

ACCREDITATION PROGRESS REPORT

Columbia College
11600 Columbia College Drive
Sonora, CA 95370

Date of Submission: October 15, 2007



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Table of Contents

Statement on Report Preparation	ii
Recommendation 1: Communication	1
Recommendation 2: Planning	4
Recommendation 3: Resource Allocation	8
Recommendation 4: Research.....	10
Recommendation 5: Student Learning Outcomes	11

Statement of Report Preparation

Columbia College was informed, by letter, January 31, 2006 that its accreditation had been reaffirmed, with a requirement that the college complete a Progress Report to be submitted by October 15, 2007. It was also noted that the report would be followed by a visit by Commission representatives.

The report was discussed in many venues such as College Council and Academic Senate meetings and was written over the summer months, addressing the five recommendations made by the Commission after their October 2005 visitation. The Progress Report was placed on the Columbia College website for the entire college community to review and provide comments to the president's office. All comments were collected and will be shared with the visiting team upon their arrival to the site visitation.

The Progress Report was approved by the Yosemite Community College District Board of Trustees on September 12, 2007.

Submitted by,

Joan Smith, Ed.D.
President, Columbia College

Recommendation 1: Communication – The team recommends that the college and district develop a concrete and systematic process to improve collaboration, communication, and cooperation. The process should include, but not be limited to, an examination of whether any current functions provided by the district office should be centralized or decentralized to better serve student needs (I.B.1; I.A.4; III.B; IV.A; IV.B).

Visiting team’s remarks (under themes, relevant to this recommendation):

“DIALOGUE: The College has been engaged in some initial dialogue; however, there is not evidence of meaningful dialogue related to any system or complete review of governance, institutional research, planning, and building a culture of evidence. Significant dialogue is needed to enhance compliance with the Commission’s standards. It will be necessary for all of the individuals to cooperatively explore and exchange ideas. Communication is central to the current challenges facing the college and the district. The lack of effective communication between the college and the district is such that it is interfering with the college’s ability to make strides for improvement. While informal communication is an important component, it does not provide the record and collective memory and conscious building necessary to make plans, assign responsibility across departments, and effect change.”

“ORGANIZATION: The college is experiencing serious organizational difficulties that are reinforcing and exacerbating the current communication problems. The combined effects of these organizational and communication problems have created a confused and inefficient environment both at the college and the district level. As a result, it is difficult to undertake the important work that lies ahead for the college. The current campus climate reveals a lack of confidence and trust with the district office, which appear to have resulted in struggles between the college and the district. (See Recommendation 1.)”

COLUMBIA COLLEGE RESPONSE:

The Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) has faced some challenges in terms of executive leadership turnover throughout the past couple of years. Both Columbia College and Modesto Junior College (MJC) have new presidents that assumed their positions in the 2006-2007 academic year, with Columbia College’s president beginning in January 2007. Additionally, the YCCD chancellor position was occupied by an interim administrator for the 2006-2007 academic year, with the permanent chancellor assuming his position in July 2007. During his tenure, the YCCD Interim Chancellor worked with the new Columbia College President to establish methods for effective communication between the college and Central Services and between the college, Central Services and MJC. To that end, a number of regular meetings have been established. Many of these meetings have been held in rotating locations (Columbia College, Central Services, MJC) and in Oakdale (a city that is roughly the mid-point between Modesto and Columbia), rather than in Modesto as a demonstration of “meeting the college half-way.” A summary of those newly established regular meetings include,

but are not limited to; monthly meetings between the Interim Chancellor and College President, monthly meetings between the Interim Chancellor and the two college presidents and quarterly District Administrative Council meetings which have been re-established to facilitate communication and include attendance by administrators from Columbia College, Central Services and MJC.

Additionally, appropriate representatives from Columbia College participate in a number of other district committees such as; District Council, Chancellor's Cabinet, District Enrollment Management Committee, YCCD Technology Committee and District Budget Allocation Taskforce Committee, to name a few. As one example of collaboration, the Budget Allocation Taskforce Committee is co-chaired by the College President and Executive Vice Chancellor. While in the preliminary planning stages, another demonstration of collaboration and effective communication between the college and Central Services personnel is a project that focuses on MIS reporting for matriculation. Similarly, the Associate Vice Chancellor of Technology, Vice President for Student Learning, Chief Operations Officer, registrar, and faculty matriculation coordinator are working on a new-system being developed in online education—progress is being made in the area of centralization and support of services for online education and curriculum management (CurricuNet). The information obtained through the committees described above is brought back and shared with the campus. Commonly this information is disseminated through the appropriate constituent groups. In addition, the College President has held forums to facilitate campus-wide communication, as well as to give the campus community an opportunity to ask questions and/or express concerns. The Columbia College Council—the body tasked with initiating and responding to or from the District Council on issues of college or district-wide interest, among other charges—has also been a vehicle that the President has used to provide information and ensure that this collegial consultation group is involved in the decision making processes of the college.

