

CRITERION THREE –

*The institution is accomplishing
its educational and other purposes.*

CHAPTER 11 –

Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

During the last five years, the College has committed substantial resources, time, and energy to the development of a coordinated effort of institution-wide assessment. While most departments and programs have developed a variety of methods to evaluate their progress and success, prior to 1997 the College did not approach institutional assessment in a coordinated manner. With the establishment and staffing of the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office (IRE) in 1997, the College made a firm commitment to assessing performance, institution-wide, in the context of how well it is fulfilling its mission. Over time, the ability to evaluate a variety of indicators of success will prove beneficial to more effective and informed decision-making and governance processes at SCC.

Currently, institutional assessment at SCC is an evolving process designed to create a culture of evidence and performance using a range of indicators and techniques. It includes learning outcomes assessment, student tracking, performance indicators, surveys, internal and external services assessment, and various management reports and tools. The academic learning outcomes assessment program has already produced results that have been useful to the departments and faculty responsible for general education and career-technical education as discussed in Chapter 10, and the *Assessment Manual* available in the Resource Room. This chapter will focus specifically on the broader institutional assessment initiatives underway at SCC.

STUDENT TRACKING/ASSESSMENT COMPUTERIZED SYSTEM (STACS)

In fall 1999, the Cabinet approved the plan of the IRE to implement a student-tracking database, titled the Student Tracking/Assessment Computerized System (STACS). According to the plan, IRE would implement STACS for the benefit of the whole college community. When fully implemented, STACS will allow IRE to create a wide variety of student data sets from eclectic data sources for the purpose of producing management reports, research studies, and statistical data. IRE will be able to create student data sets for its internal needs and have the capability of producing additional student data sets for different need-to-know stakeholders at the College.

STACS was built with four design criteria:

1. to capture student data longitudinally
2. to store student data for key process and performance indicators
3. to provide links to different student data sets using a common identifier (i.e., social security number or college identification number)
4. to employ programming software to create ad-hoc student cohort data sets by linking disparate data sets in the database

The first step in building STACS was to create a term/demographic student file from the College's administrative computer system. With five years of data pulled from the system, some of the key student data elements included: grade point average, credit hours attempted and completed, gender, ethnicity, age, high school, developmental courses, graduation status, student intent, and program declarations. After this first step, IRE began adding a variety of smaller student data sets to the database architecture. Currently, the following student data sets are a part of the STACS system:

1. *Student Opinion Survey* data (collected each semester since spring, 2000)
2. special student population data sets (e.g., dual-enrolled high school students, A+ program students in developmental courses)
3. general education rubric scores

Additional special student data sets will be added later (e.g., ACE Center student data and data results from past 180-day surveys of career-technical students who have graduated.)

Finally, efforts to capture student data from extraneous data sets (data on SCC students that have been collected by other institutions) will be attempted in 2002. Two of these potential data sets include: transfer data about SCC students from the CBHE Enhanced Missouri Student Achievement Study (EMSAS) database, and income/wage data about former SCC students from the Missouri Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance database. Because these files will contain student unit data elements identified by student social security number, it will be possible to integrate these data fully into the STACS system. However, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) concerns about student confidentiality must first be resolved before outside institutions will share their data with SCC.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (PI)

Working from the Core Indicators published by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), IRE was requested to initiate a campus dialogue to help create a set of core performance indicators for the College. According to the AACC report, institutional effectiveness will match stakeholder needs to the College mission and results. A set of core performance indicators should reflect the important functions of a community college in terms of how it satisfies external mandates and pressing constituent needs. Such measures can increase, from a public policy perspective, public understanding and trust of the College organizational purpose. Finally, a sincere effort to measure and improve an internally derived set of performance indicators will tend to focus attention of external decision-making groups toward those educational goals that are appropriate and substantive for the College.

The AACC report identified a critical set of core performance indicators that typically describe the major mission tasks that a community college accomplishes when it is considered an effective institution. The IRE's objective was to facilitate a campus-wide discussion about how operationally to define these core performance indicators. To accomplish this objective, the IRE has been meeting with Academic Affairs, Student Services, and other key internal stakeholder groups to formulate the operational definitions. This process is now half completed.

IRE has recommended that the College community develop indicators in the following core mission areas: student progress, career preparation, student support, student transfer, developmental education, and general education. The following list indicates which performance indicators have already been operationally defined, are currently being conceptualized, or will be defined at a later date, and the respective core mission area they relate to in parentheses.

