Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability (Y7)

Peer-Evaluation Report

Lower Columbia College

Longview, Washington

October 17 – 19, 2018

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

Table of Contents

I.   EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Committee Members

Mr. Garth H. Sleight (Chair)
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Miles Community College

Dr. Charles Abasa-Nyarko
Former Vice President of Instruction
Central Oregon Community College

Dr. Thomas Herring
Physics Instructor
Western Nevada College

Dr. Mary Jeanne Kuhar
Vice President, Instruction (Retired)
Blue Mountain Community College

Dr. Jessica Howard
Campus President
Portland Community College – Southeast

Ms. Laura Massey
Director, Institutional Effectiveness
Portland Community College

Ms. Nancy B. Hoover
University Librarian
Marylhurst University

Mr. Jim Langstraat
Vice President, Finance and Administration
Pacific University

Liaison to the Committee

Ms. Valerie Martínez
Vice President
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

II. INTRODUCTION

Lower Columbia College (LCC), located in Longview, Washington, was established in 1934 and received its first accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) in 1948. In 1967, LCC joined the community college system of Washington, governed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The College primarily serves Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, a service district with a population of just over 100,000 inhabitants. Enrollment data provided in the 2018 *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability* (Y7) Report indicate that LCC currently enrolls over 3,000 students per quarter in credit and non-credit courses.

From October 17 to October 19, 2018, an eight-person peer-evaluation committee representing the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, accompanied by a staff liaison from the NWCCU office, conducted a *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability* (Y7) peer evaluation on the campus of Lower Columbia College. The peer-evaluation committee examined LCC based on the Policies, Eligibility Requirements, and Standards delineated in the Commission's 2017 Edition of the *Accreditation Handbook.*

The report that follows derives from the self-study and supporting documentation the members of the peer evaluation committee studied, along with the interviews they conducted with a wide array of College stakeholders.

The peer evaluation committee thanks the many people at Lower Columbia College for their laudable efforts to prepare for and participate in the meetings that took place in conjunction with the peer-evaluation process.

III. RESPONSE TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

- What are the key challenges of the institution related to the institution's graduation rate and other data provided?
- What is the institution doing to improve graduation rates?
- What initiatives appear to be effective in improving graduation rates?
- What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates?

The NWCCU requested that the evaluation committee review and discuss with LCC the challenges and effective strategies it employs to improve graduation rates. The graduation rate provided came from IPEDS data for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students graduating within 150% of normal time.

In reviewing documents, the evaluators observed data and graphs showing that student graduation and retention rates in recent years have varied by as much as 13% from one year to the next. The variability in graduation rates over time may be attributed to the relatively small number of individuals reflected in the data. For over a decade, retention rates of full-time students have risen gradually and part-time student retention rates have fallen gradually.

Concerning graduation, LCC reported rates of 27% in 2015, with an increase to 38% in 2016, its highest graduation rate in over a decade. However, in 2017, that rate fell to 28%. On average, graduation rates have increased gradually over the past decade.

The College joined the Achieving the Dream Network in 2011, and it has engaged in various initiatives to increase student completion since then. These initiatives include revisions to advising practices and new/refined pathways in pre-college English and math. The College's strong culture of assessment in program and learning outcomes, and the annual tracking of indicators related to student performance, persistence, and completion in various Core Theme Monitoring Reports might be contributing factors to the improvements in student completion.

During discussions with LCC personnel, the evaluators learned that the College anticipates that its 2018 grant from College Spark Washington to build a Guided Pathways framework will create systemic change and enhance student retention and graduation rates. In a cohort with other Washington colleges, LCC will engage in Guided Pathways implementation for five years under the grant, building upon the reforms initiated through Achieving the Dream. Work is underway to create stronger student onboarding experiences and to provide professional development for staff and faculty regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In discussions with LCC personnel, the evaluators learned that accreditors could assist the College in improving graduation rates by updating Standard 2 to encourage innovation, and by creating clarity in distinguishing between Standards 3A, 3B-4B, and 5.

IV.   ASSESSMENT OF SELF-EVALUATION AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

The self-evaluation document was well written but too succinct. As a result, the evaluators found it challenging at times to find the supporting documentation they needed to verify adherence to some of the standards. Some of the links included in the electronic version of the self-study were repetitive, and some of the links did not go to the needed information. In several instances, links went to an entire document instead of the specific part of the document. Consequently, the evaluators had to dig deep on occasion to find the information they needed.

The evaluators also received a flash drive with pertinent reference materials, which, in many instances, were helpful. At times, however, they appeared to provide just a partial response to the standard. The inability to find documentation readily meant that the evaluators had to request additional meetings, thereby reducing the time they could have spent in the workroom holding evaluator discussions and working on the report itself.

Those limitations notwithstanding, the evaluation committee wishes to acknowledge that the hard copies of supporting documentation in the workroom were most helpful. Furthermore, College personnel were timely in providing further supporting documentation and in accommodating the committee's needs for additional meetings.

V.   TOPICS ADDRESSED AS AN ADDENDUM TO THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Lower Columbia College had no additional topics to address in conjunction with its *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability* (Y7) Self-Evaluation Report.

VI. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Assessment of the Eligibility Requirements is implicitly embedded within the body of the peer-evaluation report. In this section, however, the evaluation committee notes that there was only one Eligibility Requirement that was of notable concern: Eligibility Requirement 12, as it pertains to related instruction. (See Recommendation 2 at the end of this document.) <u>The evaluation committee was satisfied that adequate evidence existed to support the remaining Eligibility Requirements.</u>

VII. MISSION, CORE THEMES, AND EXPECTATIONS

Standard 1.A – Mission

1.A.1 – 1.A.2

Lower Columbia College has the following Mission Statement: "The mission of Lower Columbia College is to ensure each learner's personal and professional success, and influence lives in ways that are local, global, traditional, and innovative."

Supplementing the College's Mission Statement is the following Vision Statement: "Our vision is to be a powerful force for improving the quality of life in our community."

Additionally, the College has articulated its institutional values, as follows: "Our campus community expects an environment of integrity, respect, collaboration, cooperation, inclusion, and innovation that fosters personal growth, academic excellence, and accountability."

These three statements, along with the College's four Core Themes, appear prominently throughout campus and in LCC publications.

As will be noted in 1.B, Lower Columbia College has four Core Themes, which form the basis for informing various planning processes and assessing mission fulfillment. The College defines mission fulfillment based on the following criteria:
1. The aspirational goal (also known as stretch goal) was achieved ("Met, and then some"), and/or
2. The mission fulfillment target (goal) was achieved ("Met"), and/or
3. Actions have been developed and/or implemented to address the deficiency ("Not met, so here's the action plan").

The College has five Monitoring Report Review Teams, which are tasked with reviewing the data gathered to assess accomplishment of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the College's four Core Themes. Throughout the year, each team provides a detailed report of its findings, along with a SWOT analysis, to the Board of Trustees, which then determines whether it is satisfied that mission fulfillment has occurred. During their planning retreats, the Trustees discuss the data to determine whether the Mission, Core Themes, Objectives, or Key Performance Indicators need to be modified for the upcoming year. On occasion, the Trustees have made the KPIs more rigorous.

Standard 1.B – Core Themes

1.B.1 – 1.B.2

In 1999, Lower Columbia College adopted seven Expected College Outcomes, which formed the basis for guiding and assessing mission fulfillment. With NWCCU's implementation of Core Themes in 2010, the Board of Trustees adapted the Expected College Outcomes to create four Core Themes. The Core Themes were operationalized by the creation of Objectives, which would be assessed by Key Performance Indicators. When a panel of three peer evaluators for NWCCU reviewed the College's Year One Self-Evaluation Report in the fall of 2011, the College was complimented for having "a clearly mapped linkage between the mission statement, the Core Themes, and the Key Performance Indicators." However, the peer evaluators determined that the "College [yet needed to] provide indicators that [were] measurable for each of the newly developed indicators not linked to Key Performance Indicators." Accordingly, the NWCCU Board of Commissioners requested that Lower Columbia College address that recommendation as an addendum to its Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report. In the fall of 2014, two peer evaluators conducted an on-site Mid-Cycle Peer Evaluation on behalf of NWCCU. In their report, the evaluators noted that "Standard One [had] been updated to include six new KPIs that, along with pre-existing KPIs mapped to the core themes, fully [assessed] Core Theme accomplishment and mission fulfillment." Accordingly, the NWCCU Board of Commissioners removed Recommendation 1 from the Year One Self-Evaluation Report.

Lower Columbia College has four Core Themes:
1. **Workforce and Economic Development**: Objective 1 has four KPIs; and Objective 2 has three KPIs.
2. **Transfer and Academic Preparation**: Objective 1 has three KPIs; Objective 2 has three KPIs; and Objective 3 has two KPIs.
3. **Student Access, Support, and Completion**: Objective 1 has three KPIs, and Objective 2 has six KPIs.
4. **Institutional Excellence**: Objective 1 has three KPIs, and Objective 2 has three KPIs.

The KPIs are crafted in a manner that the Board of Trustees and administration deem them as meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement for gauging the degree of mission fulfillment. LCC makes good use of state and national resources in defining success, gathering data, and comparing performance (e.g. CCSSE, PACE surveys, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges data, and the indicators enumerated in the AACC publication *Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges*, 3rd Edition). Although the KPIs are meaningful to the Board of Trustees and administration, it was not clear from the report, supporting documents, or interviews whether faculty, staff, or students found them to be meaningful ways of monitoring the degree of mission fulfillment. It was also not clear whether faculty, staff, or students had any clearly defined role in helping to determine the KPIs or their success measures. It appeared to the evaluators that the faculty felt as though they had input, but no direct examples were evident. Students, including student government representatives, seemed largely unaware of the Core Themes even though they are posted prominently throughout the campus.

VIII. RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

Standard 2.A – Governance

2.A.1 – 2.A.3

Lower Columbia College provides many opportunities for faculty, staff, administrators, and students to have a voice in the decision-making processes that take place. First, the Board of Trustees adheres to Washington State's Open Meeting Act (RCW 42.30). This piece of legislation ensures that all interested parties have the opportunity to attend meetings to monitor the discussions taking place and the decisions made, and the opportunity to provide input as allowed in the meeting agenda or during the time span between first and second readings of proposed actions.

Second, the evaluators learned that when new policies or procedures are under consideration, the college community has the opportunity to provide feedback prior to the first reading. Through various interviews, the evaluators learned that modifications to proposed policies and actions have occurred because of this sharing process.

Third, the College has many committees, which fall under purview of the following designations:
- President's Committees
- Human Resources Committees
- Effectiveness and College Relations Committees
- Instruction Division Committees
- Student Services Committees
- Administration Division Committees

Fourth, the College has five Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams, each of which has at least 20 members from among faculty, staff, administration, and students. Participation on these teams provides a wide cross-section of stakeholders the opportunity to study the Core Theme Objectives and Key Performance Indicators and contribute to the creation of the Monitoring Report and a SWOT analysis, which are presented to the Board of Trustees.

