



**Commendations & Recommendations from 2010 Self-Study and Site Visit**  
**Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities**

**General Commendations**

1. The Committee commends the College staff, faculty, and administration for their strong commitment to student success. Exceptional demonstrations of quality service, teaching excellence, and collaboration are evident at Lower Columbia College. As the College budget has been reduced, student enrollment and employee workloads have increased. Employees exhibit exceptional support for one another, the communities they serve, and the College Mission.
2. The Committee commends the College for implementing a Learning Commons model that has made the library the biggest classroom on campus—integrating resources for students and faculty to ensure educational success. It is a visible symbol of creativity and innovation.
3. The Committee commends the College Leadership and the Board of Trustees for strong advocacy, support, and oversight of Lower Columbia College.
4. The Committee commends the College for its active commitment to student access and success through its exemplary services, experiences, and opportunities. This was especially evident in the energy and attention given to the collaboration between Lower Columbia College and its area high schools. Noteworthy examples were the carefully designed and administered Running Start Program, dual advisory committees in career and technical education, and creative high school diploma completion efforts.
5. The Committee commends the College for its outstanding efforts in response to community needs that have changed due to the economy. Lower Columbia College faculty and staff have been responsive in serving a significant increase in students who have been negatively impacted by the recession. Working closely with community partners and employers, specialized programs have been created, and existing programs have been redesigned to serve the needs of dislocated workers, TANF recipients, incumbent workers, employers and entrepreneurs. Clearly, the College understands its mission of “**improving the quality of life in our community.**”

**General Recommendations**

1. The Committee recommends the College review resources to adequately provide student financial assistance. The current physical location of the Financial Aid Office is in an open and unsecure area. This arrangement appears to be inadequate in addressing the needs of the office to provide a secure, confidential atmosphere for discussing financial aid matters. With the increase in student demand for financial aid services, the College has not yet increased the staffing to accommodate the additional demands. (**Standards 3.A.4, 3.B.6**)
2. The Committee recommends the College evaluate the effectiveness of the faculty advising program. While the College has an active faculty advising program, the student advising

workload of each teaching faculty member, as well as the student advising preparation of each faculty member, appear inconsistent. **(Standards 2.A.5, 2.C.5, 4.A.2)**

3. The Committee recommends the College implement regular and systematic evaluation of all faculty on a continuing basis. Lower Columbia College has policies and procedures in place for both tenured and pre-tenured faculty, and the evaluation of pre-tenured faculty appears to be consistent and constructive. The evaluation for tenured faculty and part-time faculty appears to be heavily reliant on student course evaluations. **(Policy 4.1 and Standard 4.A.5)**
4. The Committee recommends the College assess the effectiveness of its internal policies and procedures. A review and update of college policies and procedures may ensure that the authority, responsibilities, and relationship among and between administration, faculty, staff, and students are clearly defined. Clarity in the role of the faculty in governance, planning, budget, and policy development needs to be clear and public. All constituencies may participate in the planning and evaluation process, and results will influence resource allocation, program improvement, and evidence of institutional effectiveness. **(Standards 6.A.1, 6.A.2, 6.A.3, 6.D)**
5. The Committee recommends the College maintain adequate financial reserves to meet fluctuations in operating revenue, expenses, and debt service. Lower Columbia College should develop a clear policy on reserve balances. The policy should clearly state the goal for reserve balance amounts, and outline appropriate use of said funds. **(Standard 7.B.7)**
6. The Committee recommends the College construct and maintain facilities with regard for health, safety, and access by the physically disabled. Disabled students should be able to access all areas of campus. While the institution has clear plans to move the fitness center from an upstairs location in the gymnasium to an accessible area, the earliest this could happen is 2013. In the meantime, the institution should provide access to the fitness center. This could be accomplished with a stair lift, new elevator, or the relocation of the center. **(Standard 8.A.5)**