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Northwestern Connecticut Community College Institutional Effectiveness Report-Year One

Introduction

As stated in the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's Policy on Institutional Effectiveness, "an institution's efforts and ability to assess its effectiveness and use the obtained information for its improvement are important indicators of institutional quality." Peter Ewell has defined institutional effectiveness as "the comparison of the results achieved to the goals intended." The National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges has offered a more detailed definition: "Institutional effectiveness is the process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals, defining how the college and community will know when these goals are being met and using the data from assessment in an ongoing cycle of planning and evaluation." In short, institutional effectiveness efforts seek to answer the question of whether or not we are doing what our mission says we do, and uses the information this question generates to make improvements.

In its report following the March 2003 10 year visit, the Commission emphasized the importance of a comprehensive institutional effectiveness plan that would support the College's strategic planning process. Specifically, the Commission noted that :

The College has made progress in the area of institutional effectiveness and assessment, principally in the area of student services. In assessment related to the academic program, while the institution must operate within the state system, we note that to date considerably less progress has been achieved. Indeed, progress in this area has been identified by the institution as a priority. The team noted that the College's academic programs have coherence and substance; however, except for the programs which are separately accredited, there is a general lack of stated outcomes, expected competencies, or stated standards for student success beyond the traditional course grading system. There is currently little evidence of systematic program review. Through the report in 2006, we look forward to learning of the College's progress in systematic program review, the statement of expected learning outcomes, and the gathering and use for improvement of evidence related to student learning.

The Commission directed that the College will submit a report in Spring 2006 detailing its progress in this and other areas. In response to the Commission's comments, the institution began in Fall 2004 to develop a comprehensive system of institutional effectiveness.

The IE Process

May 2003/September 2004 Professional Days

NCCC faculty and staff were provided with a brief introduction to the key components of institutional effectiveness during a May 22, 2003 professional day workshop. (attach presentation materials) Presentations focused on student outcomes assessment and definitions and measurements of institutional effectiveness.

A second professional day workshop on September 26, 2003 provided additional information and served as the official kick-off day for the college's IE initiative. In

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advance of this workshop, faculty and staff were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their understanding of and attitudes toward institutional effectiveness; results of the questionnaire were presented at the meeting.

Questionnaire items were taken from a much more detailed survey that was part of a study of institutional effectiveness in two-year colleges belonging to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The study was published by Timothy Todd and George Baker at North Carolina State University in 1998. The five items adapted from this survey were as follows:

- Institutional mission is clearly written and understood
- Expected educational outcomes are defined in measurable form
- College program and services are regularly evaluated to determine if outcomes are being met
- Results of evaluation are used to improve the effectiveness of programs and services
- Results of evaluation are used to inform the strategic planning process.

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of these five items in the college's ability to determine its effectiveness. Greater than 95% of those responding rated all five items as important or very important in terms of our ability to determine effectiveness.

Secondly, respondents were asked to state their level of agreement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) in terms of how well the college is currently doing in each of these five areas. The responses to this set of questions were more diverse, indicating a perceived need to improve performance particularly in the areas of defining measurable educational outcomes, using evaluation results to make improvements, and using evaluation results to inform strategic planning.

Presentations at the September Professional Day included:

- Dr. Jean Wihbey, Acting Academic Dean at NCCC, presented an introduction to institutional effectiveness. The presentation focused on how institutional effectiveness is defined, who is responsible for doing IE work, and how IE can benefit an institution.
- Professor Doree Squeri of Gateway Community College led a conversation on assessing student learning.
- Caitlin Boger-Hawkins, Director of IR at NCCC, introduced AACC's Core Indicators of Effectiveness

IE Subcommittees

Following the morning presentations, faculty and staff were divided into subcommittees representing four areas: Assessing Student Learning, Assessing Programs, Assessing Governance, and Assessing Student Life. An Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee which would oversee the process was also formed on this day. Each of the subcommittees was provided with a series of questions to frame their work. For the Assessing Learning, Assessing Programs, and Assessing Student Life subcommittees, these questions focused on the following:

- What are the questions it is important to ask to assess effectiveness in this area,

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- What kind of data will be needed to answer these questions,
- Where/how will these data be obtained.