Finally, the College President has "Quarterly Conversations" with faculty, classified staff, and exempt staff to share what is happening at the College and to receive feedback from the different employee groups.

The Executive Leadership Team is comprised of the President, five Vice Presidents, and the Executive Assistant to the President, who takes minutes of the team meetings. All of these individuals are mindful of the need to ensure compliance with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation when engaging in collective bargaining, working with the Washington State Legislature, or responding to other external mandates.

Governing Board

2.A.4 – 2.A.8

The Board of Trustees of Lower Columbia College is comprised of five individuals who serve by appointment of the Washington Governor. Their terms last five years and are renewable one time. As the result of a meeting with the Board Chair and another member of the Board, the evaluators learned that the Trustees are a high-functioning legislative body for the College. In addition, they are invested in the College and are ardent advocates for the College. The current Board Chair has made multiple trips to Washington D.C. to advocate for the College and for higher education, in general. In particular, she participated in the effort to support the granting of the Pell Grant year-round. In addition, the Board Chair has been passionate about extending the College's outreach to a neighboring community that struggles economically. Her goal is to provide opportunities for the residents to acquire skills in the trades and tech sector.

The evaluators were particularly impressed with the Trustees' focus on student success. Trustees regularly attend LCC graduations and other College events to celebrate the students' success. The Board Chair noted that one of the Trustees is an alumnus of Lower Columbia College.

The Board of Trustees governs the College in accordance with *Board Policies*, which it reviews each year during its summer retreat. If the Trustees see the need to revise policies, they task administration and staff with the drafting of new or revised policies, which the Board of Trustees considers for possible adoption.

The Board of Trustees is the hiring authority for the College President. The Board also evaluates the President's performance annually. The Board uses multiple indices for evaluating the President, including the solicitation of feedback from faculty, staff, and administrators, along with a self-evaluation completed by the President. There are specific performance indicators that the Board of Trustees takes into consideration. If the Trustees encounter a performance issue with the President, they work with him to resolve the issue. The Trustees cited examples of how this process has worked effectively with the current College President.

The Board of Trustees also has an extensive instrument for conducting its own self-evaluation. Through this process, the Board learned of the need for, and implemented, training in government issues to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. In addition, the Trustees have an intensive onboarding training process when new Trustees are appointed to the Board. The President and Vice Presidents conduct the training to ensure the new Trustees are thoroughly familiarized with the College and with the Trustees' role as the legislative body of the College.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the Board of Trustees for its passionate advocacy of and dedicated service to Lower Columbia College and its many constituents.

Leadership and Management

2.A.9 – 2.A.11

Lower Columbia College has a robust leadership structure. It begins with the Executive Leadership Team, which is comprised of the following positions:
- President
- Vice President of Instruction
- Vice President of Administrative Services
- Vice President of Student Services
- Vice President of Effectiveness and College Relations
- Vice President of Foundation, Human Resource Services, and Legal Affairs.

In addition to the Executive Leadership Team, the College has three primary Leadership Councils:
- **Governance Council**, which consists of the President, five Vice Presidents, and six members of the faculty association. There are also sub-committees that engage in faculty negotiations.
- **Union Management Communications Committee**, which consists of the President, two Vice Presidents, two members of the exempt staff, and five members of classified staff.
- **Operations Council,** which consists of the Executive Leadership Team and all of the exempt managers.

As has been noted in 2.A.1 – 2.A.3, LCC has many committees that assist with the planning processes and leadership functions of the College. Supplementing the committees are the five Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams, which have been functioning for many years in assessing Mission and Core Theme fulfillment and providing that information to the Board of Trustees, which has ultimate oversight of College's Mission, Core Themes, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators. The Board of Trustees has been delegated the statutory authority (RCW 28B.50.140) to determine its satisfaction with the level of mission fulfillment.

The current President has been serving Lower Columbia College since 2011. President Bailey holds a J.D. degree and has a background in law, business, and higher education. During the past seven years, President Bailey has striven for a leadership style that is open, inclusive, and collaborative. During the many meetings in which the evaluators participated, they heard abundant examples that confirm how the President listens to and involves faculty, staff, and students in planning and decision-making processes.

Policies and Procedures

> **Academics**

2.A.12

Policies appear in appropriate and accessible documents. Students access much of this information through direct instruction, but they indicated that the information was not made clear

during the orientation process. Faculty are made aware of this information, particularly when changes take place, through the faculty contract and fall in-service sessions. There are many references to faculty and student handbooks, but it is not clear how well utilized these resources are despite being readily available online. Students, in particular, expressed frustration over being summarily referred to the handbook when asking questions about various policy issues.

Concern: The evaluators were unable to document whether regular review of these policies takes place.

2.A.13

The Library maintains policies and procedures related to the use of the Library and information resources.

Concern: The evaluators were unable to document whether regular review of Library policies takes place.

2.A.14

The transfer-of-credit policy is easy to find online and in the catalog. LCC bases the policy almost entirely on the Intercollegiate Relations Commission (ICRC) guidelines, which are designed with the intent of facilitating the transfer of students between institutions of postsecondary education in Washington. Students do not seem well aware of the policy but are getting information through the learning commons, Library, tutoring services, and some faculty advisors. The ICRC provides for regular review of this policy.

<u>Students</u>

2.A.15

Policies and procedures regarding Student Rights and Responsibilities, including the College Non-Discrimination Statement, are available in the LCC Student Handbook. Students are directed to contact the Disabilities Support Services Office to request accommodations, if needed. The Disabilities Support Services webpage details the process for requesting accommodation support. The Student Handbook is available online and accessible via a link in the College's electronic catalog.

2.A.16

Administrative Policy 400 describes the College's open admission policy for high school graduates and individuals 18 years of age and older with a Certificate of Educational Competence. Those who do not meet these criteria may be granted admission depending on their general educational development and ability to benefit. Administrative Policy 310.1 addresses academic suspension and readmission processes. Corresponding policies for Nursing and the Medical Assisting Programs are in program handbooks available on the web.
The College catalog and class schedule inform students of the placement assessment requirement for students who plan to earn an LCC degree or certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution.

Student Academic Grievance, which is covered by Administrative Policy 435, outlines resolution procedures for both formal and informal grievances and is described in the Student Handbook.

2.A.17

Administrative Policy 420.4 recognizes the Associated Students of Lower Columbia College (ASLCC) Executive Council as the student government organization at the College. Its purpose is to direct and manage the affairs of the student body at LCC and to represent the students. The Student Clubs, Organizations and Groups webpage contains information about existing entities, instructions regarding how to start a club, and advisor responsibilities.

Human Resources

2.A.18

Sections 200 – 265 of *Administrative Policies*, located on the College's Administrative and Board Policies webpage, address human resources policies. A review of the approval date listed with each policy revealed that almost two-thirds of the policies were last reviewed in 2009. Discussions with the College confirmed that a policy review schedule was not in place.

Concern: The evaluators were unable to document whether human resources policies and procedures undergo regular review to ensure they are consistent, fair, and equitably applied to employees and students.

2.A.19

Through the Administrative and Exempt Handbook, Classified Union Staff Contract, and the Faculty Contract Handbooks, employees are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. These documents are available on the College website.

2.A.20

Current human resources paper records are stored in locked filing cabinets located in the Human Resources (HR) Office. The onsite interview confirmed that archived records are securely stored in an underground room located in the same building. Discussions with College personnel indicated that electronic human resources information is only accessible to HR and payroll staff.

Institutional Integrity

2.A.21 – 2.A.26

From the Board of Trustees to the newest employee on campus, Lower Columbia College demonstrates an uncompromising commitment to representing itself in an ethical manner. For the past seven years, the College has had a Vice President of Foundation, Human Resource Services, and Legal Affairs who holds a J.D. degree and previously served as an attorney in a legal practice that included working with labor law. Vice President Sprague has brought to the College a clear and proactive vision of ensuring that the College treats its stakeholders in an ethical and legal manner. In cases when she needs guidance beyond her own legal expertise, she confers with the Washington State Attorney General to ensure all policies and procedures are aligned with state and federal laws, along with the standards and policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. She provides an excellent complement to the College President, who, as previously noted, is trained as a J.D. and served in the legal profession prior to his work in higher education.

The College has *Code of Ethics*, which clearly articulates the College's ethical expectations of all members of the college community. *Code of Ethics* is closely aligned with the Washington State Ethics Laws, *Administrative Policies*, and Faculty Contract. The College has policies that define and preclude conflicts of interest, and address intellectual property, accreditation status, academic freedom, and pursuit of scholarship.

Additionally, the College has two sets of policies. The first is *Board Policies*, which is legislative in nature and provides high-level direction to the College. The Board of Trustees has ultimate authority over the establishment of Board policy. The other set of policies is *Administrative Policies*. It is operational in nature and comes under the purview of the Executive Leadership Team, as informed by an extensive vetting process by the Governance Council, Union Management Communications Committee, and the rest of the campus community.

Academic Freedom

2.A.27 – 2.A.29

The issue of faculty freedom was a prominent question posed by the evaluation committee at the faculty forum. The faculty members in attendance unequivocally affirmed that they felt tremendous academic freedom, contingent upon their ensuring achievement of the course learning outcomes. The Faculty Association President, who was in attendance, read from the Faculty Contract the language that has been negotiated with regard to academic freedom.

The following evidence corroborated that the Board-approved standards of academic freedom protected faculty, staff, and students from inappropriate influences or pressures, as asserted during the faculty forum:

1. **Section 405 of the Faculty Contract**, which clearly defines academic freedom (pp 48-49).
2. **Section 420.5**, which defines freedom of expression as it pertains to students, faculty, administrators, and staff (in accordance with WAC 132M-125).
3. **LCC Administrative Policy 203**, which also addresses freedom of expression.
4. **The Faculty Handbook and Library Policy**, in which the College demonstrates how those with teaching responsibilities are expected to present scholarship objectively and fairly.

Concern: Standard 2.A.29 was not accurately addressed in the College's accreditation self-study; therefore, the evaluators had to search in the Faculty Handbook and Library Policy for evidence regarding this standard.

Finance

2.A.30

As will be demonstrated in detail in Standard 2.F – Financial Resources, Lower Columbia College provides the evidence to demonstrate, with one caveat, overall appropriate and competent management of its financial resources.

Standard 2.B – Human Resources

2.B.1

The College employs a sufficient number of employees to support the operation of the institution despite having experienced reductions in state funding. Evidence reviewed during the visit showed the number of employees (less Head Start/ECEAP employees) in 2016 was actually higher than the previous four years according to the College *2016-17 LCC Facts and Figures*. General qualifications for administrators are stated in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 131-16-080, which is available on the Washington State Legislature website.

