

Ad Hoc Peer-Evaluation Report

Wenatchee Valley College

Wenatchee, Washington

October 22, 2020

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

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Wenatchee Valley College Ad Hoc Evaluation October 2020 Report on Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 from the Comprehensive Evaluation Report April 2019

Overview of Ad Hoc Visit

The Ad Hoc visit to Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) was a virtual visit on October 22, 2020. The purpose of this visit was to assess progress towards recommendations from the April 2019 Comprehensive Visit.

During the Ad Hoc visit, WVC faculty, staff and administration were welcoming and candid during all meetings and discussions. Additionally, and while outside of the scope of this visit, the evaluators would like to acknowledge WVC's deep commitment to students and particular attention to improving its equity gap, especially with students of color and a more recent emphasis on Native American students.

The evaluators met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Jim Richardson, President
- Dr. Tod Treat, Vice-President of Instruction
- Ty Jones, Institutional Effectiveness & ALO
- Phyllis Gleasman, Board of Trustees Chair
- Dr. Chio Flores, Vice President of Student Services
- Instructional Deans
- Student Services Staff
- Assessment Council Representatives
- Instructional Council Representatives
- Omak Campus Faculty and Staff
- Omak Campus Security Staff
- Faculty (At-Large)
- Administrative Staff (At-Large)
- Students (At-Large)

Findings from the Ad Hoc Visit

Recommendation 1: *The evaluation committee recommends that Wenatchee Valley College assess the Omak campus to ensure that it is safe, secure, and sufficient in both quantity and quality, ensuring healthful learning and working environments that support the institution's mission, programs, and services. The evaluation committee further recommends that the institution make provisions for the security of property at the Omak campus. (2010 Standards: 2.D.2; 2.G.1)*

Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) has made good progress towards creating a more secure and safe environment at its Omak campus. Specific activities include increasing the in-person

security presence from 19 hours per week to 40 hours per week, conducting a lighting walkthrough and making some needed modification, modifying the access control system to provide electronic access on the exterior doors of most buildings, redesigning the key distribution and collection system to ensure needs-based access, providing safety and security trainings for all WVC employees, and shifting organizational/reporting structure to better align with security needs. Discussions with Omak faculty and staff indicate an overall sense of safety and security while on campus and recognize that changes made by WVC, as well as by the City of Omak, have improved security on campus.

Recommendation 2: The evaluation committee recommends that Wenatchee Valley College document through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment, that students achieve identified learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes. (2010 Standards: 2.C.5 and 4.A.3; 2020 Standard: 1.C.5)

During the 2019–2020 academic year, Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) worked to help faculty understand what program learning outcomes (PLOs) are and how they relate to course learning outcomes (CLOs) and ultimately to the institutional academic learning outcomes (SLOs). WVC's cycle of continuous improvement was also introduced, and training on these concepts and processes ensued. Yearly programmatic review is conducted through the Area Plan which encourages—but does not require—faculty to collect data, document their continuous cycle of improvement, and to share experiences through vignettes.

All program and course learning outcomes are mapped to WVC's four academic student learning outcomes:

- Problem Solving (critical thinking, creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, qualitative reasoning)
- Social Interaction (collaboration, ethical conduct, professional conduct, cultural diversity)
- Communication (oral expression, written expression, artistic expression)
- Inquiry (information literacy, research, documentation)

The Vice President for Instruction oversees the academic assessment process. To aid in developing a culture of assessment and to help faculty create CLOs and PLOs, the Faculty Assessment Committee was created. This group assists faculty in collecting qualitative information to document the continuous cycle of improvement. In addition, four faculty were given release time to serve as assessment coordinators for a one-year period to assist the Assessment Committee in training and helping faculty. They were made a permanent part of WVC's budget starting with the 2020-21 budget year.

All syllabi reviewed contained student learning outcomes that were clearly defined, meaningful, and measurable and students easily recognized the role CLOs played in their learning. However, not all departments require that the learning outcomes are assessed in the same manner or use

the same measurement tool for each outcome. Essays, tests, projects, and related activities are used to measure student learning outcomes, but it is unclear if the same measurement tools are used in all course sections for defined course learning outcomes no matter who teaches a course.

Few thresholds or benchmarks have been defined for the course or program learning outcomes to determine successes or areas for improvement. It is also unclear how course and program learning outcomes are used to determine the success of the institutional student learning outcomes (SLOs) and if thresholds or benchmarks exist for the SLOs.

The evaluators found that data collection and analysis is conducted on the course level in some cases and in some programs, but it is often occurring individually or in pockets on various platforms and not always part of an official process nor included in the Area Plan.

The Area Plan document requires programs to provide:

- Three or four program performance gains (results worth celebrating), using prior year data.
- Three or four program performance gaps (areas for improvement), using prior year data (including resource needs).
- Three or four program performance goals (aspirations for the future) for the next academic year.

A review of several area plans for the last academic year showed little to no data. The reports were mostly narrative with anecdotal assessment information and vignettes. The area plan instructions indicate, and discussions concurred, that data collection is *encouraged* but not required. While the narration was informative and contained valuable information, without data documentation, it is difficult to determine trends for improvements regarding the success of or needed improvement for student learning outcomes at the course, program, or institutional level.

Conversations indicated that WVC is making good strides towards developing a culture of assessment, inquiry, and use of data to improve student learning within some areas of academic programs. Additionally, evaluators found strong evidence that the institution has fully embraced area plans and in some circumstances, results of those plans are being used to make positive changes and allocation of resources. However, a comprehensive system of assessment is still in its early stages with progress still needed on systematic evaluation of institutional, program, and course learning outcomes, documentation of processes and improvements; and use of benchmarks or thresholds.

Recommendation 3: *The evaluation committee recommends that the college use the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. (2010 Standard: 4.B.2; 2020 Standard: 1.C.7)*

WVC's leadership has worked to develop a culture of inquiry and assessment throughout instruction, although a more formal, data-informed, and documented process has not permeated the institution. However, not enough time has passed to allow the institution to effectively and regularly use the framework throughout instructional and non-instructional units, nor use results of the assessment to inform student achievement. Additionally, the evaluators acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption for the institution, further limiting their ability to make progress.

During conversations with faculty, some were able to share excellent examples of how data informed changes to courses and/or programs. Similarly, non-instructional areas frequently engaged in post-event surveys and in some cases, the results were used to make changes in programs or services. However, such actions did not appear to be connected to larger Area Plans or more formal assessment plans focused on student learning outcomes. Of note was that many non-instructional areas could not identify larger assessment concepts outside of the "gain, gaps, and goals" associated with Area Plans.

Additionally, discussions indicated that faculty and staff had access to the data needed to engage in effective assessment. However, comments including needing assistance on how to effectively use the data to inform decisions, how to connect it to outcomes (at any level), and how to connect it to qualitative data. Such conversations are evidence that developing a culture of inquiry is working, but that it is still at nascent stages.