The Assessing Governance subcommittee's questions were slightly different, focusing on the evaluation of the college's governance process and the development of a governance process flow chart to describe current practice. (attach question copies as appendix)

Each subcommittee met multiple times over the course of the Fall 2003 semester to begin the work of answering these questions. In early December, each group was invited to meet with the Steering Committee to discuss their progress to date, the challenges encountered, possible areas in which the Steering Committee might be of assistance, and ideas for future training topics. A summary of these presentations follows:

December 2003 Interim Reports

STUDENT LIFE

The committee decided to look at the following 4 questions:

- Do students get the support and information they need to achieve their goals?
- Do we know what prevents student success—what are the obstacles outside class?
- Do students participate in activities outside the classroom?
- What are the mission and goals of various services? Are they being met?

The subcommittee asked what is expected as an end product, and whether there is a way to coordinate information needs to streamline the process. The Steering Committee **is to** report back on these questions.

ASSESSING LEARNING

This committee **worked on** developing outcomes for the general education core and reviewed course and program outcomes. In addition, they **have reviewed** the current syllabus and course overview formats and **determined** that there **were** overlaps. They **presented** a single template that **combines** both current forms into one and **ratified this new format** at the first faculty meeting of the spring 2004 semester. Their goal is now to have all the syllabi collected **using** this format and kept **as master syllabi for the use of all adjuncts, transfer questions and common course numbering by all faculty by mid-fall 2004 semester.**

The committee asked for clarification on who should be responsible for developing program outcomes. In addition, they recommended that the Academic Policy Committee develop a brief statement on plagiarism that could be included on course syllabi.

ASSESSING GOVERNANCE

The committee has identified key questions to be answered by those leading each of the major segments of the college's governance system, including the following:

- What is your group's charge
- How do you know you're doing what you're supposed to be doing
- What are your group's goals and objectives

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- Are meeting minutes available
- Is the group active/functioning or dormant
- How are initiatives brought to this group
- How does the group address its charge in a timely manner
- How does group's activities support the overall mission of the college

The committee asked how far it is supposed to go in its work and also asked who will make the assessment of the viability of governance at the college.

ASSESSING PROGRAMS

The committee has reviewed the system-approved templates for program and discipline review and has asked for mission statements from all academic and non-academic programs/units. The committee asked about its purpose and goals given the fact that system models for program and discipline review have already been developed and approved. In addition, they asked whether they should be reviewing non-academic programs and modifying the existing templates for this purpose. The Steering Committee recommended that the committee should review the recently developed cycle for program review to determine whether it makes sense, needs revision, etc. It was also stated that the committee could act as an advisory body to the program review process, and/or could identify ways to best present and utilize program review results.

January 2004 Professional Day

In response to some of the questions and concerns that arose out of the December interim report discussions, the Steering Committee scheduled an additional professional day for January 2004. Each subcommittee was asked to present a summary of their work to date, and Professor Squeri returned to lead another in-depth discussion on assessing learning outcomes. The subcommittee presentations provided faculty and staff the opportunity to hear from each of the four major areas, and gave subcommittee members an opportunity to receive feedback and suggestions beyond what the Steering Committee had provided.

Following the January Professional Day, subcommittees were asked to prepare a final report, due in early May, which would summarize the year's work and would serve as their committee's contribution to the College's initial institutional effectiveness report. Subcommittee approaches to this charge varied. Some groups chose to frame their final report around the original questions posed by the Steering Committee in September (see above); others organized their work differently. Following is a brief summary of each subcommittee's report (full reports can be found in the appendices.)