Classified staff position descriptions follow state classification and job duties as required by the Office of Financial Management. The Human Resources (HR) team collaborates with the supervisor for each position to develop needed position description(s). A sample of administrative and classified staff position descriptions reviewed by the evaluation team found that the position descriptions accurately reflect the duties, responsibilities, and authority of each position.

Guidelines for the selection of full-time employees are detailed in the "Procedures for Recruitment and Selection of Lower Columbia College Administrator, Exempt, Classified and Faculty Positions (Full Time)" document available on the Human Resources website.

2.B.2

Administrators, exempt staff, and classified staff undergo evaluation on a regular basis. The Board of Trustees annually evaluates the President in accordance with parameters established in the Board's policy governance model. Administrators and exempt employees undergo evaluation every other year following procedures outlined on the College's Human Resources website. Per the collective bargaining agreement, classified staff reviews occur each year using a process established and required by the Washington State Department of Personnel.

2.B.3

The College is committed to providing and supporting professional development for employees through local, regional, and national conferences and training programs. College stipends, the Exceptional Faculty Fund, Foundation grants, and faculty development funding provide a variety of faculty development opportunities. The College provides ongoing training opportunities for all staff throughout the year using a distributed model of face-to-face and online instruction. Classified staff may receive an annual $150 reimbursement toward non-college trainings, conference registrations, and other approved activities. The College provides training for administrative and exempt staff, as well, and encourages leadership participation in activities such as the Washington Executive Leadership Academy.

2.B.4

The College employs a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty. Fourteen new tenure-track faculty positions have been funded in the past three years, and student-to-faculty ratios are currently 20:1. Minimum qualifications for faculty are specified by the College and based on the area in which they are teaching. A review by the evaluators of the faculty qualifications in three academic disciplines found differing and appropriate distinctions among the minimum qualifications.

2.B.5

Faculty responsibilities and workloads are commensurate with the College's expectations for teaching and service. Faculty responsibilities and workloads are determined by the supervising dean and academic department according to the workload guidelines enumerated in the Faculty Contract. Direct contact hours provide the basis for workload assignments to ensure workloads are comparable in time and effort. In addition to teaching, faculty advise up to 30 students and are compensated if that number is greater than 30. Supervising administrators, in consultation with faculty, assign College service obligations.

In discussions with College personnel, the evaluation team learned of "workload creep" concerns expressed by faculty during collective bargaining negotiations. A faculty workload study was conducted and found that workloads were fairly well distributed with a few exceptions.

2.B.6

Faculty are evaluated in a regular, systematic, and comprehensive manner using processes and measures specified in the corresponding faculty contract article for either full-time, full-time probationary, full-time temporary, or adjunct faculty. The evaluation committee found each of the four evaluation processes clearly described in the report. While the processes and evaluation data for each category of faculty assignment are the same in many areas, the use of clear, systematic processes that recognize the differences in the challenges faced by each type of assignment allows the College to collect relevant, substantive evaluative information. Evaluations occur at least every three years, with annual progress meetings during intervening years. Probationary faculty have quarterly meetings with their assigned review committee. Each faculty category evaluation process uses multiple indices of effectiveness that are directly related to faculty roles and responsibilities, such as student appraisals of instruction, administrative and/or (peer) Professional Partner observation. The evaluation process for tenured faculty is a formative process focused on improving teaching, service, professional excellence, and growth. Should concerns arise, Faculty Contract Article 306 provides direction for remediation and disciplinary actions.

High school instructors who are teaching College in the High School (CiHS) and dual credit/professional technical students undergo a rigorous evaluation before receiving approval to teach these courses. The College regularly schedules professional development days during the academic year that keep high school teachers in contact with LCC colleagues and assure the appropriate course content and rigor. Some high school teachers, particularly within the transfer courses, have ongoing collegial and supportive relationships with college faculty in their discipline or program. Efforts include regular contact, common assessments of student learning, and in-person observations, but this does not appear to be monitored or tracked by the College in a consistent manner for dual credit/professional technical instructors beyond attendance at the required in-service days.

Concern: The evaluators did not find evidence that high school instructors who are teaching College in the High School (CiHS) and dual credit/professional technical students undergo regular and systematic evaluation once they complete the initial instructor approval process. The evaluators also failed to discover evidence that students participate in course/instructor evaluations in a consistent manner.

Standard 2.C – Education Resources

2.C.1

LCC provides a wide range of programs and courses that allow students to pursue a variety of educational and employment goals. The College offers transfer degrees, professional/technical degrees and certificates, basic adult education, community education, and corporate training. Programs are offered at the main campus located in Longview, Washington. LCC also offers an Associate in Nursing – Direct Transfer Agreement (LPN2RN-eLearning) as an online program, which serves students from all over the state. The College provides several options to enter the educational pathway, including Running Start, Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training

(iBEST), College in the High School (CiHS), and Individualized Certificate Programs (ICP). ICP serves a small number of students in cooperation with regional employers requiring specialized professional/technical skills.

The evaluators met with the Vice President of Instruction, Instructional Leadership, Instructional Council, Instructional Assessment Committee, 2018 Summer Assessment Institute faculty, faculty members, and students. Learning outcomes for academic programs are published in Program Planners, in the College catalog, and on the College website. The Syllabus Template and the Course Plan document clearly identify individual course learning outcomes (also referred to as measurable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities). The Curriculum Committee reviews and approves outcomes for new or revised courses or programs to assure appropriate rigor.

Faculty members demonstrate clear engagement and enthusiasm regarding assessment, and the faculty-led Instructional Assessment Committee has done an admirable job in collaborating with and supporting faculty in creating a culture of assessment. Assessment of student learning is an integral part of the Curriculum and Program Review process. Faculty are provided with resources including a Faculty Assessment Handbook, resources published on the Instructional Assessment website, and professional development opportunities during two dedicated instructional assessment days to collaborate and refine outcomes and participate in course and program assessment. Faculty shared examples of assessment projects (such as those in writing, math, and business) which led to significant changes that improved student learning. While all faculty, including part-time instructors, are invited to participate in assessment work and to submit artifacts, this is a completely voluntary process. Currently, no outreach to faculty teaching College in High School (CiHS) or dual credit/professional technical courses occurs and thus these teachers are not participating in the College assessment processes.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College faculty and staff, which, under the leadership of the Instructional Assessment Committee, have been especially successful in creating and maintaining a culture of assessment. The established processes and tools for Curriculum and Program Review, including data and assistance provided by the College Effectiveness and Relations staff, are robust and comprehensive.

Concern: Some program and course outcomes, while meaningful and measurable, appear more like comprehensive skill sets rather than broader course/program outcomes. The evaluators did not find evidence of any systematic process for periodically reviewing and updating course or program outcomes.

Concern: While the current faculty hiring processes and the faculty handbook clearly state that assessment of student learning is required of all faculty, the entire process as it currently exists relies on voluntary participation. Evaluators did not find sufficient evidence that over time, all courses and instructors will participate in assessment projects that improve student learning.

Concern: The evaluators did not find evidence of a process for systematic oversight or accountability by the Instructional Assessment Committee or the Office of Instruction regarding the quality of the Curriculum and Program Review reports. While some reports

were comprehensive and complete, others had sections that contained little or no information or analysis. As a result of discussions with faculty and instructional leadership, the evaluators surmised that review of the completed documents is informal and inconsistent, and there is no indication on the reporting tool documenting that it has been reviewed and/or revised. Additionally, after reviewing a sampling of Advisory Committee meeting minutes, evaluators found no evidence to support the claim that the Curriculum and Program Review reports are routinely shared with industry partners on the Workforce Program Advisory Committees for feedback and program improvement.

2.C.2

General education outcomes (Global Skills) are listed in the College's catalog, which is available to all students on the website. Learning outcomes for programs are published in program planners, in the College catalog, and on the College website. A course syllabus and the Course Plan clearly identify individual course learning outcomes (also referred to as measurable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities), which are provided to the student in written form or within the Canvas Learning Management System during the first week of the term.

2.C.3

The report provides a clear summary of standards. Information is easily found on the website and in the catalog. Assessment of student achievement and its applicability to programs is built into the Curriculum and Program Assessment process. The report references course syllabi as a source of information on grading procedures, but course syllabi were not readily accessible. The requirements are consistent with generally accepted outcomes, norms, or equivalencies.

2.C.4

Information regarding admission and program graduation requirements is reasonably well defined and widely published both in print and online. Students are confused by some recent changes in program requirements and were unsure of how to provide feedback on them. Faculty have designed, implemented, and used results from program assessments on sequence of courses and synthesis of learning, but there is no clear documentation process related to these activities. LCC provides Program Planners via the website and catalog which list relevant program requirements and outcomes.

Distance Education:

LCC's distance education programs are overseen by appropriate instructional deans, depending on the department in which each program is housed. A dean manages the eLearning department at LCC as a part of Learning Commons, which also includes the Library and tutoring services. The future of distance education at LCC most certainly lies in the eLearning department and in the newly established eLearning committee. Cooperative effort between faculty and staff is evident and deliberate in the case of online course and program offerings. However, clear policy, oversight, consistency, and deliberate planning of a distance learning initiative are in their infancy.

In order to address the topic of distance education, the evaluation committee used the NWCCU Distance Education Policy as the template for addressing the specific items listed in that document. For clarity, they are shown here as a bulleted list, with responses and information under each bullet.

- **Distance education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the Institution.**

The online programs offered at LCC are consistent with the mission and objectives as stated in the report. These programs have mostly evolved from existing traditional programs, as the courses involved have been moved online as enrollment demands change.

- **Distance education programs are integrated into the regular planning processes of the institution.**

The newly established eLearning committee established its mission and goals based on the Academic Master Plan. The new committee has started well in integrating planning into the design of online programs. Existing online programs have been one-at-a-time efforts driven by motivated faculty, deans, and the eLearning staff. Current online offerings were not part of any coordinated plan. However, the newly established eLearning committee is aware of this need and has already taken appropriate steps to address it.

- **The institution provides sufficient resources – financial, human, physical, technological – to support its distance education programs.**

The eLearning program at LCC is largely funded by the Distance Education Fee charged to students enrolled in courses that use Canvas, LCC's Learning Management System, or other online systems. This pays the salaries of the two eLearning staff as well as part of the dean who oversees the department in addition to providing for most other costs. Some supplemental funds are provided by the dean from other sources, but it is not clear whether these funds will always be available. Despite some funding issues, the staff seem to operate well, given their limited resources. They also stated that they were consulted and included in budget decisions regarding their responsibilities. Given the rapid growth of online education, this may not be a sustainable funding model, but it has provided at least sufficient support so far.

- **Operation of distance education programming is incorporated into the governance system of the institution.**

With the recent establishment of the eLearning Committee, this item has been satisfied. The deliberate and thoughtful design of the committee's mission, goals, and bylaws shows an awareness of institutional needs and the governance system that provides oversight.