Those performance indicators that have already been operationally defined include:

- Student satisfaction with student support services (**student support**)
- Student satisfaction with academic affairs (**student support**)
- Student satisfaction with auxiliary services (**student support**)
- Academic program pass rates (**career preparation**)
- Degree completion rates for first-time, full-time students (**student progress**)
- Degree completion rates for first-time, part-time students (**student progress**)

Those performance indicators and their respective core mission areas that are currently being conceptualized for future measurement include:

- Workforce placement rates (**career preparation**)
- Persistence rates of first-time, full-time fall freshmen students (**student progress**)
- Persistence rates of students at-risk (**student progress**)
- Developmental math success (**developmental education**)
- Developmental English success (**developmental education**)

Performance indicators and their respective core mission areas still to be developed include:

- Perceived student general educational skill attainment (**general education**)
- Perceived learning gains (**general education**)
- Student transfer rates (**student transfer**)
- Student transfer success (**student transfer**)
- Wage/income advancement (**career preparation**)

When completed, 16 key performance indicators will be operationally defined. As each performance indicator comes on line, it will be published in the College's annual fact book and on the IRE's future web page. When enough data points have been collected over time, PI benchmark levels will be established that will document areas of SCC's effectiveness. These data will provide valuable information for institutional change, specifically, in those situations where a performance indicator proves to be negative over time. Because most performance indicators will be collected at the student unit level through the STACS, IRE will be able to identify student populations and key

variables that account for below-average performance levels. This information will help to inform the decision-making process relative to reversing any negative trend of these performance indicators.

COUNSELING FOR HIGH SKILLS SURVEY

SCC has participated in the ACT Counseling for High Skills project since its inception. Postsecondary students in career-technical programs answer questions concerning how they decided to enroll in the program, how they made their career choices, how they are paying for their education, housing, perceptions of the institution, equipment, and the instructional staff. Former students are asked to participate in a follow-up survey about six months after completing their program. The primary outcome is that ACT compiles the data, and school counselor resources/materials are developed for use with students in facilitating student career decision making. The surveys do provide some additional useful information about SCC's student demographics and perceptions. For example, 88.2% of the students felt there was adequate or strong support at SCC for a male or female student in a field where most students were of the opposite gender.

FACULTY SURVEY

The College participated in the *UCLA HERI Faculty Survey* in 1998-99. The survey was designed to provide colleges with information about the attitudes, experiences, concerns, job satisfaction, workload, teaching practices, and professional activities of faculty and academic administrators. Survey responses of faculty and academic administrators and national normative data for comparison purposes were provided to the College.

The most practical results from the survey were the responses received from the add-on questions relating to the use of technology and distance learning courses at SCC. This information was used to review and expand the offering of tele/video, Internet, and interactive TV courses. The study helped academic administrators understand more accurately the attitudes of faculty. The College is participating in a second *HERI Faculty Survey* during fall 2001 to see how faculty attitudes have changed since the last survey was administered.

EMPLOYEE CLIMATE SURVEY

During fall 2000, a comprehensive, campus-wide survey of employee satisfaction was administered. A total of 278 employees responded to this survey, which covered a wide array of issues rating elements that included the following: satisfaction with job position, supervisors, deans, and administrators; relations with colleagues and coworkers; satisfaction with institutional practices, physical facilities, services, and employee benefits.

In general, College employees are satisfied "overall" with their jobs. The full-time faculty was the least satisfied on the broad range of questions having to do with job satisfaction in comparison with other employee categories. The dissatisfaction seems to focus on compensation and communication.

Ratings for supervisors, deans and administrators indicated very favorable responses and a high satisfaction with immediate supervisory personnel. While staff, professional-technical and administrators have largely favorable views, the full-time faculty expressed the most unfavorable views on question of administration decision-making and communication.

Working relations among the various employee categories indicated a strong sense of mutual respect, cooperation, and accomplishment. Strongly positive responses are given to the statements, “We work well with each other,” and “We accomplish our work.” However, the one area of concern all employees seemed to share was a need for improvement in the area of “communication among all employees at the College.”

Further strong positive responses are given campus-wide to items about the College as a good place to work and as a place that is respected by the community. Also, items under the heading of “Campus Services” ranging from the Library and ACE Center services to the cafeteria and campus safety were given strong approval.

Under the heading of Human Resource Practices, such topics as orientation of new employees, performance evaluation processes, and the recruitment and selection process were evaluated. Responses to these questions indicated that the grievance procedure and the position classification system were areas of concern. Most satisfactory was the response given to the orientation of new employees.