Columbia College management and Central Services management have established more productive working relationships wherein the vice chancellors and other Central Services office personnel visit the campus on a regular basis to attend and/or hold meetings with college staff. During these visits Central Services personnel are assigned office space outfitted with necessary equipment and connections to conduct meetings and business as usual. For example, the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources schedules at least one visit per month to the campus to directly experience and work with personnel issues. The Controller visits the campus on a monthly basis as well and has begun to bring members of her staff to provide on-site fiscal training to Columbia College staff. In addition, the College President, leadership team members and faculty, i.e. Academic Senate presidents and Academic Senate President Elect, have made concerted efforts to attend meetings at both the Central Services office and MJC to establish collegial working relationships and facilitate collaboration, communication and cooperation among all entities. MJC faculty, staff and administration also attend meetings at Columbia College for the purpose of improved communication. This formal participation of key personnel from both the Central Services office and Columbia College will assist the district and college in

providing a record of collective memory necessary to make plans, assign responsibility across departments and, in the future, effect positive change.

The Central Services office, under the leadership of the Interim Chancellor, also held events that were focused on facilitating and improving communications between the three entities of the district. For example, this year a leadership training day was held for the entire district leadership team. The event was held in Oakdale to encourage Columbia College leadership team attendance. The mid-way location was once again noted with favor when the annual district retirement celebration was also held in Oakdale. Moreover, the Interim Chancellor asked the two college presidents to be co-masters of ceremony at that celebration. As a result of implementation of systems which have improved communication, greater participation by Central Services administrators and staff has also been noted at Columbia College events such as In-Service Day and the End-of-Year Picnic and Celebration.

Another effort toward more open communication has been the establishment during the spring 2007 semester of the Columbia College's President Report, *In Site*. This newsletter features campus news as well as faculty and staff accomplishments and is also used as a communication tool by the president to promote the campus to both the district-wide community and the community-at-large.

Columbia College's president views communication as an integral part to organizational effectiveness and accountability. The new Columbia College President has stated on many occasions, and in different campus and district venues, that it is her goal to assist the campus in its commitment to: create an environment that promotes an open exchange of ideas; enhance participatory decision making; and provide an atmosphere of mutual respect and support a participatory governance structure for the entire educational enterprise of the college. Columbia College faculty, staff and administrators have expressed the commitment above through their vision and mission statements that as an institution, Columbia College endeavors to fulfill its responsibility to its students and to operate as an important entity in the community.

In addressing this recommendation, the college and the district have begun to develop processes to improve collaboration, communication and cooperation. The college is now waiting until the new Chancellor is established in his position to develop the next steps with respect to an in-depth examination of whether current functions provided by the Central Services office should be centralized or decentralized to better serve student needs. At the time of this writing the new Chancellor has just assumed his position. However, as highlighted above, much progress has been made in terms of collaboration by Columbia College and Central Services staff.

List of documents:

- A. YCCD District Administrative Council Agenda and Meeting Minutes, 2006-2007 Academic Year

- B. YCCD District Council Agenda and Meeting Minutes, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- C. YCCD Chancellor's Cabinet Agenda, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- D. YCCD Enrollment Management Committee Agenda and Meeting Minutes, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- E. YCCD Technology Committee Agenda and Meeting Minutes, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- F. YCCD Budget Allocation Taskforce Record of Meetings, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- G. Agenda for April 20, 2007 State of the College Meeting
- H. Columbia College Council Annual Agenda and Record of Meetings, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- I. Agenda for Leadership Team Training Day
- J. Program/Invitation for YCCD Retirement Celebration Dinner
- K. President's Report, *InSite*
 - 1. April 2007
 - 2. May 2007
 - 3. August 2007

Recommendation 2: Planning – The team recommends that the college establish an integrated comprehensive planning process in all areas of the college by emphasizing and strengthening the link between planning, budgeting, and Program Review. Particular focus should be in the following areas (I.A.4; I.B.2; I.B.5; II.A.2; II.C; III.B):

- **Communication of a planning calendar complete with timelines and delineated with the person(s) responsible**
- **Instituting and communicating processes that produce evidence that program evaluations lead to the improvement of college programs and services**
- **Development of a strategic plan that will guide the college in integrating its planning processes that result in the college meeting its goals set forth and in line with its mission.**

Visiting team's remarks (under themes, relevant to this recommendation):

“PLANNING, EVALUATION, AND IMPROVEMENT: The visiting team noted that the college needs to be more vigilant in addressing this theme. This cycle of planning, evaluation, and improvement is at the heart of the college and leads to ensuring that an institute continues to address and meet the needs of the community which it serves. The college's reliance on surveys as the form of documentation for change is short-sighted, as is the advocacy for more funds and staff based primarily on anecdotal comments. The team saw little planning and, where planning efforts existed, there did not appear to be identified leadership of the efforts. (See Recommendation 2.)”

COLUMBIA COLLEGE RESPONSE:

The newly appointed College President initiated an assessment of the college's planning process in January 2007. The President worked with and through the established college planning committee, College Council, as well as with the existing college and Central Services administration, the academic and classified senates, and student body leadership members to determine what functional mechanisms were in place that assisted in directing institutional goals and resource allocation. In discussions with the membership of College Council it was determined that the college would use the planning that was in place and work to develop it into a systematic, understandable, and useable process. In addition, College Council worked to develop definable terms. For example, what the college (and the District) were calling an Educational Master Plan was in reality a compilation of unit plans. Furthermore, college decisions were made from a list of established college priorities, yet these priorities were not tied to any of the college's planning processes.