- **The institution's academic unit exercises oversight of distance education programs, ensuring both the rigor of the program and the quality of instruction.**

Online courses are included in the Curriculum and Program Review process. That process does not directly address any differences between traditional and online programs. However, eLearning policy requires faculty to be trained in the Learning Management System.

- **Courses and programs offered via distance education maintain the same academic standards as those offered on the main campus.**

The eLearning Committee is beginning to coordinate with faculty regarding quality assurance processes, policies, procedures, and guidelines. While there is some oversight of these programs, it is not being carried out in a systematic or consistent manner at this time. The eLearning committee has started efforts to develop a more rigorous and consistent process for evaluating online course quality. These efforts are well documented through their meeting minutes. The evaluation committee believes that the eLearning committee and staff have a well-reasoned plan and processes that will complement and enhance the oversight of online courses and programs.

- **On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of distance education programs.**

The design of online courses and programs at LCC is accomplished by on-campus faculty with support from the eLearning staff. Oversight from the dean level is highly dependent on the departmental dean, and no consistent policy defines the role of involved parties in the design of online courses or programs.

- **The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of each distance education program, including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction, to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.**

Existing online programs are assessed in the same way as their face-to-face counterparts, as they are seen at the institution as simply one possible path to a degree, which happens to be comprised entirely of online courses. This assessment process includes the requisite elements and makes comparison to campus-based programs inherent in the process.

- **Students enrolled in distance education programs have adequate access to and make effective use of learning resources, including Library, information resources, laboratories and equipment.**

The Library policies and procedures are well defined in providing access to online learners on a variety of ways. Library staff in cooperation with the eLearning staff have done extremely well in accommodating a wide variety of access issues. The online nursing program arranges the clinical components of its program by coordinating with appropriate facilities near an online student's home, with assistance and oversight from nursing faculty.

- **Students enrolled in distance education programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, academic advising, course registration, and career and placement counseling.**

The online presence of student services is adequate for providing access in the requisite areas. In addition, some faculty advisors, and especially the eLearning staff and Library staff, aid students in accessing information and services through a variety of means. It is clear that helping all students, regardless of physical location, is a cultural norm at LCC.

- **Publications and advertising for distance education programs are accurate and contain necessary information such as the program's goals, requirements, academic calendar, and faculty.**

The information about online programs and courses is readily accessible via the Online and Registration Services web page (https://lowercolumbia.edu/online-services/index.php). Program information is sometimes still tied to the traditional program but is still readily available via the catalog or website.

- **Contractual relationships and arrangements with consortial partners, if any, are clear and guarantee that the institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of distance education programs. Where the institution has entered into contractual relationships involving credits and degrees, it has obtained Commission approval for the substantive change.**

LCC does not currently have any online consortial partners.

2.C.5

Feedback received at the faculty forum seemed to confirm a strong sense of collective responsibility for student learning outcomes. Through well-defined structures and processes with clearly defined authority and responsibilities, LCC faculty exercise a major role in the design, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. The College has a Curriculum Committee that reports to the Instructional Council. This committee reviews and makes recommendations concerning all curriculum. Committee membership includes faculty members from professional-technical education and academic transfer education. The Faculty Handbook outlines the process for reviewing, revising, or removing existing curriculum. Faculty also engage actively in the hiring process of other full-time faculty through participation in faculty search committees.

2.C.6

Teaching faculty partner with the librarians to ensure that information literacy is integrated into the curriculum. Critical thinking is embedded in Global Skills outcomes and is taught by librarians and assessed as part of the Summer Assessment Institute. In addition, librarians visit classes to instruct students in the use of Library resources, including the ability to identify information needs; to locate, evaluate and synthesize information; and to cite sources correctly.

2.C.7

The College offers several opportunities for credit for experiential learning (non-traditional credits), including Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Exam Placement (CLEP), military experience, course equivalency assessment, credit for professional certificates, foreign transcript credits, credit by challenge, and International Baccalaureate (IB) credits. The website also contains a table with links applicable for specific programs, such as equivalencies for Microsoft certifications for the Business Technology degree and Basic Childcare Certificate for Early Childhood Education.

The College has clear policies on these alternative methods, as stated in the College catalog (pages 20 and 21 under "Non-traditional Credits"), along with the credit limits for each type of option. Policies align with guidelines from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Guidelines for awarding of credits are established with recommendation of program faculty.

2.C.8

The College complies with the policies enacted by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) relative to transfer students from any in-state or regionally accredited institution of higher learning. Furthermore, SBCTC has implemented a common course numbering system and reciprocity agreements that facilitate student transfer within the state's community and technical college system. The LCC Catalog indicates that the College only accepts lower division transfer credit from postsecondary institutions accredited by the six regional accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. LCC follows the American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for transfer of military credit. The catalog also outlines policies for accepting equivalent general education coursework, major-related coursework, and residency requirements for earning a degree at the College. When patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements between the institutions.

Undergraduate Programs

2.C.9

Transfer associate degree programs at LCC include identifiable general education student learning outcomes (Global Skills) at the course and program levels. This general education core follows the Associate Degree Guidelines developed by the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC) and satisfies general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree at all of Washington state's public four-year institutions.

The evaluators did not find any identifiable core of related instruction in the areas of Communication, Computation, and Human Relations for applied degree and certificate programs. The self-study report and the college catalog both articulate that students completing

applied degree and certificate programs achieve proficiency in Global Skills. See 2.C.11 for further discussion and concern.

2.C.10

General education components at LCC are referred to as Global Skills, which are as follows: Communication, Critical Thinking, Interpersonal Relations, and Numeracy. The Instructional Assessment Committee supports institutional accountability by facilitating the assessment of student learning outcomes in each of these areas. These outcomes are published in the college catalog and on the website with the statement, "LCC faculty developed a set of global skills that provide the foundation of the learning outcomes for all courses, programs, certificates and degrees at the College. Students are expected to have these skills when they graduate."

This committee, in cooperation with the Office of Instruction and Office of Effectiveness and College Relations, sponsors a yearly Summer Assessment Institute during which faculty come together to review artifacts of student learning for an identified Global Skill. Each skill is normally reviewed on a four-year cycle. In the spring, the Chair of the Instructional Assessment Committee sends out a notification to faculty (both full- and part-time) soliciting applications for the Institute and requesting submission of student artifacts; however, high school instructors teaching CiHS courses are not contacted. Ten faculty, selected by the Vice President of Instruction after an application process, participate in intensive norming to assure inter-rater reliability and then evaluate approximately 100 artifacts using approved rubrics. At the end of the three-day institute, faculty review the data against the established benchmark and develop recommendations for improvements. This report is shared with faculty at the fall assessment in-service day. Faculty sponsor in-service activities to facilitate improvements. These in-service meetings result in new or improved assignments and "Make and Take" documents. Faculty speak enthusiastically about the Summer Institute and credit it with creating the high level of existing support for assessment work and commitment to improving student learning.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College's Summer Assessment Institute for being an effective means of assessing Global Skills using established rubrics, a variety of student learning artifacts, and an established norming process. This process demonstrates successful "closing the loop" actions which result in improved teaching and learning.

2.C.11

The College states in the catalog and in the self- study report that all students earning a certificate or degree at LCC are expected to demonstrate achievement of the Global Skills. For applied degree and certificate programs, there is no separate list of identifiable and assessable learning outcomes provided in the report, on the website, or in the catalog, nor a description of how the related instruction components of Communication, Computation, and Human Relations are aligned with the Global Skills. The evaluators reviewed the Global Skills Assessment reports from the Summer Assessment Institute and did not find any reference to assessment of related instruction components. An interview with the Instructional Dean who oversees many of the Professional/Technical programs confirmed that such a list does not currently exist. She did state

that the Curriculum Committee is aware of this discrepancy and plans to address this deficiency this year.

Concern: The evaluators did not find evidence that applied degree and certificate programs have identifiable and assessable related instruction components— communication, computation, and human relations—that align with and support program outcomes.

Graduate Programs

2.C.12 – 2.C.15   Not applicable

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs

2.C.16

Continuing Education, known at LCC as Corporate and Continuing Education, reports directly to the Office of the President, and supports the College's mission by providing a variety of training and non-credit courses to individuals and business/industry partners to meet personal, professional, and corporate training goals. The fall 2018 Course Schedule publication lists several training opportunities, including Mental Health First Aid Core, OSHA Construction Safety Certification, and Flagger Certification. Personal enrichment courses are offered in painting, mixed media and collage, as well as a variety of health and wellness courses. Online options are also available through Ed2go.

2.C.17

Evaluators spoke with the Executive Director of Corporate Partnerships and Training and confirmed that the College has established procedures for approving non-credit courses, recruiting instructors, and evaluating quality and student satisfaction. There is an established process for developing new courses that includes creation of a course description and course outcomes. Instructors are provided an Instructor Packet and evaluated using a written course evaluation. This evaluation is included as a KPI for Core Theme I-G, "Client assessment of programs and services." This KPI has been tracked since 2012-13 and shows 98-99% satisfaction.

The department is well connected with the employer community and is responsive to requests for corporate training. When evaluators met with a representative of the Longview Chamber of Commerce, he referred to LCC as a "jewel of the community." In cases of customized training in which the employer desires to have an option for students to obtain credit that may be applied to an existing degree or certificate, program faculty are asked to evaluate existing program courses and, if possible, modify existing courses to meet employer needs. There is close alignment between the Continuing Education department and the Dean of Workforce Education. When the community indicated the need for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program, this began as a non-credit program, and then went through the Curriculum Committee to be approved as an eight-credit program/course that could be applied to the Diesel Technology program,

thereby offering students expanded opportunities for funding, including federal financial aid. If a new course is designed, it must be approved by the Curriculum Committee through the normal process to assure academic rigor.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the department of Corporate Partnerships and Training for being so responsive to community and employer needs and for having a well-established process for creating and implementing corporate training programs, including the flexibility to partner with the Office of Instruction to create credit courses that are aligned with existing degree and certificate programs.

2.C.18

Continuing Education Units (CEUs), when granted, are awarded based on national, state, and College standards which require identified student learning outcomes, documented student achievement, and the number of hours of instruction. The department of Corporate Partnerships and Training has an established policy regarding the awarding of CEUs and files yearly reports with the Washington Office of Public Instruction.

2.C.19

Every participant in non-credit classes is enrolled into the Student Management System and receives a Certificate of Participation that verifies attendance and the number of CEUs earned. This serves as documentation that may be presented to the employer or another interested party to demonstrate completion of the training or course.

The Continuing Education Department maintains files that include course names, descriptions and course objectives.

Standard 2.D – Student Support Resources

2.D.1

More than 50 student services and programs, with corresponding links to College webpages, are identified in the report as supporting the needs of learners and contributing to an effective learning environment.