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ASSESSING LEARNING

Members of the Assessing Learning Subcommittee include the following:

Tom Hodgkin – Co-Chair
Patricia Owen – Co-Chair
Roseann Dennerlein
Roxanne Norway-White
Keith Adams
Robert Loftus
Stephanie O'Brien
Kunle Olumide
Kathie Fox
Anne Dodge
Jeff Crothers
Bev Schott
Josephyne Hollis
Tara Jo Holmberg
Nancy Marchetti
Denise Linden
Paulette Jacques
Laurie Jassen

The following is a summary prepared by the Assessing Learning Subcommittee:

“Beginning with the September Professional Day, the LOC (Learning Outcomes Committee) met once a month all through the academic year with solid results. These results were reported out to the Steering Committee, the Faculty, and the Professional Senate. Appropriate votes affirmed the LOC’s proposals and work.

The initial concerns involved clear, public, measurable outcomes of coursework; how and where those outcomes were stated; how those course outcomes related to the programs they fed; how those outcomes related to the General Education Outcomes for the College, the System, and NEASC. Creating and having acceptance of the General Education Outcomes for the College then became the prime focus. Next, the concerns centered on the actual syllabi/overviews with the infusion of the General Education Outcomes, a new format for the combined document, and its distribution to the students and administration. Finally, the concerns moved to learning outcomes as they appear in the College’s Common Core. This last concern is for the next academic year’s agenda.

The process evolved through combined efforts of a group of high achievers. They honestly wanted to examine where the learning process was on this campus and be certain that all constituencies knew what is required to support that learning. Most people attended the meetings and came prepared. The Co-chairs facilitated and set the schedule. Work moved rapidly and the faculty are almost finished with creating their new Syllabi/Overviews for the fall 2004.

LOC had one area that needed clarification and to date that has not been done. What are the program outcomes and do the outcomes listed on the syllabi clearly support those program outcomes? This is essential for the discussion that will kick off the major topic for the LOC in 2004-2005.”

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ASSESSING PROGRAMS

Members of the Assessing Programs subcommittee include:

Steven Frazier- Co-Chair
Clark Schroeder-Co-Chair
Valerie Royals
E. Thomas Dore
Mary Muller
Leona LeJeune
Sue Berg
Chuck Dmytriw
Greg Banks
Dave Rodgers
John Lewis
Sharon Gusky
Barry D'Onofrio
Kim Dragan
Janet Cosgrove
Dariel Connors
Pam Bellows

The committee met monthly throughout the academic year to establish a program review process. One of their first tasks was to establish an annual schedule so that each academic program and discipline is reviewed on a regular basis. This schedule as it currently stands follows: (insert schedule)

After the review schedule had been established, the committee turned its attention to the adoption of program and discipline review models. The committee chose to adopt the models approved by the community college system Board of Trustees. The committee recommends that implementation of the program review model begin in the Fall 2004 semester. In addition, the committee recommends that the models be examined periodically and updated as needed.

ASSESSING GOVERNANCE

The following is a summary prepared by the Assessing Governance Subcommittee:

“The Institutional Effectiveness Subcommittee on Governance began investigating the structure and operations of Northwestern’s governance system on November 20, 2003. The Subcommittee’s composition, selected by Dr. Jean Wihbey, Dean of Instructional Programs and Services, is as follows:

Paul Atkinson, Instructional Specialist for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students, Co-Chair
Margot Krimmel, Director of Personnel, Co-Chair
Todd Bryda, Instructor in History
Maureen Chalmers, CEDHH Communication Specialist
David Conrad, Technical Data Processing Assistant
Joan Delayo, Data Entry Operator
Andrea Dombrowski, Library Associate
Michael Gow, Assistant Professor in Computer Science
W. Gregory Hager, Professor in Sociology and Geography
William Hunt, Assistant Professor in English
Alison Jassen, Associate Professor in Chemistry
Debra Reynolds, Registrar
Melissa Slocumb, ASL/English Interpreter
Duc Tinh, Graphics Specialist
Jessica Treat, Associate Professor in Developmental English/English

The Subcommittee established the following process for attaining its overall goal of formulating recommendations pertaining to the evaluation of the governance system’s effectiveness to the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee:

1. Identify objectives for the assessment and evaluation phases of the project.
2. Identify major segments of the governance system and the constituent parts of each segment.
3. Identify specific types of data needed to be collected and develop survey questions to elicit such data.
4. Distribute surveys to governance unit leaders and collect data including flow charts diagramming the initiative-to-decision process with their units.
5. Develop a means to evaluate the effectiveness of each governance unit.
6. Formulate preliminary recommendations concerning the overall governance system, each major segment, and selected governance units within segments.
7. Prepare interim report including recommendations.
8. Revisit selected governance units for more complete data.
9. Revise recommendations and prepare final report.