The President worked with College Council to review the assessment and evaluation of the planning documents and worked with the group to establish a starting point in the new planning process. It was suggested to College Council to adopt the *YCCD Strategic Plan 2007-2013*. This plan was distributed to Council members and they discussed their concerns. The Council decided to adopt the strategic plan, as it utilized the *Vision 2010* document as its centerpiece, and this vision was very closely aligned with planning processes already in place at Columbia College. The Council next decided to proceed by reviewing the critical components in a strategic plan—these were determined to be; collective campus vision, mission, and goals with an understandable integrated process. The president's office agreed to prepare a draft flow chart as a starting point that integrated all planning efforts of the college beginning with the *YCCD Strategic Plan 2007-2013*. This flow chart was distributed by email prior to the February meeting of College Council with the intention of garnering campus-wide input.

It was also discussed at College Council that Columbia College was required to develop and submit an accreditation progress report in October 2007. In that report it is expected that the college would bring forth positive actions that address integrated planning efforts. Although Columbia College had an established *Campus Master Plan* (focusing on facility development) and a *Columbia College Facilities Master Plan* (focusing on Measure E projects) there was no formal established educational master plan—tying these documents to the educational purpose of the campus build-out. Additionally, there was no link from program review to planning, nor any consistent link between budgeting and planning. Planning was being conducted in a 'silo' fashion and linkages needed to be developed and established. College Council was up to the challenge and decided to hold two retreats to connect existing planning and establish a college planning format.

The Council developed a revised mission statement and vision statement during the first retreat. By consensus, the Council agreed that a mission statement should articulate "who we are and what we do." As such, the Council worked collaboratively to revise the

mission statement. Moreover, the College Council worked diligently to integrate the philosophies and verbiage contained in numerous Columbia College documents—planning and otherwise, to revise the *Columbia College Vision Statement* and to develop *Columbia College Core Values* for the institution. The Council felt strongly that the vision statement should articulate, “where we want to be,” and a value statement, or core values, should, “be the moral compass” of the organization.

College Council members were tasked with communicating the process used and the documents developed to their constituency groups and to bring feedback from those groups back to the Council. The second retreat of the College Council was used to review and finalize the *Columbia College Mission Statement*, *Columbia College Vision Statement* and *Columbia College Core Values* and to incorporate constituency group feedback. College Council adopted unanimously the mission, vision, and core values statements, after the campus input was incorporated. Lastly, the College Council agreed to host a state of the college meeting which occurred on April 20, 2007. At this meeting the entire college community was informed by the President of the planning efforts that had been accomplished and were given copies of the new, collectively adopted mission, vision, and core values statements.

Additionally, the participatory governing body, College Council, discussed two ongoing goals of this group. The first goal is to identify common direction(s) of college constituents and their visions for the future of the college; to identify and develop the institutional plan in order to improve institutional communication and cohesion; to develop a realistic perspective; and to balance short-term and long-term college goals. The second goal that the Council wants to focus on is to establish criteria for making strategic decisions about programs and requisite funding in order to determine the efficacy of those decisions in achieving college goals. College Council clearly recognized that these aspects of the college planning and decision making process needed to be revamped and understood by the campus at-large. While work has begun on achieving the first goal, work on the second goal will begin in fall 2007.

Results of an informal analysis by the College President revealed that historically the college has not always trusted the Central Services office to conduct planning and the allocation of resources associated with it in a fair and equitable manner. Viable and vestigial institutional traditions, immediate needs and crisis management seemed to have served as the basis for determining the college’s decision making and direction. The college has also had issues with a series of dean turnovers, particularly in the Arts and Sciences department, and was doing all it could to keep instructional areas functional. In truth, college planning took a back seat to maintaining daily operations. Despite these concerns, the college has been able to maintain its reputation for quality education and student success due to the commitment of faculty, classified and administrative personnel who were willing to assist “outside their area of assignment” in order to meet student needs and maintain program viability. The college consistently indicates (collectively) that it is committed to student learning and student success. This commitment is evident in the stream of pride expressed throughout College Council by all constituent groups—faculty, staff, administration and students. This Council also did not hesitate in their

charge to embrace and develop a much more systematic college planning process and did so with great pride.

The Council's efforts were noted when the YCCD Board of Trustees adopted the *Columbia College Vision Statement* and *Columbia College Mission Statement* on May 9, 2007. To date, Columbia College is on target with its new planning calendar. A rough draft of an *Educational Master Plan* (EMP) is being written over the summer of 2007 using the established components delineated by the College Council before disbanding for the summer break. This plan will be reviewed at the first Council meeting in fall 2007. Following that review the plan will be edited and disseminated to the entire campus via email for further review and input before it is finalized. Included in the plan will be a clear delineation of Columbia College's decision making processes as well as components that tie program review and budget allocation to planning.