Comments from student forums addressed the extent to which the College provides students an effective and supportive learning environment. Students spoke positively about the athletic facilities, tutoring, i-Best (referred to as the "Gold Star" of the College), distance learning, Veterans' support, day care, TRiO programs and numerous other services. On the other hand, students expressed angst over being misadvised on the correct course(s) to take, lack of available parking, limited Food Service hours, unsatisfactory communication with the Financial Aid Office, and the lack of a lactation space in the new Health and Science Building.

2.D.2

The evidence provided to the evaluation committee demonstrated exceptional planning, implementation, delivery, and assessment of services delivered by the Safety and Security Department to ensure a safe campus environment for all. Crime statistics, campus security policies, and other disclosures required under federal and state regulations are available on the Safety and Security webpages. College employees participate in numerous training events throughout the year, including campus-wide drills for the entire college community. When attendees at student, faculty, and staff forums were asked by the evaluation committee, "Do you feel safe at this College?" without hesitation each group responded with a resounding "Yes!"

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College, which, under the leadership of the Safety and Security Department, makes extraordinary provisions for the safety and security of its students and their property at all locations where it offers programs and services.

2.D.3

The College has an open admission policy for high school graduates and for individuals who have earned a Certificate of Educational Competence. Those who do not meet these criteria may be granted admission depending on their general educational development and ability to benefit. Multiple areas of the College do outreach and recruiting throughout the College's service district.

Entering students who plan to earn an LCC degree or certificate, or who plan to transfer to a university, are required to take the placement assessment or equivalent test before enrolling. The Testing Center assists with determining appropriate placement.

All new students are required to attend a new student orientation prior to registering for courses. Degree-seeking students are encouraged to develop an educational plan to complete their degree or certificate to underscore the importance of having and using a plan to guide completing a certificate or degree. The New Student Orientation process was completely revamped as a result of the College's six-year experience with Achieving the Dream. It is unclear if the negative student forum comments reflected the older or revised orientation process.

2.D.4

Eleven degree and certificate programs have been terminated or suspended since the last accreditation visit. Information obtained on the visit indicated that five of the programs did not have students enrolled at the time of termination. Teach-out plans were created for the remaining programs.

2.D.5

All elements of 2.D.5 are available to students and other stakeholders with most items located in the College catalog. Student conduct regulations, rights, and responsibilities are in the Student Handbook. Tuition, fees, and program costs are listed in the class schedule.

2.D.6

Program descriptions with specific application materials, which are located on the College website, include legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation for applicable programs. Notification is also included in the description for those programs in which the awarding of an LCC credential is contingent upon successful completion of an external test or exam.

2.D.7

The College follows the Washington State Community and Technical College system general records retention schedule. Records are scanned into the College's document imaging system prior to disposal in the event of a need for future reference.

Although record storage was not addressed in the materials provided to the evaluation committee, discussions with the College revealed that records are backed up and stored through the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges network.

The College catalog and website publish student rights provided by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The College follows FERPA and WAC 132M-133 rules for releasing student records. Students may request a copy of their records at any time by following the College's request procedure.

2.D.8

The College disburses federal and state financial aid, and LCC Foundation scholarships. Financial aid information is available to prospective and enrolled students through the College Financial Aid and Scholarships webpage, the comprehensive LCC Financial Aid Handbook, the LCC Financial Aid Portal, and the Scholarships webpage.

At both student forums, students expressed angst with communication challenges they have experienced with the Financial Aid Office. They opined that they were not getting the help they needed, that communication could be slow, and that they were frequently told to "look in the Financial Aid Handbook" when asking a question at the front desk.

In discussions with College personnel, the evaluation team was informed that the Financial Aid front desk is often staffed by College work-study students with limited financial aid expertise. This is a challenge that merits further consideration so that students are better served by interacting with staff members that have greater financial aid expertise.

Concern: During the two student forums, the evaluators became aware of the College's need to enhance the tools and processes currently in place to ascertain student satisfaction with Financial Aid services to verify student concerns and develop strategies to address any concerns that may be valid.

2.D.9

The Financial Aid Handbook describes the circumstances in which changes in student enrollment affect repayment of awarded aid. The "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) section on the Financial Aid webpage informs students of loan repayment obligations and the requirements of Exit Loan Counseling. The FAQ also encourages students to "consider loans as a last resort for funding your education" and describes the negative consequences for failing to make required loan payments.

The College regularly monitors its student loan programs and loan default rates. Total aid disbursement, the percent attributed to loans, and the three-year-cohort loan-default rate are monitored and reported in the annual Access and Completion Monitoring Report. In discussions with College staff, the evaluators learned that a variety of approaches are utilized to manage the loan default rates. Some of the tactics include encouraging students to complete the SALT (financial literacy) certificate courses and evaluating programs that pose a high risk of loan default, and then proactively reaching out to students entering those programs to provide additional guidance.

2.D.10 Academic Advising

Advising requirements are published on the Advising webpage and College catalog. Students are assigned a faculty advisor following student orientation. Newly hired personnel with advising responsibilities are prepared by participating in an orientation on curriculum, program, and graduation requirements via a ten-hour Advising Institute, and by receiving mentoring from an experienced advisor. In discussions with College personnel, the evaluation committee noted that prior to the recently developed Advising Institute, the academic departments were responsible for providing all of the advising training needed by faculty.

Advising occurs online through Canvas. Entry-related topics are addressed at the New Student Orientation. Faculty and staff use the Advisor Data Portal for entering advising notes and reviewing student records.

As part of the development of Guided Pathways, the College is planning to move toward a team-advising approach by incorporating faculty and staff with expertise in financial aid and transfer options.

At both of the student forums, students expressed frustration over challenges related to advising. The primary concerns voiced by students were that they were not able to get in touch with faculty advisors; and they sometimes received incorrect advising, resulting in their taking courses that did not apply toward their intended degree requirements.

Concern: During the two student forums, the evaluators became aware of the College's need to enhance the tools and processes currently in place to ascertain student satisfaction with academic advising to verify student concerns and develop strategies to address any concerns that may be valid.

2.D.11

The Associated Students of Lower Columbia College (ASLCC) funds the co-curricular groups, organizations, and student clubs. ASLCC, which reports to the Assistant Director of Student Programs, employs student representatives who work directly with academic programs and other College departments in providing co-curricular offerings. Although the self-study report stated that policies and procedures are in place which clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of students and the College with regard to activities and funding, it was unclear exactly what those are, given that the link provided was to the general webpage listing all Administrative and Board Policies.

Concern: The evaluators found no additional evidence to indicate that co-curricular activities are "governed appropriately" by methods beyond the reporting line to the Assistant Director of Student Programs.

2.D.12

The College owns and operates a self-supporting Bookstore, Food Services, and Fitness Center. Discussions with the College and feedback from student forums indicated that in general, these services contributed to the campus community and student learning environment, although students did share some challenges. These services receive input from the college community from a variety of sources, including the Operations Council, Fitness Center Advisory Committee, Bookstore Committee, and Foodservice Committee, as well as feedback from student and employee surveys.

In discussions with the College, the evaluators noted efforts by the Bookstore to reduce costs of educational materials for students, including outreach to faculty to assist with access and delivery of Open Education Resources (OERs), even though increased use of OERs would reduce Bookstore revenue. Student forum comments included the desire for more preparation by the Bookstore to have sufficient books at the beginning of the term, improved communication between faculty and the Bookstore, and access to a Bookstore payment plan.

The Fitness Center received positive comments from students, as well as college faculty and staff. The facility is available to students for $20 per quarter and College employees for $50 per quarter.

Students expressed frustration that the cafeteria is not open beyond 1:30 p.m. The evaluators shared this feedback during an onsite interview and were informed that the hours were limited due to staff availability, and that to extend the hours would not cover the additional costs. It was unclear to the evaluators whether these staffing and fiscal realities had been conveyed to ASLCC.

2.D.13

The College has six intercollegiate athletic sport teams that compete in the Northwest Athletic Conference (NWAC). Students participating in intercollegiate athletics and co-curricular programs are subject to all LCC admission requirements and procedures, degree requirements, and financial aid awards. Athletic-related financial aid is distributed following policies set by NWAC. Students receiving athletic-related aid are required to maintain full-time enrollment, meet GPA standards, and comply with study table hours.

A budget is submitted each year to the Associated Students of Lower Columbia College (ASLCC) requesting student service fee dollars, which fund the program. During the onsite visit, staff explained that the Athletic Department, with some support from the LCC Foundation, is responsible for all scholarship fundraising. These scholarships assist with recruiting both local and out-of-state students, and in particular, potential student-athletes located in the nine-state area in which NWAC allows the College to recruit out-of-state.

2.D.14

Students access Canvas, the College's Learning Management System, by using their LCC accounts. Instructors of online courses verify student identity in the assessment process by administering exams in the on-campus-proctored Testing Center, at an instructor-approved off-campus setting, or through an authorized online proctoring service. If an instructor requires the use of a fee-based proctoring service, students are informed of testing-related charges in the course shell, syllabus, and class schedule.

Standard 2.E – Library and Information Resources

2.E.1

The Library at LCC is a vibrant and popular space that is beloved and heavily used by students. Library, tutoring, and e-learning reside together in the Learning Commons to serve students by inviting them into the space where Library staff can assist them with a variety of needs. Library staff create a friendly, welcoming environment, and always go the extra mile to ensure students' needs are met. The Library and Learning Commons have consistently received high marks for the past five years on the Student Service Surveys.

A Collection Development Committee, composed of faculty from all academic departments, approves purchases of resources for the Library. The Library holds or provides access to Library and information resources that support the curriculum at LCC.

Participating in a statewide initiative to create and use Open Educational Resources (OERs), the Library created an advocacy plan and worked with faculty to create resources to replace expensive textbooks. The initial plan offered financial incentives to faculty to create OERs for their courses. The class schedule identifies those courses using OERs, thereby letting students know which courses may be more affordable. Librarians do the heavy lifting of editing texts and

create PDFs of OERs, which can be accessed online or purchased at the Bookstore in print for $30.

The Library recently severed ties to the shared catalog with the local public Library and transitioned to the ExLibris catalog. This was done to promote increased usability of online resources and to make it easier for students to locate information. While this change was needed and has improved access to information, this transition also brought increased costs and a greater workload for the Library staff who manage the new system. The Library budget does not include all the money necessary to pay for the new online system or to offset the inflationary increases for online resources.

The new B.A.S. degree in Early Childhood Education will stretch the already thinly-stretched staff to support these students. Surveying other schools that offer this degree showed that their libraries experienced a significant impact from the addition of this program. Although money for resources has been approved to support this program, no additional staffing is part of the plan. The President is committed to creating a strong program, and the Library will be an important part of the new program's success.

2.E.2

Planning and decision making for Library resources is inclusive. Student surveys seek input about Library use and tutors. In addition, the Library works with student leadership to gather feedback on ways to improve service to students. Recent initiatives include purchasing paperbacks for pleasure reading and DVDs. The evaluators talked to students who expressed frustration with the early closing of the Library on Fridays. The students also expressed a desire for more evening study space.

