. Core theme objectives were revised as a result of the NWCCU Mid-Cycle visit, and objectives were revised for concision and focus. In the Year Seven Mission Fulfillment Report the college provides core theme dashboards for each objective, followed by a narrative summary of assessment results, examples of actions taken to improve programs, and a list of next steps for improvement. Through review of the provided material and interviews with key personnel in this area, evaluators found evidence of appropriate assessments responding effectively to 4.B.1 and 4.B.2. Though not fully established, the college provided a preliminary plan explaining the various implementations and development of campus wide assessment to date.

The many changes in administration, combined with different opinions about approaches to assessment, seriously destabilized efforts that had been started prior to the NWCCU Mid-Cycle evaluation. With the change in college leadership, assessment efforts were again identified as being faculty work that had value, required professional development for those engaged, and

deserved resources to complete. The investment in faculty leadership of assessment has been especially important and fruitful, allowing for clearer roles, responsibility, and mentorship of the faculty as they work to develop meaningful assessments.

Assessment efforts are still developing and will require continued and focused attention, but under the current conditions, current progress shows great promise for completion of final, robust assessment structure. It was clear from meetings conducted during the visit that the Learning Outcomes Committee (LOC), and faculty chairs in particular, have done an impressive job of supporting faculty in the development of assessable outcomes, scaffolded from courses into program outcomes. Faculty are empowered to identify the assessments within their programs that provide evidence for the outcomes. Faculty repeatedly expressed gratitude for the ability to capture work already being done as a way of making assessment something do-able, and own-able by the faculty.

The LOC Chair Report for 2018/19 indicates indicated increased faculty and program participation in assessment efforts, though noting there is some additional engagement needed to reach 100% involvement. CTE reporting is moving in the right direction, but requires greater participation, and would benefit from more thoughtful analysis of the data and recognition of the value of assessment data to improve teaching and learning. Campus Wide (CW) outcomes development focuses on creation of rubrics for Written Communication and Critical Thinking, with the intention that these would be used by instructors at the section level, and the data rolled together at course, program, or college levels. The rubrics are remarkably simple: three levels of attainment for the outcome, and intentionally broad, intended to be usable across every program at the college. The CW Responsibility outcome was assessed via a set of four questions included the CCSSE survey that focused on student responsibly. The results did suggest areas for improvement, and appropriate actions are being taken in response. A fourth outcome, Quantitative & Symbolic Reasoning has not been addressed since it was last redesigned in 2014/15.

The evaluation team spent considerable time studying and discussing data and circumstances associated with assessment at GRC. While the period of uncertainty about ownership of assessment efforts posed a major hurdle and barrier, more recent clarification and empowerment of faculty resulted in marked change. It is with this perspective that the team reached conclusions that are believed to be appropriate and holistic in nature about the current state of GRC assessment.

### **COMPLIMENTS**

1. The IE Office is complimented for re-establishing campus trust and developing tools and data elements that serve as meaningful indicators of improvement.
2. GRC faculty are commended for their active and thoughtful engagement in planning and assessment activities that result in academic accountability and improvement.

## **CONCERN**

While the college has in place effective course and program methods of achievement and evaluation, systematic and periodic college-wide assessment is not yet fully developed or implemented.

## **Section 5 (Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability)**

GRC clearly defines mission fulfillment through the framework of carefully developed performance indicators that tie directly to core themes. The GRC board adopted acceptable thresholds of performance that are tracked on a systematic and period basis and form the basis of an annual review process used to set future goals and expectations.

Evaluators found evidence that GRC evaluates the college's ability to sustain operations over time within the context of human, fiscal, and physical resources. Progress is evident in rebuilding employee trust, thereby further engaging employees in important work to improve student learning, retention, and progression. The college was able to retire \$300,000 in debt while maintaining fund balances available to meet unforeseen challenges. The college is successful in acquiring foundation-generated and state funds for maintenance, repair, and new construction of facilities.

The team found multiple examples of efforts to ensure sustainability at GRC. Full faculty engagement in assessment; robust student and IT support services; and focused and successful fund generation through the GRC Foundation and continuing and community education are examples of evidence related to sustainability.

Strong planning processes, evident through the work of the college as a whole and through unit engagement, serve to demonstrate responsiveness to identified areas of improvement. The planning process is clearly documented and understood by college personnel. Community members often engage with the college in planning efforts. Following the previous Year Seven visit, GRC made significant advances in their use of relevant and reliable data to inform decisions. Each of these elements speak to sustainability of operations.

The Evaluation Team expresses confidence that, even during times of challenge, GRC has in place the systems and structures to realize mission fulfillment and sustain operations over time.

## COMMENDATIONS

1. The Evaluation Team commends Green River College leadership, especially the president, for establishing a positive campus culture that reflects effective communication, transparency, access to decision-makers, and genuine constituent engagement.
2. The Evaluation Team commends GRC for their proactive campus preparation that aided the college in responding to the COVID-19 emergency. Of special note is the dedication of all employee in exhibiting care and concern for individuals (students, employees, and community members), as well as services, impacted.
3. The Evaluation Team commends IT leadership and staff for the development of a strong technology infrastructure that increases critical connectivity and computer support for students, employees, and the community. Specific examples of this strength include My Green River, the employee access portal, and support for faculty and staff now engaged in on-line teaching and support service provision.
4. The Evaluation Team commends GRC faculty and student services staff for the establishment of a comprehensive transitional studies model that effectively contributes to an increase in student retention and completion, especially for traditionally disadvantages students.
5. The Evaluation Team commends GRC for a strong commitment to and funding of professional development and innovation that contributes to enhanced institutional creativity and strengthens opportunities for the college and its students.
6. The Evaluation Team commends the Holman Library faculty and staff for their extensive program of information literacy, robust provision of technology support, and for consistently promoting and maintaining a welcoming and inviting atmosphere for student learning and engagement.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Evaluation Team recommends the college work to demonstrate and document an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Standard 2.A Governance (new Standard 2.A.2, 2.A.3, 2.A.4)
2. The evaluation team recommends that the College move to fully implement an effective and comprehensive system of direct and authentic assessment that appraises student accomplishment of existing course, program, and college-wide learning outcomes from which are derived meaningful results that provide clear direction for curricular and instructional improvement. Standards 4.A.3, 4.A.6, 4.B.1, 4.B.2 (new Standards 1.B.1, 1.C.3, 1.C.7, 1.D.3, and 1.D.4)

**APPENDIX A:**  
**Report on Department of Education Sanction**

## **Introduction**

On September 26, 2018, GRC was officially informed that the Department of Education imposed a sanction related to Clery Act non-compliance. The college was directed to make immediate improvements to annual campus security reporting and to correct the college's Title IV policies and procedures.

Using the NWCCU Clery Policy Checklist, it was ascertained that the college addressed each concern identified by the Department of Education and, in doing so, created best-practice documents and actions that are worthy of informing and guiding other institutions.

Evaluators are confident that the issues identified by the Department of Education now reflect compliance with federal expectations.