Columbia College's new institutional researcher will meet with individual departments/divisions in the fall to discuss the data contained in the report and to ask for input. The *Educational Master Plan* timeline is scheduled for completion by the end of the fall semester 2007 or beginning of the spring semester 2008. Since this progress report is due to the commission on October 15, 2007, only the draft *Educational Master Plan* and draft planning process will be available for the team site visit.

Columbia College recognizes the fact that it has only begun in its initial planning processes. However, Columbia College is confident that once the EMP is completed, with cross campus participation, the college will be in compliance with the recommendation set forth above. Columbia College also recognizes that planning is a fluid process and it will be developing as the campus grows and achieves its short-term goals.

List of Documents:

- A. Columbia College Council Annual Agenda and Record of Meetings, 2006-2007 Academic Year
- B. Comprehensive Planning Process
 - 1. Planning Process Flow Chart, Dated May 15, 2007
 - 2. *Guiding Principles for Columbia College Comprehensive Planning*, Dated April 6, 2007
 - 3. *DRAFT Columbia College Participatory Governance Structure*, Dated June 5, 2007
 - 4. Integrated Planning Model, Flow Chart and Memo to College Council, Dated January 24, 2007
 - 5. *DRAFT Columbia College Goals and Strategies*
- C. *YCCD Strategic Plan 2007-2013*
- D. *Columbia College Campus Master Plan*, dated March 14, 2007
- E. *Columbia College Facilities Master Plan*, dated...
- F. *Columbia College Mission Statement, Columbia College Vision Statement*, Both Adopted by College Council on April 6, 2007, and Excerpt from May 9, 2007 YCCD Board of Trustees Minutes Approving Both Statements

- G. *Columbia College Core Values* Adopted by College Council on April 6, 2007
- H. Agenda for April 20, 2007 State of the College Meeting
- I. *DRAFT Educational Master Plan*
- J. Campus-wide Communication

Recommendation 3: Resource Allocation – The team recommends that in order to best serve the needs of students, the district and the college engage in a collaborative process to ensure a transparent and equitable allocation of financial resources and that the district and the college implement a process to communicate budget issues with each other on an ongoing basis (IIC.1a; IIC.1d; IIC.2; IID.1a,b,c; IID.2a; IID.2b; IID.2d; IID.2e; IID.2g; IID.3; IVB.2d; IVB.3d; IVB.3g).

COLUMBIA COLLEGE’S RESPONSE:

A shared recommendation with its sister college, Modesto Junior College, Columbia College recognizes and appreciates the significance of the evaluation team’s resource allocation recommendation. Its importance is further evidenced by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College’s (ACCJC) letter of January 31, 2006 to then YCCD Chancellor Williams urging the district to work with the colleges to resolve district-wide resource allocation concerns.

The college and district quickly turned their attention to the resource allocation recommendation in late 2005 with the initiation of a district-wide strategic plan process. The college’s Chief Operations Officer along with the district Executive Vice Chancellor and district Controller served together on the YCCD Strategic Planning team to craft the plan’s resource objectives. By incorporating the team’s recommendation into the *YCCD Strategic Plan 2007-2013*, the colleges and the district made a commitment to a clearly communicated, transparent and equitable resource allocation model and set this as a top priority.

The YCCD District Council, comprised of representatives from Columbia College, Modesto Junior College and Central Services began discussion of budgetary processes and resource allocation in the spring of 2006. At the July 2006 meeting, the Council unanimously moved to form a task force to review current resource allocation models. Under the leadership of the new Interim Chancellor, the District Council reconvened in October 2006 to consider the membership of a District Budget Allocation Taskforce. At the October meeting, it was determined Columbia College’s new President would serve as Taskforce co-chair along with the YCCD Executive Vice Chancellor. Other Taskforce members include: Columbia College’s Chief Operations Officer and Academic Senate President; Modesto Junior College’s Academic Senate President, Dean of Business, Behavioral and Social Sciences, and Director of Community and Economic Development; a representative from each bargaining unit, the YFA and CSEA; and the YCCD Controller. The Taskforce’s meetings were set to commence after the January 2007 appointment of Columbia College’s new president.

The Budget Allocation Taskforce's first meeting was held March 6, 2007 with subsequent meetings held in April and May. Over the course of its meetings, the Taskforce conducted an in-depth study of the new SB361 funding model, current YCCD budget allocation practices, the YCCD 2006-2007 General Fund budget, and reviewed YCCD 2006-2007 expenditures. It examined sound fiscal management practices and performed a self-assessment as recommended by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. The Taskforce also held discussions on the revenue effects of the district's enrollment decline and had discussions regarding the YCCD reserves and policies regarding reserves.

The aim of the Taskforce's initial study phase was to provide all committee members with a foundational understanding of community college funding and district budgeting practices. Committed to transparency, these dialogues have been lively with significant amounts of time devoted to question and answer sessions. At the May 2007 meeting, it was agreed by consensus to cosign future meetings to the study of best practices in resource allocation models at other community college districts. Taskforce chairs were asked to invite an expert in the field to meet with the Taskforce in an advisory role. Adjourning over the summer months, the Taskforce will reconvene and resume work in fall 2007 under the direction of the new YCCD Chancellor.