Phase I

Items 1 – 3 above were largely completed during our first meeting on November 20, 2003. The Subcommittee initially identified ten major segments of the College’s governance system to be assessed and evaluated:

1. All-College Meeting (including committees reporting directly to the President)

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2. Extended Cabinet
3. Cabinet
4. Professional Senate and its standing Committees
5. Classified Staff
6. Regional Advisory Council
7. Academic Advisory Committees
8. Student Senate
9. Operational Management (Deans, Division Directors, Program Coordinators)
 - a) Administrative
 - b) Instructional Programs
 - c) Student Development and Information

10. Contract Committees

These segments were divided among the Subcommittee members so that surveys could be conducted in a manageable fashion. The first survey questions took the following form:

- 1) Summarize the charge to your unit (committee, division, etc.)
- 2) How do you know that you are doing what you are supposed to be doing?
- 3) What objectives and goals does your unit have?
- 4) Do you have meeting minutes to reference?
- 5) What is the status of this committee (or unit)? Active and functioning on a regular basis or dormant?
- 6) How do initiatives come to this unit?
- 7) How does this committee/unit deal with its charge in a timely manner?
- 8) How do the activities of this committee/unit support the overall mission of the College (i.e. providing quality higher education services to students in Northwestern Connecticut)?

Initial responses from governance unit leaders had yielded inadequate data in some areas. The Institutional Effectiveness Workshop on January 30, 2004 provided the Subcommittee with feedback on its survey questions which resulted in the following revisions and additions:

1. Summarize the [governance unit's (the specific name was inserted here)] mission or charge.
2. How do you measure the [governance unit's] level of effectiveness in fulfilling this mission? What factors and criteria are used in this evaluation?
3. What objectives or goals does the [governance unit] have?
4. Please attach copies of representative samples of the [governance unit's] agenda and meeting minutes. How extensive are the archives of meeting minutes and related records?
5. How often does the [governance unit] meet in an average academic year?

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6. How do initiatives come to the [governance unit]? How does the [governance unit] handle these initiatives?
7. How does the [governance unit] deal with its charge in a timely manner? What evidence to support this can be presented?
8. How do the activities of the [governance unit] support the overall mission of the College?
9. What evidence can be presented to demonstrate that the members of the [governance unit] understand their role in the overall governance process of the College?
10. What issues of effectiveness does the [governance unit] need to address?
11. What issues regarding certain [governance unit] operations should be brought to the attention of the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee?

These more open-ended questions were re-distributed to some governance unit leaders, and their responses yielded better results.

In addition, our third meeting resulted in the revision of our goal, objective and outcome statements:

Goal: To define the governance process of the College

Objective: To survey each committee/unit in the College's governance structure

Outcome: To come up with a measurement of effectiveness for each committee/unit.

Phase II

By the second meeting of the Subcommittee on January 29, 2004, only limited progress had been made in the data collection phase of the project (see below).

- 1) All-College Meeting (including committees reporting directly to the President) – none of the committees had yet been surveyed
- 2) Extended Cabinet – had not yet received its survey
- 3) Cabinet – had not yet received its survey
- 4) Professional Senate and its standing Committees – only 3 out of ten standing committees had completed surveys. The overall survey of the Senate had not yet been completed.
- 5) Classified Staff – had been completed
- 6) Regional Advisory Council – had not yet received its survey
- 7) Academic Advisory Committees – 5 out of 11 advisory committees were in the process of completing their surveys. One of the five had been returned for clarification.
- 8) Student Senate – had not yet received its survey

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- 9) Operational Management (Deans, Division Directors, Program Coordinators) – this area was incorporated into the survey of the Cabinet (#3 above)
 - a. Administrative
 - b. Instructional Programs
 - c. Student Development and Information
- 10) Contract Committees – had been completed

It was decided at this point that information derived from the survey questions would yield an adequate description of initiative-to-decision processes used by the various governance units. Thus, it was not necessary to ask unit leaders to include flowcharts of these processes.

