

CHAPTER 16 —

Conclusions

CHAPTER 16 – *Conclusions*

The self-study process was an invitation to the college community for institutional retrospection and introspection, as well as for consideration of a collective vision for the coming decade. The gathering of information, drafting of reports, revision, and editing of this text has been truly collaborative, and it is with sincere hope for its utility to the College, as well as to the North Central team of consultant evaluators, that this document is submitted for consideration. The early years of the College have been characterized by phenomenal growth, and all projections point to the continuation of this trend in the coming decade. The steering committee of this self-study project believes that the reflective work represented in this report will expand and continue in coming years, engaging every campus employee.

These final pages include a summary, organized by criterion, of conclusions. Continuing the pattern of previous chapters, the report concludes with a summary of the strengths and challenges of St. Charles Community College as they have been identified and the recommendations for improvement.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. CRITERION ONE - MISSION AND PURPOSES

The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

The College has purposes consistent with its mission statement and said purposes are indeed appropriate for an institution of higher education. Within the context of strategic planning and its continued evolution, the College will remain abreast of changing needs and challenges, reviewing and revising its mission and purposes as required.

2. CRITERION TWO - HUMAN, FINANCIAL, AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

The College has effectively organized the necessary human, financial, and physical resources to fulfill its purposes. Organizational structures that accommodate prudent decision-making, communication, and administration are in place. Human, financial, and physical resources adequate for the delivery of programs and services are distributed in accord with the values held by institutions of higher education.

3. CRITERION THREE - EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes

The College is accomplishing its educational and other purposes as evidenced by multi-level assessment and continued growth in strong transfer and career-technical programs.

All college community members including students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to participate fully in both learning and teaching, endeavors that are inextricably linked. General Education requirements are being reconsidered and rewritten in accordance with state-mandated changes. These revisions and other curriculum reviews are informed by assessment.

4. CRITERION FOUR - INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

The internal governance structure, together with an evolving strategic planning process, function within the context of the College's mission, and allow for anticipated growth and change, including expansion and increased enrollment. An evolving climate of assessment, including College-wide performance indicators, encourages institutional responsiveness on every level.

5. CRITERION FIVE - INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

The College demonstrates integrity in its policies, practices, and procedures. Sensitivity to cultural diversity is evidenced in college programs and policies as the demographics of the community continue to change. The College works diligently to maintain strong connections with the internal and external community, as reflected in the partnerships that exist with both credit and non-credit programs.

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES BEING ADDRESSED, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The steering committee, together with members of subcommittees for the self-study, identified the following strengths and challenges and made recommendations for improvement. While celebrating its strengths and responding to challenges, the College remains mindful of these recommendations.

STRENGTHS

1. Criterion One - Mission and Purposes

The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

The mission of the College is consistent with its stated values. Changes in the mission statement reflect the multi-faceted growth of the institution. The process for developing strategic priorities of the institution allows for participation by faculty and staff at all levels. Institutional strategic priorities provide clear direction for all functions of the College and are appropriate to an institution of higher education.

2. Criterion Two—Human, Financial, and Physical Resources

The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Human Resources:

An evolving system of internal governance facilitates decision-making, the accomplishment of purposes, and communication. Academic restructuring affords the opportunity for improved efficiency. In spite of tensions, there is an abiding spirit of cooperation among employee groups for accomplishing goals and providing services. Efforts to foster improved communication continue. Following a two-year period during which faculty worked without an agreement on salary, benefits, and working conditions, the Faculty Association and administration were able to reach an agreement in May of 2001. The Board of Trustees is committed to the mission and vision of the College, exercising appropriate leadership while remaining accountable to constituents. Faculty, staff, and administrators have appropriate credentials and experience to meet the needs of the College. Professional development programs provide opportunities for growth.

Fiscal Resources:

The College is conservative and responsible in the management of its financial resources. The College has consistently received an unqualified audit opinion on its financial growth. Prudent management of funds has allowed for rebuilding of the technology infrastructure and the completion of two new construction phases. A growing Foundation, with strong community support, provides alternative financing for programs. State lobbying efforts have resulted in some increased funding, even in the face of current economic restraints.