The Employee Survey was developed for the purpose of this self-study and the results provide some valuable insights into employee attitudes about the College. The specific areas of dissatisfaction among various employee groups represent issues that require further discussion and analysis as part of the College’s attempt to improve the services offered to both external and internal constituencies. These results will help to provide direction to the departments, committees, and task forces responsible for resolving issues relative to employee satisfaction at SCC. The goal of improving communication at all levels of the institution remains a high priority as it has been consistently reflected in the annual strategic priorities developed through the planning process.

HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

During spring 1999, IRE conducted a survey of juniors and seniors in area high schools. The survey was administered at the request of the Vice-President for Instruction and was used to determine the need for future expansion of career-technical programs. Summaries of the survey were mailed to high schools that participated in the survey.

The survey provided the College with student demographic information, educational plans after high school, reasons for continuing education after high school, and factors that were important in selecting a college. The survey gave valuable information to the College about the special help students would be requesting in areas of writing, reading comprehension, study skills, computer skills, math, and test taking.

RTEC PROGRAM ANALYSIS

In fall 2001, the Dean of Regional Technical Education completed an analysis of the Regional Technical Education Council (RTEC) program from its inception in 1997 through 2001. Through an analysis of survey results, enrollment, and budget data, the study assessed the effectiveness of the RTEC program, identified some positive outcomes, as well as issues that remain to be resolved. The primary recommendation coming out of this study was that the College would be better served by consolidating the three current distance sites into one, centrally located site that would more efficiently and effectively serve the needs of students in the expanded service area. Further discussion is needed in order to determine the potential ramifications of this recommendation. The complete RTEC report is available in the Resource Room. (See Exhibit A.)

MANAGEMENT REPORTS, TOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES

In an effort to measure the effectiveness of operations and to provide an information base for decision making, certain management reports, tools, and techniques are being used by the three vice-presidents. A brief listing and explanation of those reports, tools and techniques by area is presented below.

Financial Resources:

A management report of the general operating budget expenditures is provided to the Board of Trustees at the monthly meetings. This report focuses on trends that may be developing in expenditure patterns so corrective action can be taken in a timely manner, if needed.

The Vice-President for Administrative Services monitors revenue trends and reports various changes to the major sources of revenues the College receives. Department administrators can access financial expenditure data from their desktop computers at any time through the financial system.

The notice of a public hearing is published annually prior to the meeting where the Board of Trustees sets the local tax levies, as required by statute. Interested taxpayers may express concern about the levies being established by the Board at this meeting.

Reports of the financial condition of the College are prepared annually for CBHE. These reports show actual revenue and expenditure data for the previous fiscal year, the current fiscal year, and a projection for the next fiscal year.

The annual audit of College activities is conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm and reports are given to the Board. Copies of the audit are distributed to interested parties, including bondholders, bond rating agencies, grant and contract funding sources, and the College's financial advisor.

An inventory of all College assets is maintained by the Purchasing Department. College departments are responsible for their property and are asked to verify the inventory annually. An equipment acquisition and disposal policy helps keep the inventory up to date.

Academic Affairs:

The Academic Affairs Division produces a series of reports for use by the Vice-President, deans, chairs, and program coordinators that assist with making informed decisions about the effective use of available resources. What follows are descriptions of some of these reports, with copies of the actual reports available in the resource room.

- *Program Evaluation Data Forms* (annually). All program/discipline areas are provided with data forms showing a running five-year picture of Curriculum History (the total student credit hours generated annually for every course offered and the number of weekday and other [evening, weekend, and distance learning] sections run in the Fall and Spring semesters each year).
- *Percentage of Total Student Credit Hours Taught*. This report presents the percentage of total student credit hours taught by full and part-time faculty annually.
- *Enrollment Trends*. All programs receive data on the total student credit hours taught and the number of course sections run for the Fall semester and the entire academic year along with average class size based on all course sections taught. For career-technical programs, this report provides the number of declared majors by option in the Fall semester of each year and the summary results of the 180-day placement survey compared to the state result.
- *Financial Resources* (General budget information for program cost centers indicating specific expenditure details.) For career-technical programs, charts showing five-year trends in Fall semester headcount and major and academic year graduates are also provided.
- *Average Class-Size Reports* (every semester). The first version compares average class size by discipline to SCC's overall average. This report is based on global enrollments in primary sections with a scheduled capacity greater than or equal to 17, excluding telecourses. Figures do not include independent studies, clinicals/practicums, private music lessons, nursing labs, or sections where room availability required an unusually low schedule capacity. The second version compares the same information to what Academic Affairs has defined as normal capacity for that discipline and type of course (labs, lectures, studios, remedial/institutional).
- *Student Performance by Discipline* (every semester). This report shows the pass rate, withdrawal rate, and for disciplines with remedial courses, the repeat rate defined as the percentage of R (Repeat) grades given.
- *Student Success Report* (annually). This report presents the student success rate by discipline for the last three fall semesters.
- *Non-instructional Assignment (NIA) Faculty Assignment Report by Faculty name and by NIA* (every semester). This report is used to show all faculty mem-