Planning for an interior remodel was guided by input from students, who requested more quiet space, more study space, and coffee. Faculty need a dedicated classroom to be able to bring classes to the Library for interactive learning sessions. In response, the Library has finalized a plan for a remodel that includes more study space, a classroom for teaching and a more welcoming entrance. The Library is purchasing a Keurig coffee machine for the circulation desk.

Preparation has already begun with moving periodicals to open up the area upstairs for a classroom. Unfortunately, the plan for the remodel, which had been approved, was put on hold after the money set aside for the work was redirected to remodel the Main Building. The Library staff is hopeful that the plan for the Library remodel will come to fruition in the next budgeting cycle.

2.E.3

Instruction is a priority for the Library. Librarians work closely with teaching faculty to offer workshops, teach information literacy modules, and create instructional materials for research-based courses. Librarians are receptive to requests from faculty to create individualized subject-specific resources or to create video tutorials for online courses.

The lack of a dedicated classroom within the Library makes teaching a challenge. This has been mitigated by the purchase of a roving lab of mobile Chromebooks. This is a temporary fix until the Library is able to build its own classroom for teaching research skills.

Reference librarians staff the Reference Desk in the Library for walk-in or appointment-based assistance. When the Library is closed, there is a 24-7 online chat service to assist students with their research needs.

2.E.4

Assessment and program review are ongoing and integrated into the teaching and learning process in Library instruction. Librarians use surveys and collect artifacts after they conduct workshops to improve their teaching. Data gathered from assessment tools are used to improve services and instruction.

Library and information resources and services undergo regular and systematic evaluation. Librarians and staff participate in collection maintenance to ensure that Library resources are current and adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. The Collection Development Committee reviews requests for additions and closely examines use of costly resources with an eye to purchasing more relevant material.

Concern: The evaluators are concerned that the already-stretched-thin Library personnel are being further strained under the weight of managing online systems and supporting new programs such as the upcoming B.A.S. program in Early Childhood Education.

Standard 2.F – Financial Resources

2.F.1

The College's net position at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2017 was $60,076,713, representing a decrease of 4.2% from the previous year. Unrestricted net assets as of June 30, 2017, were only $104,788, only .23% of FY 2017's operating expenses of $44,653,606. Unrestricted net assets decreased from $5,663,367 in FY 2016, with most of the decrease being due to an increase in the pension liability.

Continuing a trend that began midway through FY 2009, the College's state operating appropriations decreased each fiscal year through FY 2013. The state of Washington appropriates funds to the community college system as a whole. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) then allocates monies to each college. System-level appropriations hit their height in FY 2009, and as of FY 2013, state appropriations had been reduced by almost 24%. In FY 2014, the Legislature reinstated a small portion of the previous cuts. However, for the first time in 17 years, SBCTC has changed the way it distributes state funds to college districts. In FY 2017, the SBCTC implemented a new allocation model, changing how the state-allocated funds are distributed to each college. The new model is based on performance in several key indicators, from general enrollments to enrollments in high-cost

programs, as well as student completion and achievement points. The model is based on a three-year rolling average of enrollments and completions, comparative to other institutions in the state. Although the College continues to see a decrease in enrollment, when comparing enrollment to the other colleges in the system, a small increase in state operating appropriations is anticipated in the next few fiscal years.

Following a trend that began in FY 2009, the College's state operating appropriations continued to decrease through FY 2016. Beginning in FY 2016, the Legislature enacted the Affordable Education Act, which reduced tuition by 5% at the College. This will further reduce the amount of tuition collected by the College. The Legislature did, however, backfill a portion of this loss.

The College has continually sought opportunities to identify savings and efficiencies. Over time, the College has decreased spending and services because it was subject to various state spending freezes and employee salary reductions.

The College is exposed to various risks of loss related to tort liability; injuries to employees; errors and omissions; theft of, damage to, and destruction of assets; and natural disasters. The College purchases insurance to mitigate these risks. Management believes such coverage is sufficient to preclude any significant uninsured losses for the covered risks. The College, in accordance with state policy, pays unemployment claims on a pay-as-you-go basis. The College finances these costs by assessing on all funds a monthly payroll expense for unemployment compensation for all employees.

The College participates in a State of Washington risk management self-insurance program, which covers its exposure to tort, general damage, and vehicle claims. Premiums paid to the State are based on actuarially determined projections and include allowances for payments of both outstanding and current liabilities. Coverage is provided up to $10,000,000 for each claim with no deductible. The College has had no claims in excess of the coverage amount within the past three years. In addition, the College purchases insurance from the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services. These policies cover such areas as property, buildings, athletics, and medical malpractice liabilities.

The College has stayed current on the repayment of its long-term liabilities and includes the required repayments in its budget. In December 2012, the College obtained financing in order to fund the construction of the Health and Science Building through certificates of participation (COP), issued by the Washington Office of State Treasurer (OST) in the amount of $31,550,000. The interest rate charged is 3.10% for a term of twenty years. In December of 2015, the College obtained financing in order to fund the renovation of the College's Fitness Center with COPs issued by the Washington Office of State Treasurer (OST) in the amount of $ 2,910,000. The interest rate charged is 3.42129% for a term of twenty years. The Fitness Center COP will be paid for by student fees as approved by ASLCC.

2.F.2

In order to maximize enrollment, and therefore funding, Lower Columbia College engages in strategic enrollment planning. Additional benefits of strategic enrollment planning include

unification of practices, policies and procedures in support of student success; increased student retention; and creation of a more vibrant and supportive collegiate environment.

To that end, Lower Columbia College identified the following enrollment initiatives for 2017-18:
1. **Academic Advising**: integrate mandatory and intrusive academic advising model throughout LCC.
2. **Athletics**: increase the number of student athletes attending LCC.
3. **BAS degree**: explore the possibility of adding one or more applied baccalaureate degrees.
4. **Career assessment**: develop a directed career self-assessment to assist students in choosing a "meta-major."
5. **Corporate training**: increase the amount of revenue obtained through contract training.
6. **International Programs**: increase the number of international students attending LCC.
7. **Multicultural outreach**: increase racial and ethnic diversity in the LCC student population.
8. **Arts**: increase course offerings in the performing arts.
9. **Non-academic supports**: increase non-academic support for students and build a "one-stop" center for student engagement.
10. **eLearning**: increase the number of direct transfer courses offered online.
11. **Professional/Technical Enrollment and Outreach**: increase enrollment in workforce programs.
12. **Reputation/Brand Identity**: increase the overall reputation of the institution through enhanced brand identity.
13. **University Center**: increase the number of students transferring from LCC to baccalaureate programs.

To understand the current budget and trends, financial statements were reviewed through the end of June 2018. The FY 2018 General Fund revenue budget was $23,139,786, and actual collections were $23,621,046. The FY 2018 General Fund expenditure budget was also $23,139,786, and actual expenditures were $23,410,681. It appears that the developed budget is realistic compared to actual results.

In FY 2018, 62.7% of operating revenues came from the state allocation; 22.9% came from tuition and fees; and 14.4% came from local sources.   A review of the financial information since 2013 revealed a 16.6% growth in revenue from $20,071,824 to $23,621,046. During this time, there was an increase in the percentage of revenue from the state allocation and from tuition and fees, and a decrease in the funding from local sources.

For FY 2018, 42.6% of operating expenditures was for Instruction; 8.0% was for Academic Support Services; 1.9% was for the Library; 14.4% was for Student Services; 19.1% was for Institutional Support; and 14.0% was for Plant Operations. A review of the financial information since 2013 revealed a 5.19% growth in expenditures from $21,714,190 to $22,840,933. There were decreases in the percentage of resources allocated to Instruction and Academic Support Services, which were offset by increases in Student Services and Plant Operations.

For FY 2018, 83.9% of operating expenditures was for salaries and benefits; 13.6% was for goods and services; 1% was for travel; 1.4% was for equipment/technology; and 1% was for grants/subsidies.

The Board minutes contain adequate evidence to document the budget approval process and regular reporting of key financial information and activities.

2.F.3

The annual budget planning timeline is as follows:
- **December**: present full-time faculty needs to Executive Leadership Team to allow for succession planning.
- **January**: provide revenue projections to Executive Leadership Team and review student fees.
- **February**: review budget revenue and expenditures for current year by Executive Leadership Team.
- **Mid-February**: draft goals and priorities for the coming year.
- **March**: Vice Presidents review proposed budgets with their areas and bring notes and proposed line item budgets to Executive Leadership Team.
- **March-April**: review proposed budget with Union Management Communications Committee, Operations Council, Governance Council, Leadership Team, Instructional Council, and Student Services Council.
- **April**: review of proposed budget with inputs from campus groups by Executive Leadership Team.
- **May**: approval of proposed budget by Executive Leadership Team.
- **Summer**: presentation of budget to Board of Trustees for review and approval.

The College follows an internal budget planning and development process to support the Annual Priorities and maintain financial stability. The Annual Priorities are aligned with the four Core Themes: Workforce and Economic Development, Transfer and Academic Preparation, Student Access-Support and Completion, and Institutional Excellence and Community Enrichment.

2.F.4

Lower Columbia College utilizes an integrated financial management and accounting system (FMS), developed and maintained by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). All colleges within the system utilize this common system for recording all financial transactions. It is uploaded periodically to the SBCTC for consolidated system reporting and review at the agency level. The system contains predetermined control mechanisms that flag and suspend accounting transactions that do not follow GAAP and/or procedural standards for proper accounting classification and reporting. The SBCTC issues monthly reconciliations and error alerts to individual colleges for review and correction of all identified errors.

Further guidance is provided by the State Administrative Accounting Manual and the Fiscal Affairs Manual. These documents provide guidelines for Data and System Access, Internal

Controls, Capital Assets, E-Commerce, Federal Compliance, Uniform Chart of Accounts, Accounting Policies, Accounting Procedures, Budgeting, and External Reporting.

The Lower Columbia College Finance Office manages and controls all budgeting and accounting functions. The Finance Director oversees all Finance Office functions and reports to the Vice President of Administrative Services. The Director is responsible for managing, summarizing, and reporting the results of operations and financial position of the College to the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees. Finance Office staff members perform monthly, quarterly, and annual reconciliations and fund/account analyses in order to ensure accounting data accuracy, integrity, and compliance with OFM and SBCTC accounting requirements.

In spite of these controls, recent audits have noted numerous weaknesses in internal controls and financial reporting as follows:

The 2014 audit noted:

> Those preparing the statements lacked adequate resources to ensure transactions were appropriately reported under generally accepted accounting principles. We also found the review performed on the financial statements and notes was not adequate to ensure they were complete and accurate.

> As a result of these deficiencies we noted multiple errors on the financial statements. These included $6.5M in loans presented on the operating statement, $6.9M in misclassified revenue on the operating statement, and $20M of financing cash flows misclassified on the statement of cash flows.