Physical Resources:

The College has accomplished the completion of three major building phases in response to increased enrollment. The campus physical plant is adequate for accommodating current levels of enrollment, is only between one and ten years old, and is in remarkably good repair. Funding for maintenance and repair projects has been identified as a state priority. There is adequate acreage for expansion. Open green space has been preserved, and a conceptual master plan has been developed for discussion.

3. Criterion Three - Educational Purposes

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

The College has a strong, well-prepared faculty focused on teaching and learning. There is continued emphasis on and commitment to excellence in the general education core, and in all career-technical programs, with ongoing embedded assessment activities. A quality program of developmental studies enables students to be successful. A strong learning support system is in place. There is a growing commitment to infusing global studies into the curriculum, and an expanding program of student-centered activities enriches student learning.

4. Criterion Four - Institutional Effectiveness

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its institutional effectiveness.

The creation of the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office has been a positive step in implementing needed research measures and in coordinating the college-wide assessment program. The integration of strategic planning and internal governance is becoming increasingly significant in College decision-making and resource allocation. The Strategic Plan provides a foundation for long-range and short-range planning and resource allocation. Assessment on a variety of levels encourages institutional responsiveness and improvement. Planning is now specifically related to the College's mission, vision and values, and the current planning model connects with research, staffing, and budgeting.

5. Criterion Five - Institutional Integrity

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

The College's practices and relationships are characterized by integrity. The college community persists in its pursuit of communication with trust and respect. The *Memorandum of Understanding* with faculty includes a detailed grievance procedure. Procedures for dispute resolution have been developed and are accessible. There is a strong commitment to increasing ethnic sensitivity and global awareness within and beyond the classroom. The College continues to work in partnership with the community to expand outreach activities throughout the service area.

CHALLENGES

1. Criterion One - Mission and Purposes

The institution has clearly and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

While the purposes and mission of the College are clear and consistent with the mission of community colleges in general, additional work to better connect planning and mission, vision, and values for all employees needs to occur. Work continues on the review of the current mission, vision, and values statements to ensure that they reflect the role of the College in the community. Linking the mission and purposes of the college to daily operations continues to present a challenge.

2. Criterion Two - Human, Financial, and Physical Resources

The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Human Resources:

Issues of faculty and staff workload with campus projects are under consideration. Additional work needs to be done on all levels of the staff and faculty performance evaluation systems. Given the uncertainty of state funding levels in the coming years, funding additional personnel and salary increases will present a challenge. Additional campus-wide discussion needs to begin in order to address various levels of discontent with salary and workplace issues.

Financial Resources:

The state allocation for FY 2002 included July 2001 withholding 5 percent of the College's base allocation. Efforts to improve staff retention while maintaining fiscal responsibility present ongoing challenges. Proposed future state funding budget cuts will affect the overall budget picture and raise the possibility of pursuing alternative funding avenues including tuition increases and a tax levy increase.

Physical Resources:

Future construction is dependent upon voter acceptance of additional bonded debt. Keeping adequately trained support personnel to support the operation of a larger physical plant is an ongoing challenge. Developing ways to better utilize existing space for all college programs will become an increasing priority with projected student enrollment increases.

3. Criterion Three - Educational Purposes

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Continued growth with large numbers of students placing in developmental studies tends to overload the learning support system. Program reviews do not include clear guidelines for program retention or cancellation based on enrollment, graduates, or other guidelines.

Issues with distance learning and the RTEC program are challenges that the College will need to address in the coming years. The roles of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty in terms of professional development, curriculum coherence, and integration into the academic side of the institution need to be examined. The continuing need to provide more sections of courses for a growing student populations will require careful examination of space usage and staffing issues.