bers with NIAs listed alphabetically, title of their assignment, and their faculty load. It also shows total faculty load for all NIAs.

- *Part-Time Faculty Pay List* (every semester). This report lists the individual part-time faculty loads and salaries in addition to total load and cost for a semester.
- *Space Utilization Summary* (quarterly). This summary examines the average utilization rates by classroom for three time periods: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday.
- *Low Enrollment Courses Report* (every semester). This report lists primary sections by discipline that had a global census count enrollment fewer than 10. Figures do not include private music lessons, independent studies, clinicals/practicums, nursing labs, or courses taught through the ACE Center. What remain are courses that could have enrolled more students, did not, and were run based on reasons other than enrollment.
- *Full-Time Faculty Extra Pay Contracts List* (every semester). This report lists individual full-time faculty overload and pay and gives total overload and cost for a semester.

Although many of these management reports are relatively new, the vice-president, deans, department chairs, and program coordinators have used them effectively to make decisions about average class size, decreasing the number of low-enrollment courses, and canceling classes. In response to the student success reports, some disciplines have begun to examine why their success rates are below average. The space utilization report has led to better scheduling of facilities, equipment maintenance, and increased communication between different areas of the College about usage issues.

Student Services:

A number of management reports are utilized by the Vice-President to monitor the progress and effectiveness of student services operations. A list of these reports follows:

- *Payment Extension Report by Term* – tracks the number of students by term who were given payment extensions and the percentage of payment collected.
- *Assessment Center Services Report by Term* – tracks services by type and usage.
- *Make-Up Testing Report by Term* – monitors the extent to which faculty are using the Assessment Center for make-up tests.
- *COMPASS Assessment Report by Term* – reports on placement scores by category.
- *Student Loan Default Rate Report by Year* – monitors the percentage of SCC students who default on their student loans.

- *Registration at the Point of Advisement Report* – provides vital information about the effectiveness of counselors registering students.
- *180-Day Placement Report* – reports important information about career-technical graduates.
- *Student Development Activity Summary by Month* – monitors the frequency of appointments, phone advising, no shows, walk-in, SIGI tests, and e-mail advising, which enables staff to anticipate and plan for high peak usage periods.
- *Summary of New Student Phone Calls* – reports frequency of calls made by new students by day, month, and year to determine peak periods of usage, and predict enrollment.
- *Summary of Information Desk Phone Calls (day and evening) by Month* – monitors types of calls that come to the College.
- *Gender Equity in Athletics Report* – evaluates how effectively the College is maintaining gender equity in its athletic programs. Adjustments are made accordingly to maintain the required balance.
- *A+ Schools Scholarship Report* – lists students who are in the A + program by name, high school, and grade point average.
- *Returning Learners Workshop Report* – evaluates the success of this outreach program to returning learners.

Institutional Research & Effectiveness:

- *Census Report*–This report is prepared in the summer, fall and spring terms each year. Fall and spring are reported on the 20th day of class; summer is reported on the 10th day of class. Each report contains a one-page comparison of the current term with the previous year’s term for the same period. The report provides a variety of demographic and program evaluation data on students registered during the current term.
- *Fact Book*–Since fall 1999, the College fact book, *The Cougar Count*, has been published annually. Data is compiled from several sources such as the CBHE Statistical Summary, STACS, IPEDS, Ceridian, and the *Student Opinion Survey*. This data represents general information about the College, admissions, student body, outcomes, and financial information used to inform the annual planning process and daily operational decision-making. The book is made available to all areas of the College as well as to the St. Charles County Economic Development Center.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER (CDC) ASSESSMENT

The Child Development Center evaluates its effectiveness in several ways. Surveys are conducted to determine customer satisfaction with services. The *Student Survey* conducted in the past few years indicated that students were satisfied with the scope of service being provided by the Center. Families of those enrolled in the Center are asked to complete a questionnaire each year. On a scale of one to five, five being the most satisfied, parents rated the Center between 4.26 and 5.0 for the past three years. Copies of these surveys are available in the CDC.