To further improve communication between the college and district on budgetary issues, the college's Chief Operations Officer meets with the Executive Vice Chancellor and Controller on an informal and frequent basis. Additionally, the Chief Operations Officer attends the Executive Vice Chancellor's monthly staff meetings to facilitate the sharing of information. Meetings between the college President and the Executive Vice Chancellor occur regularly both at the district office and at the college. With the reinstatement of the District Administrative Council (DAC), whose membership includes the college's President, Vice President, and Chief Operations Officer and district senior leadership an important forum for the discussion of budget issues has been reestablished. It is the hope of the college that the improved communication with the district has built a culture of trust in which resource issues can be discussed in an open and productive manner.

List of Documents:

- A. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Letter dated January 31, 2006
- B. *YCCD Strategic Plan 2007 – 2013*
- C. YCCD District Council Agenda and Meeting Minutes: July 19, 2006, October 25, 2006, January 24, 2007, February 28, 2007, March 28, 2007
- D. YCCD Budget Allocation Taskforce Record of Meeting: March 6, 2007, April 17, 2007, May 21, 2007.
- E. YCCD Fiscal Services Staff Meeting Record of Meetings: November 2005 – June 2007

Recommendation 4: Research – The team recommends that the institution adopt a culture of evidence by developing and implementing, with timelines, responsibilities, and evaluations, a research process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis that assesses institutional effectiveness and documents the need for resources, technology, staffing, programs, and facilities which best serve the students needs (I.A.; I.B; II.B.1,3,4; II.C).

Visiting team’s remarks (under themes, relevant to this recommendation):

“INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY: The visiting team experienced difficulty in obtaining adequate documentation/evidence to support the self-study. The lack of critical and pertinent information was prevalent in areas such as Program Review, student learning outcomes (SLOs), research, organizational structure, and planning. It was very difficult for the visiting team to make an accurate assessment of the college’s current state of progress in addressing this theme due to the apparent lack of documentation and the untimely and incomplete manner in which the existing documentation was prepared and provided. For the most part, however, the college publications were complete, accurate, and honest. (See Recommendation 4.)”

COLUMBIA COLLEGE’S RESPONSE:

Given the serious, substantive concerns raised by the commission’s comments in this recommendation, Columbia College hired a Director of Institutional Research and Planning who began her assignment in May 2007. Columbia College recognized its need for an institutional researcher. As the college continues to grow and change, it must be able to assess new processes and outcomes as part of its continuous improvement cycle. Ongoing qualitative and quantitative analysis will also provide the information necessary not only to evaluate institutional effectiveness but to pursue new opportunities such as applying for external funding, an increasingly important part of a college’s growth, especially for a small college like Columbia College that has limited resources.

Additionally, Columbia College clearly recognizes the need for systematic, ongoing institutional research—scanning both internal and external environments. Developing a systematic method for assessing and evaluating the college’s programs and services on a regular basis will assist both at the main campus and in the development of the college’s off-campus sites in Calaveras and Oakdale. Columbia College recognizes the college’s unique role in the community as an educational leader—student’s interests, local and regional needs must be assessed so that the college maintains its responsiveness to its programs and services.

The student learning outcomes committee as well as other individuals at the college who are interested and dedicated to understanding, utilizing, and promoting student learning outcomes assessment, will have the resource and support of the Director of Institutional Research and Planning. She will work closely with the Vice President for Student Learning and Chief Operations Officer to develop effective outcomes assessment processes. In addition, the Director of Institutional Research and Planning will be a

faculty resource. The college has begun to examine program review across the institution and college faculty and staff will be informed that they now have an institutional researcher available who will be able to help them develop procedures for collecting and analyzing data in the important area of program review. Furthermore, the institutional researcher will be invaluable to faculty and staff when student learning outcomes must be specified in terms of the student being able to demonstrate identifiable measurable skills and abilities.

Columbia College is very cognizant of the fact that the development of a college-wide student learning outcomes model of assessment and improvement is a large undertaking and will need serious, ongoing commitment at all levels of the college. The development of campus-wide student learning outcomes will not be implemented in a vacuum. The institutional researcher will play a key role in this process. The college recognizes that student learning outcomes measurement/assessment, as well as addressing the other items with respect to research in the accreditation recommendations from the evaluation team report need to be made priorities for the entire college.

It is the intent of Columbia College that the new department of institutional research on campus will lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of measuring student learning and success, as well as an appreciation for evaluating current programs, services and overall institutional effectiveness.

List of Documents:

- A. Director of Institutional Research and Planning Vacancy Announcement and Excerpt from April 11, 2007 YCCD Board of Trustees Minutes Approving Personnel Appointment
- B. *2007-2008 Columbia College Organizational Chart*

Recommendation 5: Student Learning Outcomes – The team recommends that the college adopt an aggressive approach with specific timelines and responsibilities for developing student learning outcomes including documentation and assessments at the course, the program, and the institutional level and demonstrate that evidence is being used for institutional improvement. All employees of the college must assume responsibility to improve student learning outcomes (II.A.1, II.A.2; II.B; II.C).

“STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: The visiting team noted that the college is attempting to develop and implement student learning outcomes on the institutional level. The college appears to have made a good start; however, the efforts need to be coordinated in extending SLOs to the course and the program level throughout the college. The degree of engagement is imbalanced. The college will have to develop a plan to engage all appropriate individuals, establish a timeline, and implement an assessment and improvement process. (See Recommendation 5.)”

The fall 2006 accreditation report findings for Columbia College clearly demonstrated the need for an aggressive plan to develop, implement, assess and document student

learning outcomes in a coordinated and inclusive manner. With this in mind, the college assembled a Student Learning Outcomes Workgroup to guide the planning, development, implementation and documentation of student learning outcomes—as well as the culture that is required to sustain them. The Columbia College SLO Workgroup was assembled in the late fall of 2006, and consisted of 13 members whose background and assignments were distributed throughout the college. The workgroup team consisted of staff, faculty and management from operations, student services and instructional areas. Using the accreditation recommendations as a guide, the SLO Workgroup developed an SLO plan that would engage the college and move our culture forward to one that better embraces and utilizes SLOs. Also, as was documented in the *Columbia College Accreditation Self-Study* of fall 2005, past development included on-going dialogue, training and program development, (i.e. Career Tools for Success, fall 2001; Transformational Learning Task Force Development), occurring as initial base models for areas of the institution to demonstrate a continued focus on student transformational learning and student learning outcomes.

As directed by the visiting accrediting team, the plan specifically addressed timelines; responsibilities and documentation. The new SLO plan was completed on March 2nd, and was discussed and adopted by the college's participatory governance body, College Council, on April 7, 2006. The charge and actions associated with this plan supported an overall goal that by October of 2007, each department, service or program at Columbia College will have documented active involvement in the SLO process by providing models and demonstrating how each model or process relates to the *Student Learning Outcome Assessment Cycle* (SLOAC). Additionally, the plan included that the college will have deployed a uniform documentation process for reporting progress and measuring effect.

The SLO Workgroup also recognized the critical need to have SLO processes strongly connected to our planning processes. The current SLO plan is displayed on the Columbia College SLO website, and has helped guide the college to a position in which SLO coordination has improved greatly, and our SLOs are expanding into the course, program, departmental, service area and institutional levels. This aggressive planning approach (with related timelines and responsibilities) has helped to engage a much broader range of stakeholders throughout our college community. The SLO Workgroup has already begun to see the positive impact and increased buy-in through addressing SLOs from a widespread perspective. As of August 2007, the college has kept pace with the planned activities and the SLO Workgroup expects that all goals will be met by October 2007. The *Student Learning Outcomes Planning and Implementation Chart* will be updated in the fall 2007.

The visiting team determined that documentation relating to our SLO efforts was sporadic, and could be strengthened through better coordination and organization. A likely contributing factor to the noted 'imbalanced engagement' of the SLO initiative across the college was that we were not documenting what we were doing, which made it difficult to share with our stakeholders. Basically, we were not equipped to demonstrate and communicate what progress we were making with our SLO initiative.

The college, through the SLO Workgroup, has responded to this critical issue through a variety of mechanisms. Our SLO Workgroup discussed the matter and determined that the most expedient and substantial response that we could provide, would be to use our newly developed SLO website as a conduit to share critical information with our students and staff. This documentation included; SLO Workgroup meeting minutes, college-wide SLOs, Columbia College's definition of SLOs, the *Columbia College Student Learning Outcome Assessment Cycle (SLOAC)*, SLO implementation models, the *Columbia College Student Learning Outcomes Planning and Implementation Chart*, and related timelines and responsibilities.

An additional measure to archive and share our SLO progress and activities was to develop an SLO tracking and documentation system that could be easily accessed and utilized. All SLOs for Columbia College are now submitted and archived as MS Word documents, utilizing a standardized naming protocol that identifies the origin and date of the document. As our SLOs evolve, we retain previous versions to serve as learning tools, which will allow us to be better equipped to assess the evolution of SLOs at Columbia College and to demonstrate progress. To facilitate review and retrieval, the college's SLO documents are stored in a system of shared folders that mirror the Columbia College organizational chart. At any time, all staff have read access to this resource.

All SLOs that are added to the system of shared folders are now entered into the College Curriculum Committee Course and Program Database. We have added data fields to our existing curriculum database that allow the college to track SLO development and other related SLO implementation criteria. As our SLO initiative is college-wide, we also added all of our student service and college operations units to this curriculum database. These "non-traditional" entries into our curriculum database will be very apparent to the faculty and staff that utilize, update or access this resource. This approach, rather than utilizing a separate database, will help to ensure that SLOs are highly visible to all those that access the curriculum database, and it is a constant reminder that SLOs are college-wide, and part of our ongoing culture.