The 2015 audit noted:

> The College should improve internal controls over its financial statement preparation.

> *Background*

> It is the responsibility of the College to design and follow internal controls that provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting. In our previous audit, our Office reported a finding on internal control over financial reporting. The current audit again identified deficiencies in internal controls that could adversely affect the College's ability to produce reliable financial statements.

> *Description of Condition*

> We identified the following deficiencies in internal control that, when taken together, represent a significant deficiency:
> - Staff preparing financial statements lacked adequate resources to ensure transactions were appropriately reported under generally accepted accounting principles.
> - The review performed on the financial statements and notes was not adequate to ensure they were complete and accurate.

Cause of Condition

The College experienced turnover in the position primarily responsible for preparing financial statements. The new individual lacked experience preparing financial statements for colleges. The College did not provide additional resources to compensate for the transition.

Effect of Condition

The College's financial statements contained significant errors that were not detected by management. We identified the following errors in the original financial statements we received for audit:

- Receivables were overstated and expenses were understated by $983,560 due to challenges recording building and innovation fee remittances.
- The Management Discussion and Analysis (MDandA) did not contain the required two years of comparative information.
- The College did not fully implement the new pension accounting standard that was effective for the audit period. The note disclosures and supplementary information required by the standard were not prepared.
- Net Investment in Capital Assets, a component of Net Position, was understated by $1,080,848 due to errors classifying unspent debt proceeds.
- Negative expenses of $751,263 associated with capitalized fixed assets were presented on the face of the operating statement. These expenses should have reduced maintenance and repair expenses.
- The College disclosed but did not record the loss and related liability for a legal settlement of $338,263 on their statements.
- Cash was overstated by $42,905 because the College was unable to fully reconcile its cash balance to bank statements.

These errors were corrected in the College's final financial statements.

The 2015 management letter included the additional auditor recommendations:

- Fully reconcile all cash balances, including credit card receipts.
- Investigate and resolve differences arising from unreconciled deposits in a timely manner.
- Ensure transactions are recorded in the general ledger in a timely manner.
- Ensure an independent review of the reconciliation is performed that is thorough and complete to detect errors or omissions.

The 2016 audit noted:

The College's internal controls over financial statement preparation were inadequate to ensure complete and accurate reporting.

Background

The College is responsible for designing, following and maintaining internal controls that provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting. In our previous two audits, our Office reported a finding on internal control over financial reporting. The current audit again identified deficiencies in internal controls that could hinder the College's ability to produce reliable financial statements.

Description of Condition

We identified the following deficiencies in internal control that, when taken together, represent a significant deficiency. Specifically, the College did not have:
- A process to review and implement new accounting pronouncements issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB)
- A review process for its journal entries or other adjustments to the accounting records. In addition, the College did not have process to ensure all adjustments from the prior year had been recorded in the general ledger.
- An adequate review process over its financial reporting to ensure the financial information was accurate, complete and in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP)

Cause of Condition

Staff preparing financial statements lacked adequate resources to ensure transactions were appropriately reported under GAAP.

Effect of Condition

The College's financial statements contained significant errors that were not detected by management. We identified the following errors in the original financial statements we received for audit:
- The College did not implement the new GASB 72 accounting standard, which was effective for the audit period.
- The College omitted a liability of $1,224,999 from the Statement of Net Position.
- The notes to the financial statements contained many notable errors, including missing note disclosures, incomplete items and numbers that were not updated.

The College corrected these errors in its final financial statements.

The 2016 management letter included the additional auditor recommendations:

Capital Assets:-It appears that the College may not be reassessing its useful lives and relying upon the system defaults for average useful life. We noted some assets fully depreciated and at least one asset with a useful life that appears short given the type of the asset. If some of these assets are no longer in use, we recommend the College remove them from its books. Otherwise, we recommend the College periodically reassess useful lives considering its operational plans for the asset, and prospectively adjust them when appropriate.

Accounts Receivable:-College staff who have access to accounts receivables, and make adjustments to accounts receivables, also handles checks. There is risk that a check could be misappropriated and concealed with an accounts receivable adjustment. The College believes there are compensating controls in place which would mitigate the risk but we are not able to gain sufficient comfort that controls were adequate to completely eliminate the risk. We recommend that the College evaluate the incompatible duties to ensure that the compensating controls are adequate to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level.

The 2017 audit noted:

The errors identified by the auditors in the 2016 audit were fully corrected.

The College experienced some turnover in key positions during the financial statements preparation, which impacted the level of oversight over the process. To address the audit recommendations, the College has taken the following actions:
- As of September 2017, a new Finance Director was hired to continue providing expertise and oversight over the preparation of the financial statements.
- Contracted with a CPA firm to assist with the completion of the fiscal year 2017 financial statements, which include:
  - Performing a review of year-end adjusting journal entries to ensure they are accurate and complete.
  - Conducting a final review of the financial statements to ensure they comply with all applicable Government Accounting Standards Board requirements and generally accepted accounting principles.
  - Providing technical training to the Finance Director and Accounting Manager related to financial statement preparation.
- To prepare for the fiscal year 2018 financial statements cycle, the College has also incorporated outside education and training resources recommended by the auditors into the training program for staff.

The 2017 management letter included the additional auditor recommendations:

Useful life estimation:-Within the prior year, we found the College did not have a process to ensure that a reasonable useful life was given to new assets put into service. The College was still in the process of addressing the prior year recommendation. We acknowledge that the State sets useful lives for College assets. However, the College

should work with the State to ensure the useful lives set are reasonable and supported by current information.

Cash Reconciliation:-Although the College is performing a reconciliation of cash accounts between accounting and bank records the audit noted the reconciliation did not include all cash accounts. We recommend the College ensure that all cash accounts are included within the cash reconciliation performed by the College.

Segregation of Duties:-We reviewed the receipting processes for payments received in the mail in the Finance Department and found the duties are not adequately segregated. We identified one employee who has access to make changes in the accounts receivable system and has access to receipts. When one employee performs incompatible duties without adequate oversight and monitoring it increases the risk that losses could occur and not be detected in a timely manner, if at all. We recommend the College strengthen internal controls over receipting activities.

Financial Statement Preparation:-The College has made efforts to improve internal controls over financial reporting since the last audit. However, there are areas in which the College can continue making improvements to further ensure accurate and complete financial statement reporting. The audit noted that adjusting entries were made that lacked support and approval and contained errors. Additionally, we noted that some of these adjustments were done outside of the accounting system. We recommend the College establish a process to ensure that all adjusting journal entries are valid, adequately supported and approved by someone other than the preparer. Additionally, all adjustments should be made in the accounting system with the exception of any in which the College has been directed not to record due to State compilation of accounting data.

System Access-Tuition Revenue Calculation:-We reviewed user access to the tuition calculation and tuition fee code tables within our audit of tuition revenues. We found that several persons had access to change, edit and delete data and that the access appeared to be outside of their normal job duties. We recommend the College review access levels to the tuition revenue tables to ensure change, add, and delete functions are provided only to the appropriate persons.

Concern: While noting the ongoing efforts to strengthen controls, train staff, and improve financial reporting, the evaluator did not find evidence that all issues relating to staff turnover transition, internal controls and segregation of duties, and financial statement preparation and the underlying oversight have been resolved.

2.F.5

Lower Columbia College follows an established statewide process for making capital budget requests that support the College's mission. Decisions occur locally about whether to pursue a capital request as identified through the Facilities Master Plan, which was updated in 2015. The Facilities Master Plan represents an ongoing planning process that accurately reflects the campus facility needs as identified by the College's mission and strategic planning process.

Once a decision to pursue capital funding occurs, the College continues through a well-defined State mandated process to prepare documents for State capital budget funding consideration. Beginning with the request for a capital project, the budget is prepared locally and often includes both professionals and consultants for an additional level of project review. Development of capital budget projects considers the total cost of ownership, equipment, furnishings, and operation of new or renovated facilities. Review occurs at the state and local levels in all cases where debt-funding options for capital outlay are considered. Controls are in place to preclude institutions from creating any unreasonable financial burden on resources.

2.F.6

Section 515 of the Lower Columbia College's *Administrative Policies* specifies the College's financial relationship with its auxiliary enterprises, as follows:

> The College believes the operation of auxiliary enterprises to be helpful in meeting the educational mission of the College. An auxiliary enterprise is an activity where the costs of providing goods and services to the general public or to the internal college community are recovered through user charges. All such activities shall conform to the provisions of the commercial activities statute, and will operate as proprietary funds under the guidelines set forth by the Office of Financial Management.

The College's auxiliary enterprises include the Bookstore, Food Services, and Fitness Center. These enterprises are budgeted in such a manner that they are effectively self-supporting. Actual historical experience shows the Bookstore generally operates at a profit and serves as a resource in contributing to the general operating budget. Food Services generally operates at a loss and historically has been a net recipient of local funds in order to underwrite any negative fund balance at fiscal year's end, although recent efforts to improve services are forecasted to eliminate this in FY 2018. User fees support operations of the Fitness Center.

The Bookstore had annual operations in excess of $900,000, and an ending fund balance of $393,644 at the end of FY 2018.

Food Services had annual operations in excess of $250,000, and an ending fund balance of $742 at the end of FY 2018.

2.F.7

Audits for fiscal years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 were reviewed as part of the accreditation evaluation. Although audits were performed annually, the timeliness of the audits is questionable. The 2014 audit opinion letter was dated 1/15/2016; the 2015 audit opinion letter was dated 2/23/2017; the audit opinion letter for 2016 was dated 9/22/2017; and the audit opinion letter for 2017 was dated 3/16/2018. It is anticipated that the 2018 audit will be completed in February or March of 2019.

The timeliness of audits can be a concern. As has been indicated in 2.F.4, the recent audits have noted numerous weaknesses in internal controls and financial reporting. The delay in the completion of the audit contributed to the errors not being detected and corrected in a timely manner. However, auditing community colleges is a relatively new process within the state of Washington and the timing of the audits was not under the control of the College.

2.F.8

The Lower Columbia College Foundation ("the Foundation"), a non-profit corporation established in the state of Washington, operates in support of Lower Columbia College. The Foundation is dedicated to providing a conduit for private support of the College through scholarship endowments, program grants, and similar types of support.

The College Success Fund provides an integral source of financial support to the College where state funding falls short. This funding source is designed to be both responsive and flexible to meet the ever-changing needs of the College.   The College Success Fund supports the following: academic programs, staff and faculty grants, innovative learning opportunities, new equipment and technology for classrooms and labs, veterans' support services, student-led special projects and initiatives, Head Start programs, industrial trades recruitment, capital projects and improvements to infrastructure, and other areas of great need.

The Lower Columbia College Foundation created the Student Success Fund to help students who are most at risk for abandoning their higher education goals due to acute, short-term financial hardships. Since its inception in 2012, the fund has distributed more than $254,000 in emergency grants to more than 600 students in need. The Student Success Fund helps students with the following: tuition expenses not covered by scholarships, financial aid or grants, textbook expenses, testing fees, emergency childcare expenses, and emergency transportation. The data demonstrate that the completion and transfer rates of Student Success Fund recipients exceeded the College average.