Professionally, the CDC is evaluated by peer review through the Missouri Voluntary Accreditation process. The CDC was accredited in 1997 and is awaiting a second review in 2001. The CDC is licensed by the Missouri Division of Family and Child Care Bureau.

In addition to the above assessment procedures, the CDC documents additional services students may need, such as flex-care for students. The Center reaches out to the community through the Director's Network, conducts professional workshops for area childcare providers, and CDC staff serve on area committees related to early childhood education. Feedback from these activities is carefully considered and used in improving the services offered by the Center.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT

The Marketing and Communications Department implemented several mechanisms to measure the success of its publications, advertising, media relations, publicity, community relations, and other internal and external communications products and processes. These processes have been enhanced by working with IRE on marketing-related questions for the fall 2001 *Student Opinion Survey* to help determine effectiveness of the College's information/communications efforts. In addition, a marketing and recruitment subcommittee was formed in 2001 to gain input from a broad range of College faculty, administrators, and staff on operations and expectations of the marketing function. This subcommittee has met a number of times and is in the process of putting together a college-wide, integrated marketing plan.

One challenge was to make some of the college's basic publications and the Web site more user-friendly and student-centered. To this end, the *Catalog* was reorganized to place emphasis on services to students in the beginning sections of the publication, including a new "at-a-glance" section. Various sections were combined and edited for brevity and clarity. In addition, the entire 1,000-page Web site was redesigned during 2000-01, involving user testing and interviews of students, faculty, and staff. The results were an award-winning catalog and Web site.

Another challenge was to handle an ever-increasing demand for all manner of publications, signage, graphics, publicity, advertising, and other internal and external communications as the College continues to grow. A communications specialist position (2000) and a web specialist position (1999) were added, with a resulting 13 percent increase in the department's productivity—861 marketing & communications jobs completed—in the year 2000 and a 21 percent increase in the first six months of 2001. The Marketing and Communications Department has developed a database tracking system to follow all projects from initial request through completion. (See Marketing & Communications Job Inventory documents in Reference Room—Exhibit B.)

The following are further examples of success indicators and assessment tools used in connection with Marketing and Communications services:

- The department monitors enrollment trends and adjusts its student recruitment advertising and promotional activities accordingly. Enrollment increased by 11% headcount and 13.8% FTE in fall 2001 (from fall 2000) in part due to a successful television, radio and print advertising campaign.
- Media response. The department tracks the news releases that run in area newspapers, representing free publicity for the College. In the first six months of 2001, there were 837 news articles about SCC. In July 2001, the department began counting the total number of inches of newsprint represented in the news clips, and the College is averaging about 750 inches of news coverage per month.
- Web site response. The number of visits to the Web site continues to increase, indicating that the Web site has become an important part of the mix as an informational and communications tool.
- Community on campus. The department assists in promoting an increasing number of events on campus. Attendance at these events has grown over the past five years, as publicity and publications continue to enhance public awareness.
- Recognition/awards from marketing professionals. SCC is a member of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, which conducts regional and national competitions every year for member colleges. SCC has won more than 75 national and regional awards for its publications, media relations, advertising, special events, logos/graphics, and other marketing functions.
- Surveys and focus groups. The Marketing department coordinates with the IRE office whenever possible — such as with high school surveys, SCC student surveys, and focus groups — to seek input and feedback on marketing and communications strategies. One goal for the future is to use the College's institutional research resources to conduct market surveys to determine community awareness levels, assess competition, and continue to focus on image-building issues.

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (C&CD) ASSESSMENT

Corporate and Community Development evaluates the success of its programs in various ways. A standard end-of-class course evaluation and feedback questionnaire is administered to all students in Business and Industry courses and as well as in all continuing education courses. The form asks students to evaluate the instructor, course materials, usefulness of course information, facilities, and the registration process. Students are asked to make comments for course improvement and to suggest other courses they would like to see offered in the future. This survey instrument has served the division well for a number of years and is now being adapted to a new format that will accommodate optical scanning.

The Continuing Education Department uses specialized questionnaires specifically designed to evaluate targeted audiences, e.g., Elderhostel participants. A specialized questionnaire is mailed to

ACT Prep Course students four weeks after they have taken the ACT test. Students are asked to report their actual ACT score and if they believe that the ACT Prep Course was instrumental in their results on the ACT test.