The Columbia College Curriculum Committee Course and Program Database now documents all SLO criteria currently requested from WASC, in the newly created *Annual Report for Student Learning Outcomes*. Our course database and system of shared folders document that we currently have identified SLOs for 13.1% of our total courses, 22.9% of our college programs, 20.3% of our general education courses and 85.7% of our college operations and services. Columbia College is also developing SLOs at the departmental and institutional levels.

The college has made significant improvements in the area of capturing and organizing evidence of our ongoing SLO dialogue and activities as our culture evolves. This documentation can be found in the SLO evidence binder in the Office of the Vice President for Student Learning. The documentation and evidence in the SLO evidence binder includes, but is not limited to, all agendas and minutes from SLO Workgroup

meetings, announcements, emails and agendas relating to SLO workshops and trainings, college-wide emails relating to SLO updates, *Student Learning Outcomes Needs Assessment Surveys*, *Student Learning Outcomes Knowledge Surveys*, *Annual Report for Student Learning Outcomes* prepared for our accrediting commission, agendas from SLO discussions and presentations at college-wide in-service days and agendas from SLO trainings for adjunct faculty at our adjunct faculty orientations.

The college sees the need to collectively move into active assessment of SLOs and is now moving deeper into SLO assessment training, implementation and analysis. We are trying to move together, as a college, into the process of SLO assessment. While we have some early adopters that are already assessing SLOs, and some individuals that are a bit behind the rest of the college, the majority of the college community is now engaged in the process of identifying assessment tools and techniques to effectively measure our SLOs. The timing for this works well, as we just hired a new college institutional researcher who will have a significant focus on assisting the college with the development and analysis of meaningful SLO assessment.

As of spring 2007, we have identified SLO assessments for 10.3% of our total courses, 11.4% of our programs, 71.4% of our instructional support areas and 76.9% of our other areas related to student services and college operations. We look forward to the fall of 2007 when the focus shifts from the identification of SLO assessment to active assessment and analysis. We do have some departments that are currently assessing SLOs, and we look forward to learning from those on the leading edge. To help move the college culture into a phase of active assessment, the focus of our 2007 spring in-service day was entirely devoted to SLO assessment. This included a special guest speaker, Dr. Angela Caballero deCordero, who came to the campus and shared strategies for assessing SLOs in the area of services and operations. The agenda and training topics for that day were derived from *Student Learning Outcomes Needs Assessment Surveys* that were conducted during the fall of 2006. In addition to in-service day activities, the SLO Workgroup hosted two college-wide workshops on SLO assessment during the spring of 2007, and surveyed the college with regard to overall progress and additional training needs relating to SLO assessment.

The accreditation standards are clear, regarding the critical need to demonstrate the evidence that we are accumulating. A few of the vocational education programs are at the advanced stage of implementing strategies to improve the performance of their students based on their internal and external evaluations. The evaluations included course assessment instruments, national certification assessments, college assessments in math and English that are directed at identified student learning outcomes.

Based on the results of the assessments, the programs, individually and collectively made adjustments to their curriculum. Some of those included:

- Adjusting both performance and written instruction to remove gaps.
- Updating and realigning student learning outcomes after evaluating portfolios that demonstrate competence in each of the areas identified in the program.

- For programs that are nationally certified, specific outcomes were measured at the end of the program of instruction. The final assessment was monitored by local agency experts. Curriculum content, format and time on topic were adjusted to address areas where students were not achieving at the mandated level.
- Staff development was offered in fall and spring based on faculty requests to address areas of performance. Topics included:
 - Active learning techniques incorporated into course work to address a wider range of learning styles.
 - Inclusion of basic skills training in the classroom.
- A Tools Team that included math, English, student services and vocational faculty reviewed the assessments that addressed college-wide student learning outcomes related to academic achievement. The Team devised a collaborative plan to improve student performance within individual programs of instruction and developed a course in contextual writing.
- Most programs have identified, through assessments of their SLOs, a need to improve the math and writing skills of their students. In response, math faculty have reviewed vocational curriculum and identified the mathematical concepts contained therein. They have developed a quantitative literacy program at Columbia College. The infused model pilot will be implemented next year.

The College also recognizes the need to integrate SLOs into our planning processes. With that in mind, the unit planning (comprehensive planning) software tool that the college is using has a data field built in to accommodate student learning outcomes. YCCD Central Services has been very helpful with the development and customization of this tool. As we enter a stage in which we will be actively assessing a wide range of course, department, program and institutional SLOs, we will need to have an integrated planning system that will accommodate and influence institutional change that is clearly connected to SLOs.

The Columbia College SLO Workgroup recognizes the critical nature of the reference in recommendation five, specifically that which is related to the need for all employees to assume responsibility to improve SLOs. We value the need to carry out this recommendation in a manner that engages the entire college, and speaks to a culture that embraces a true balance of departmental and programmatic investment in SLOs throughout the college. The philosophy of the *Student Learning Outcomes Planning and Implementation Chart* that was developed in April 2006, ensured that we would move forward with SLOs as a college, with no department, program or service left out of the initiative, or given primary importance over another. We have worked hard to nurture a culture that recognizes and demonstrates that learning doesn't just take place in the classroom, and that there are opportunities for learning, and therefore SLOs, in every service, program and department. This has probably been the most rewarding and valuable part of our SLO journey, and it has also meant that we have had to slow down a bit sometimes, to make sure that we aren't leaving valuable colleagues, along with their insights and inspirations, behind.