By our fourth meeting on February 26th, substantial progress had been achieved in the data collection phase of the project. The following governance units that had previously reported no progress had at this point moved in some measure toward completion.

- 1) All-College Meeting (including committees reporting directly to the President) – Of the 13 standing committees, only 1 had been completed, 3 were in progress and 9 had not yet begun work on the survey. The overall survey of the All-College Meeting had been completed.
- 2) Extended Cabinet – completed
- 3) Cabinet – completed
- 4) Professional Senate and its standing Committees – Five out of nine standing committees had completed surveys and the rest were in progress. The overall survey of the Senate was completed.
- 5) Regional Advisory Council – An attempt had been made to transmit the survey form, but the President decided that it was unnecessary to include this unit in the assessment/evaluation process.
- 6) Academic Advisory Committees – Three out of nine advisory committees had completed their surveys, six were in progress, and three programs either did not have advisory committees or were defunct.
- 7) Student Senate – completed
- 8) Continuing Education does not have an advisory committee, but one of its programs, Holistic Studies, does. This group is planning to meet during the spring of 2004.

This phase of the project was ongoing at the time we entered into Phase III.

Phase III: Recommendations (The following are draft proposals)

This phase of the project includes items #6 - #9 of the process outlined on pages 1 and 2 of this report. It is ongoing.

- 1) A general governance unit evaluation instrument should be developed. With input from a body having the specific duty of evaluating institutional effectiveness, each governance unit should establish factors and criteria for its evaluation. As a primary data source for evaluation, each unit should annually submit a bulleted summary of its meeting minutes.

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- 1) Effectiveness evaluations should be completed by each governance unit on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- 2) Establish a feedback loop in the process of communication between governance units which would allow for input and timely response to issues.
- 3) Committees listed as “inactive” on our list should be carefully considered for elimination or reactivation.
- 4) A narrative description of the College’s governance system and its operation should be written. The description should include specific evidence supporting the system’s effectiveness.
- 5) The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee should review and address issues of effectiveness identified in the governance unit surveys.
- 6) While it is an essential venue for all staff to convene, in its present format, the All-College Meeting is only an instrument of information dissemination, not truly a part of the governance system of the College. Decision-making procedures for certain committees designated as “All-College Committees” should be reorganized so that they report to the Classified Staff and/or the Professional Senate as befit their roles, functions, and responsibilities. Other committees in this category should report directly to the President.
- 7) The number of members on many units is excessive and should be reduced. Each governance unit chair should be asked to recommend membership composition in proportion to the amount of work that unit is expected to accomplish within a given timeframe and the diversity of opinion realistically needed to reach well-considered decisions.”

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ASSESSING STUDENT LIFE

The following is a summary prepared by the Assessing Student Life Subcommittee:

“At the September 26, 2003 Professional Day, the Student Life Subcommittee was formed with the following members:

Co-Chairs: Dr. Katherine Kinane and Linda Dew
Grantley Adams, Job Ayantola, Sarah Bement-O’Brien, Sue Berg, Lou Bristol Michele Better, Barry D’Onofrio, Diane Hagymasi, Eric Hardenberg, Arlene Harris, Sheryl Keeley, Mark Myers, Anna Maria Rinaldi, Mary Winar

Subsequently, Barry D’Onofrio moved to another subcommittee and Sue Berg, Kathy Chapman and Gregory Waschak joined this group

At the September 26 meeting, the committee developed three (3) questions. At a later date, with a better understanding of the Institutional Effectiveness structure, a fourth question was added.

The Subcommittee divided into the following subgroups to address each question.

Question 1. Do Students get the support and information they need to achieve their goals? Subgroup members: Lou Bristol, Michelle Better, Kathy Kinane

Question 2. Do we know what prevents their success—what are the obstacles outside class?