Focus groups were established with seniors to discuss what services they needed from the College. Emerging from those focus group meetings was the establishment of a Senior Citizen Advisory Council that now meets monthly to design programs to meet their needs. Input via phone calls and letters from community residents have resulted in the development of sports and dance camps for children, senior tap dancing classes, divorce seminars, and four levels of sign language classes.

In cooperation with area chambers of commerce, the B&I department sponsors an annual career fair for middle school students. More than 3,800 middle school students come to the college to participate. Local schools have their own evaluation forms requesting feedback and input from students. The College gives an evaluation form to all employers who participate asking for their suggestions for improvement. These forms are reviewed by the Chamber Education Committee and necessary changes to the format are made for the following year.

B&I mails a postcard questionnaire to all businesses and industries that have taken courses offered by B&I. The card is a brief but successful method for receiving feedback on the effectiveness of courses offered and for securing suggestions for additional courses in the future.

BOOKSTORE SERVICES ASSESSMENT

The Bookstore uses a variety of techniques to evaluate the success of its service. It recently cooperated with St. Louis Community College in distributing a survey to compare book prices. The results of this survey demonstrated that SCC prices were in line with the St. Louis system.

Although a suggestion box is available for students to provide feedback to the bookstore and to make suggestions for improvements, students tend to favor verbal feedback. This has resulted in significant changes relating to book buy-back procedures. With pre-approval from the Bookstore, students may now keep their books to study for final exams and return them for sale afterwards. Verbal feedback from students was also instrumental in getting books bought on-line to be shipped to distance sites.

The Bookstore frequently donates items such as mugs, pencils, folders, and shirts to high schools and other entities. Frequently, written responses are received as to the effectiveness of this service.

The Bookstore has created a management spread sheet that records the number of students served on-line. Current reports are compared to previous reports to determine the effectiveness of the service.

Within the next year, the Bookstore plans to administer a survey in cooperation with the National Association of College Stores (NACS). The results of this survey will be valuable in assessing the level of satisfaction with current services and in determining new services perceived to be needed by students.

COLLEGE FAIR ASSESSMENT

For the past 11 years, the College has hosted a College Fair in October. This year the fair was held in the new College Center on campus, with 102 colleges, universities, and organizations participating and more than 1,200 students and parents in attendance. Students and college representatives are asked each year to evaluate the effectiveness of the College Fair. Overwhelmingly positive comments are consistently received. As an indication of its success, all area high schools have discontinued their own college fairs and participate in the SCC fair. The fair is an important service to the community and the College has elected to continue the service because of the positive evaluations. Input from the participants enables the College to improve the fair each year.

CONCLUSION:

The College has begun to implement several pieces of the institutional assessment and effectiveness process. Various tools are being used to obtain data that provide quantifiable measures of performance. The STACS database has established a firm foundation by which to address assessment measures and performance indicators.

The learning outcomes assessment program will continue to provide valuable results for departments and faculty, as the College makes the transition to the new statewide general education model. (See Chapter 10.) Complete implementation of the performance indicator approach to broader college-wide assessment, along with the collection of sufficient longitudinal data over the next few years, should prove beneficial in the coordinated effort to measure performance across-the-board in the context of the College's mission, vision and values. Although these are first steps in addressing the larger issues of institutional assessment and effectiveness, the College remains committed to effective evaluation of its programs and services.

STRENGTHS:

- Establishment of the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office in 1997.
- Development of the STACS database.
- Approval and development of a specific program of assessing a series of Performance Indicators over time.
- Centralized coordination and administration of the data gathering and reporting functions for all College research functions.
- Effective use of current and evolving assessment measures to continually improve the College's service to students and the community.
- Revised and redesigned management reports that inform the day-to-day and long-range operations of the College.
- Annual publication of the College fact book, the *Cougar Count*.

CHALLENGES

- Full implementation of the college-wide assessment program using the STACS database and defined performance indicators in the next 2-3 years.
- Better communication with specific programs about the results of currently administered assessment tools.
- Development of a more complete understanding of how the College's performance indicators can be used effectively in decision-making processes.
- Full integration of assessment into the normal operation of all programs and departments at the College.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- Complete the development of the performance indicator based assessment program currently underway.
- Provide college-wide and departmental-level inservice opportunities on effective use of institutional assessment.
- Work to incorporate institutional assessment as a concept and practice into all functions of the College.
- Use institutional assessment to facilitate positive discussion and change for internal and external constituencies of the College.