4. Criterion Four - Institutional Effectiveness

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

There is a general sense that unit and area leaders, members of the Core Committee, and all college employees could benefit from additional training in the planning process. Efforts to ensure that participation in planning is meaningful must be ongoing. Confusion exists regarding reallocation of current funding to achieve unit goals. Information regarding college budgeting and expenditure processes is not generally shared or understood by the college community. Additional work needs to occur relative to the discussion and implementation of the Performance Indicator approach to college-wide assessment.

5. Criterion Five - Institutional Integrity

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

As college publications, including student and faculty handbooks, move to Web format, care must be taken to date changes. Some student appeal procedures not included in the current *Student Handbook* will need to be clarified with the next printing. As space utilization becomes a growing issue on campus, the College will need to examine the current levels of use of college facilities and resources by community partner agencies in order to maintain an appropriate balance of internal and external community needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Criterion One - Mission and Purposes

The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

The mission statement is in need of review to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the College and its stakeholders. Although the statement alludes to “general education,” there is no specific mention of the term. The use of “County” in the college name as part of the Mission Statement should be deleted to be consistent with the name change as approved by the Board of Trustees, effective April 2001. The College should publish and make available an annual report on how the mission, vision, and values are addressed and reflected in the daily operation of the College.

2. Criterion Two - Human, Financial, and Physical Resources

The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Human Resources:

Issues regarding full and part-time teaching need to be discussed. The College needs to examine and consider the need for additional full-time faculty relative to the growth of the College. The Human Resources Department will be faced with the continued need to provide the College with guidance and improved processes in the areas of COBRA and FMLA administration.

Financial Resources:

The staff and faculty need to be better informed about the revenue and expenses of the College. The new buildings need to be closely monitored for costs. Although an agreement between faculty and administration was reached regarding compensation, the agreement was for only one year and must be renegotiated in spring 2002. The College must respond proactively and responsibly to impending state budget cuts through the existing planning process.

Physical Resources:

The entire college community could benefit from continuing discussion of the master plan. Parking availability needs to be monitored in order to keep pace with growth in enrollment. Possibilities for accommodating bookstore expansion should be explored. The planned outdoor classroom and prairie restoration projects are opportunities for the College to assume a leadership role in addressing environmental issues.

3. Criterion Three - Educational Purposes

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

The College must build upon its successes in developmental instruction, taking care that these programs and the learning center activities supporting them have adequate staffing to accomplish their purposes. All educational programs at the College will benefit from regular, systematic assessment as this program continues to expand to include all areas of the College. The College should strive for more clarity in professional development program guidelines and procedures.

4. Criterion Four - Institutional Effectiveness

The institution can continue to accomplish its purpose and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

The Institutional Research and Effectiveness office has processes and procedures in place for the collection and analysis of useful data. Evolving assessment efforts require the ongoing assimilation of this information into college programs and activities. Increasing reliance on technology and the successful incorporation of technology into the institution's programs call for the development of a college-wide technology plan.

5. Criterion Five - Institutional Integrity

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

Periodic review of handbooks needs to be made according to a set schedule, under the supervision of a designated individual or committee. Language reflecting the College's commitment to cultural diversity and global education should be included in the Mission Statement or Values. The College needs to remain abreast of changing demographics in its service area.

NEXT STEPS AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The coming decade promises challenges and opportunities to all institutions of higher learning. St. Charles Community College will have its share of each. The growth of the community that demanded the establishment of the College promises to continue. Increasing enrollment will call for expansion in facilities and infrastructure, all requiring prudence and vision in planning.

The growth that has characterized the early years of the College is the source of its strengths as well as its challenges. The committee's recommendations are informed by those challenges. The College, a community of talented individuals committed to a collective mission and vision, is well positioned to meet the challenges of the next decade.

REQUEST FOR CONTINUING ACCREDITATION

St. Charles Community College currently holds accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Since the last visit by an accrediting team, the College has continued to provide quality educational programs and services for students and the community. The College will continue to do so in the next decade.

The President, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and Trustees believe that the College meets the criteria for continued accreditation by, and affiliation with, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. They request that accreditation and affiliation be granted and continued, with the next comprehensive visit scheduled for the 2011-12 academic year.