To accomplish this, we have had to change how we think about learning, and where learning opportunities occur. We have had to reframe starting points that only focus in on the classroom, and have had to shift perspectives to those that focus on the entire college culture. An example of reframing our starting points was a conscious effort to avoid using course outlines as a starting point for the development of SLOs. We will determine what the specific relationships between SLOs and course outlines are, but that will evolve at a later time. Had we have utilized course outlines as our starting point for SLO development, we would have neglected and lost some of our most active and inspirational colleagues. We have all learned from each other, and consequently, have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the inclusive culture and cooperation that is often the missing component in true institutional transformation.

Having our SLO action and processes formally pass through our participatory governance committee, College Council, helped to bring our college together and engage in meaningful dialogue regarding SLOs. Working together as departments, service areas and programs, a common philosophy of SLO development evolved and is now actively being shared and documented. This philosophy is one that is open to new ideas, non-traditional approaches and learning styles. This inclusion of the entire college, and interface with our participatory governance processes led to the development of a college-wide approach to the development of a *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle* (SLOAC), institutional student learning outcomes, and a college-wide definition of student learning outcomes. This now gives us common terminology and reference points with regard to our relative progress with our SLOs. We may have some different approaches (depending on the area) regarding SLOs, but we can communicate and discuss our progress and challenges with others on campus because we have held tight to the concept of a universal process (SLOAC) that underlies all of our SLO efforts.

The College Council discussed and adopted the institutional SLOs, the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle* (SLOAC), definition of SLOs and the SLO action plan. Ensuring that these critical documents, philosophies and plans are discussed and adopted by the College Council has been of great benefit for our evolving culture of student learning outcomes, and has led to improved mechanisms for sharing what we are all doing with respect to student learning outcomes.

Our goal for October 2007 is to have evidence that every department, program and service at the college is actively engaged with the process of SLO development, can identify where they are in the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle* and their next steps. We started at the department, program or service level, because it is our philosophy that the changes that we are bringing about will be more sustainable if we initially work in groups. We decided not to focus on program (instructional ‘program’) level SLOs, because we realized that it might be more difficult to find common ground when working across disciplines. This has been somewhat frustrating, because we have made the most progress in working at the department and service area level, but it is not an SLO arena that seems to get much attention. We believe that true ‘programmatic SLOs’ will fall into place much more naturally after we have developed a wide range of

SLOs at the departmental level. We did, however, have a significant number of SLOs submitted that were at the course and program level as well. As of spring 2007, 13 of 39 (33%) of our instructional disciplines have not yet submitted SLOs, but more than half of that 33% is because the faculty in those departments are also in other departments, and are already actively participating with SLOs. We also have a couple of disciplines with no full-time faculty, so progress is a bit slower there as well. In all, as of spring 2007 we really only have about 12% of our instructional departments that are not yet actively engaged with SLO development and/or implementation. This leaves us with approximately 88% of our instructional programs having already met our October 2007 goal.

Our student service and college operations areas are nearly on the same track regarding involvement with SLOs. Resources have been a bit harder to identify for our service areas, but that hasn't held them back from becoming fully engaged. Our service areas have slightly above an 85% involvement at this time, and are somewhat ahead of instructional areas with regard to the identification of SLO assessment tools.

The wide range of SLO activities, training sessions and college-wide attention during a number of in-service days at the college, have all contributed to a much healthier and inclusive environment for the nurturing of meaningful student learning outcomes that will lead to institutional improvement.

List of Documents:

- A. Columbia College Student Learning Outcomes Website (hardcopy format)
 - 1. Workgroup Composition
 - 2. Description of Student Learning Outcomes
 - 3. Statement of Purpose
 - 4. Columbia College History, Mission, Vision and Professionalism Statements
 - 5. *Columbia College Special Priorities 2006-2007*
 - 6. Accreditation Team Written Report, January 2006
 - 7. Columbia College Excellence Initiative
 - 8. Report to College Council, "An Integrated Approach to Ensuring Student Access & Success at Columbia College," April 2006
 - 9. *Columbia College Technology Plan*
 - 10. *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle*
 - 11. Student Learning Outcomes and Knowledge Surveys and Resource Information
 - 12. Online Models
- B. Student Learning Outcomes Workgroup and Transformational Learning Committee Meeting Minutes
- C. College Council Meeting Minutes, March 17, 2006 and April 7, 2006
- D. *Student Learning Outcomes Planning and Implementation Chart*
- E. College Communications and Emails Regarding Student Learning Outcomes

- F. Shared Folder System for College-wide Access to Student Learning Outcomes Models
- G. Columbia College Curriculum Course and Program Database
- H. Student Learning Outcomes Workshops, Presentations and In-Service Activities
- I. Student Learning Outcomes Surveys Documenting Knowledge and Training Needs
- J. Student Learning Outcomes Resources
- K. Staff Development Opportunities