Subgroup members: Job Ayantola, Sara Bement-O’Brien, Diane Hagymasi

Question 3. Do students participate in activities outside the classroom?

Subgroup members: Linda Dew, Sheryl Keeley, Mary Winar

Question 4. What are the mission and goals of the following services? Are they being met?

Subgroup members: Grantley Adams, Eric Hardenberg, Arlene Harris, Mark Myers

Subgroups met separately several times, the subcommittee met as a whole on the following dates: November 5, November 24, 2003, February 17, and March 2, 2004.

Following our charge to identify the Data required, initial sources of data and goal/action steps to address the three (3) questions, the committee developed the attached chart (see *appendix*). Question 4 came under a different format. Responses to three (3) questions asked of the 16 Student Services department are attached.

Co-Chairs Kinane and Dew presented a progress report to the Steering Committee on December 3, 2003.

At the January 30, 2004 Professional Day, Co-Chairs Kinane and Dew share the Student Life Subcommittee progress via a PowerPoint presentation. At this meeting, the subcommittee developed goal/objective, outcome statements as charged and has completed the goal/objective portion of that statement.

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The next steps for the college's Institutional Effectiveness effort is to take the information gathered by this subcommittee and develop a comprehensive plan to assess Student Life.

Please find all supporting data attached as well as a copy of the PowerPoint presentation of January 30, 2004."

STEERING COMMITTEE

As the above summaries indicate, each of the four subcommittees has worked diligently over the course of the 2003-04 academic year to address the questions of institutional effectiveness, and a great deal of progress has been made. Some of the subcommittees have concluded this phase of their work, others are still in progress but have a clear sense of the next steps to be taken.

After review of the work of each of the four subcommittees, the Steering Committee recommends that AACC's Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges (see below) be utilized as a starting point in the development of a set of effectiveness indicators specific to Northwestern. Due to similarities in community college missions, the Steering Committee believes that many of the AACC indicators will be appropriate for our college. However, we also recognize that there may be a need to add some measures, to delete others, or otherwise modify this list to best reflect our particular institution. Therefore, the Committee recommends that IE activities in the 2004-05 academic year begin with a focus on the review and modification of this list. Specifically, we suggest that the September 2004 Professional Day be devoted to this task. After we have developed a set of indicators appropriate to Northwestern, we can turn our attention to the next steps, which include the identification of measures, collection of data to support the measures, and ultimately the use of these data to shape our strategic plan.

CORE INDICATORS OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

In 1999, the American Association of Community Colleges published a update to its earlier document on how to define and measure institutional effectiveness in the community college. This document defines a core indicator as "a measure that describes a critical, widely recognized outcome of mission—one that is clearly responsive to key constituent groups and is produced regularly."

The AACC code indicators are organized around six mission categories. These six categories—student progress, workforce development, general education, transfer preparation, developmental skills, and outreach—are common components of many community college missions.

Within each of the six mission categories, the AACC model proposes 1-4 core indicators as follows:

Student Progress:

Core Indicator 1: Student Goal Attainment

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Core Indicator 2: Persistence (Fall to Fall)
Core Indicator 3: Degree Completion Rates

Workforce Development

Core Indicator 4: Placement Rate in the Workforce
Core Indicator 5: Employer Assessment of Students
Core Indicator 6: Licensure/Certification Pass Rates
Core Indicator 7: Client Assessment of Programs and Services

General Education

Core Indicator 8: Demonstration of Critical Literacy Skills
Core Indicator 9: Demonstration of Citizenship Skills

Transfer Preparation:

Core Indicator 10: Number and Rate Who Transfer
Core Indicator 11: Performance After Transfer

Developmental Skills

Core Indicator 12: Success in Subsequent Related Coursework

Outreach

Core Indicator 13: Participation Rate in Service Area
Core Indicator 14: Responsiveness to Community Needs

While a number of the indicators noted above can be measured through existing, readily accessible data sources, other indicators will be more difficult to measure. Although data will not be immediately available for each and every indicator, the Steering Committee is recommending that all appropriate indicators be included on the list, and that the College set as a goal the development of attainable data sources which support these indicators.