In response to state budget cuts, the 2012 Legislature mandated that state funding could no longer be used to support college athletics. This change has dramatically affected athletic programs statewide, as colleges must now depend on additional revenue to fund operations or make cuts to existing programs. The Lower Columbia College Foundation is committed to helping bridge the funding gap between the court and the classroom with a goal to raise $100,000 annually.

A formal agreement between Lower Columbia College and the Foundation is on file, is current, and is being followed. The Foundation is annually audited by an independent auditor.

The Foundation has total assets of $15.7 million and contributes approximately $250,000 for General and Administrative expenditures and $1,000,000 (including $300,000 in scholarships) to program services.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the Foundation for the establishment of the Student Success Fund to assist students who are experiencing acute, short-term financial needs.

Standard 2.G – Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Physical Infrastructure

2.G.1

Lower Columbia College has effectively used its Facilities Master Plan to guide campus development and maintenance of campus facilities. During the prior ten years, Lower Columbia College has successfully competed for and received allocations for state capital funds sufficient to construct, renovate, remodel and repair multiple facilities in excess of 80 million dollars. The Facilities Master Plan was created with broad stakeholder input in 2015 and represents strategic visioning to ensure that the College is planning, preserving, and constructing facilities that meet the needs of the College's dynamic learning and working environments. The current Facilities Master Plan includes a 15-year plan for site improvements to address master planning strategies as well as a long-range development plan with a vision of the campus that builds upon that 15-year plan.

The physical facilities of Lower Columbia College represent a wide range of sizes, conditions and ages. Built in 1950, the original Main Building is one of many current buildings constructed in the 1950s and early 1960s. Over the past decade and following the Facilities Master Plan, Lower Columbia College has taken an aggressive approach to modernizing the campus by demolishing old structures, constructing new facilities, and renovating existing structures.

There was no evidence of recent fire marshal or OSHA complaints or corrective actions. Lower Columbia College maintenance staff handle basic and ongoing, preventative and corrective maintenance for building systems including HVAC, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, structural, and other general systems. Some maintenance and repair work along with servicing of specialized mechanical equipment such as elevator repairs, building control upgrades and annual inspections of fire detection and suppression systems, is contracted out due to the need for specialized training and skills and to accommodate high workloads of staff.

Lower Columbia College continues to investigate and plan for replacement of additional systems and structures and to request funding to do so. This is typically a two-fold process. For new construction and major renovations, Lower Columbia College submits Project Request Reports (PRRs) to the SBCTC, and ultimately to the Office of Financial Management (OFM), and the Legislature.

Campus Security monitors access to campus facilities through routine officer patrols and responds to reports of suspicious individuals. Officers report any maintenance or safety issues observed on routine rounds. The appropriate Vice President designates key access to buildings. Security staff lock campus buildings each evening after a sweep of the facility and unlock them each morning when classes or activities are scheduled.

Lower Columbia College has an active safety committee focused primarily on occupational safety and health issues.

All buildings and construction projects meet or exceed ADA standards. The Washington State Department of Enterprise Services has a standing committee that reviews all major projects during design for the purpose of identifying potential accessibility issues and recommending appropriate courses of action. Local permitting jurisdictions are strict about compliance with local, state and federal buildings codes and use the International Building Code (IBC) for permit review and approval.

In recent years, Lower Columbia College has made a substantial investment in improvements in emergency preparedness. The Emergency Planning Council (EPC) recently updated the Lower Columbia College Emergency Handbook and Lower Columbia College Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The EOP outlines Lower Columbia College's preparation for potential emergencies, response to emergencies that are occurring; and recovery to normal operations following an emergency. In preparing for emergencies, Lower Columbia College used the risk assessment tools created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Currently, Lower Columbia College is using the National Incident Management System to define and assign roles for emergency response and continuity of operations. Representatives from various departments to include Administrative Services, Facilities, Safety and Security, Information Technology, and Effectiveness and College Relations have been engaged in thoroughly reviewing all emergency preparedness planning and continue to update and revise portions of the plan in order to address potential increased risks in our current environment. Additionally, departments are reviewing and updating their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) in the event that they may experience long-term operational disruptions.

A walkthrough of the campus and buildings found the buildings and grounds to be well-maintained, and the campus to be well-lit and safe. Conversation with student leadership indicates students feel safe and felt comfortable in reporting to appropriate staff if that safety was threatened.

The 2017 Clery/Annual Security report has reported one forcible sexual offense, 2 burglaries, 1 motor vehicle thefts, 5 drug abuse violations and 1 incident of dating violence. Review of the previous two years data did not reveal a high number of crimes. The Clery/Annual Security report has been updated to include compliance with the recent compliance requirements. Additionally, the website contains a wealth of information on the College's safety and security practices.

At the student, faculty, and staff forums, questions regarding feeling safe on campus were met with a resounding "Yes!" accompanied by expressions of strong support of and appreciation for the Lower Columbia College Safety and Security Department.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the faculty, staff, and administration of Lower Columbia College for the investment of time and financial resources in creating a culture of safety.

2.G.2

Safety staff regularly review Dangerous Waste Disposal Policy 660 and the Dangerous Waste Management Plan to ensure the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous or toxic materials.

Lower Columbia College conducts the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials (HAZMAT) in accordance with Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 296-800 - *Safety and Health Core Rules* and its sub-chapter 296-843 - *Hazardous Waste Operations*. The code outlines all regulations and procedures—federal and state—applicable to HAZMAT environments, as well as employees working with, or exposed to, HAZMAT.

Lower Columbia College files annual reports with the Washington State Department of Ecology that describes its compliance with regulations defining safe use, storage and disposal of hazardous or toxic materials. Lower Columbia College also participates in annual fire inspections, which address storage and labeling issues surrounding hazardous materials.

Lower Columbia College handles all dangerous waste in accordance with WAC chapter 173-303. Employees responsible for managing these waste streams have completed a 40-hour Hazardous Materials Operations and Emergency Response Training, Hazardous Waste Management RCRA Training and Department of Transportation: Dangerous Goods Training.

Lower Columbia College contracts with Clean Harbors, who are Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certified and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)/WAC compliant to safely and properly dispose of HAZMAT no longer needed or approaching expiration. To ensure compliance, Lower Columbia College Environmental Health and Safety coordinates disposal of all HAZMAT and collects all invoiced manifests to document waste streams generated by Lower Columbia College throughout the year. This documentation provides supporting evidence of proper waste disposal when submitting the annual dangerous waste report to the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Lower Columbia College maintains current hardcopy Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), specific to each department, in a highly visible notebook placed in a location that is easily accessible to employees, students, visitors, and emergency responders. Updates to the MSDS notebooks occur annually and when there are new products.

Emergency first aid and spill kits, wash stations, and fire extinguishers have been located throughout campus in areas where hazardous and toxic materials are used. Employees using these materials have also received training on how to clean and control accidental releases.

2.G.3

The Lower Columbia College Facilities Master Plan guides the planning for the construction of new facilities and the renovation of existing facilities. The last update of the Facilities Master Plan occurred in 2015. The Strategic Plan adopted by the College is the result of internal self-assessment and long discussions within the College. The values reflected in the Strategic Plan demonstrate Lower Columbia College's dedication to student success and academic excellence and will guide the College's direction forward into the future. The Strategic Plan is comprised of

four critical themes, all of which address Lower Columbia College's goal of ensuring that higher education is accessible, affordable, and relevant to its students as the College attempts to make the campus more accessible to both current and potential students. The implications of the strategic initiatives are highlighted in the Facilities Master Plan.

The Facilities Master Plan (FMP) for Lower Columbia College presents a vision for strengthening and transforming the campus that builds upon the existing campus framework. The FMP describes the development of the campus in two time frames, the 15-Year Facilities Master Plan (FMP) and the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP). The 15-Year Plan addresses buildings and their adjacent sites that are shown in the 2013 Facility Condition Survey (FCS) to have 5-15 years of remaining life. The Long Range Development Plan builds upon the 15-Year Plan and addresses buildings that will be reaching the end of their useful life in 20 to 30 years. The 15-Year Plan focuses on replacing LCC's aging facilities from the first period of construction in the 1950s and 60s. The plan calls for consolidating five smaller buildings into two larger replacement buildings in two phases of major capital improvements. These replacement buildings will be designed to be flexible to accommodate new directions in learning.

The first phase, which replaces the Vocational, Applied Arts and the Science Buildings, will be designed to serve not only LCC's vocational and business programs, but will also be used for corporate training in off hours. College programs and corporate training programs need similar spaces. A flexible building designed to serve both will help the college manage the enrollment swings that coincide with economic cycles. The second phase replaces the Administration building and the original Main Building, as well as first addition, while preserving the 2003 addition. With appropriate partnerships and funding, this Phase 2 replacement building may also contain an expanded University Center.

The facilities replacement projects proposed in the 15-Year Plan also includes accompanying site improvements to address master planning strategies:
- Strengthen the civic presence of the College, especially as it relates to the historic R. A. Long Square.
- Create a front door experience on the east side of campus that connects it to the historic downtown.
- Improve the design of campus parking to create a safe drop-off site for pedestrians.
- Provide appropriate fire department access in conjunction with new larger buildings that will have specific fire department access requirements.
- Provide open spaces that serve a variety of outdoor activities, including open lawn for informal recreation and hardscape spaces for outdoor gatherings.

The scope of major projects proposed in the 15-Year Plan is guided by criteria for state funding. A combination of local resources, partnerships, and/or industry grants will likely also be necessary to fund the campus development as presented.

The Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) proposes a vision of the campus that builds upon the improvements proposed in the 15-Year Plan. At the end of the 15-Year Plan, all of the original 1960s buildings with their structural and programmatic deficiencies will have been replaced. The LRDP looks at the long term of 25-30 years when programs will evolve and other

buildings will reach the end of useful life. The campus has capacity for long-term growth while maintaining a familiar relationship to the historical campus layout.

The first funding request of Phase 1 of the Facilities Master Plan 15-Year Development Plan will be for a replacement of the Vocational, Science, and Physical Science buildings. Lower Columbia College submitted a Project Request Report (PRR) to SBCTC for this project and is currently 10th on the new project list (out of 25) for capital funding to begin design work for the new building.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College for the active engagement of both internal and external stakeholders in the development of the Facilities Master Plan and for integrating the strategic planning themes as a critical planning element.

2.G.4

Land, buildings, and equipment are recorded at cost, or if acquired by gift, at acquisition value at the date of the gift. Capital additions, replacements and major renovations are capitalized. The value of assets constructed includes all material direct and indirect construction costs. Any interest costs incurred are capitalized during the period of construction. Routine repairs and maintenance are charged to operating expense in the year in which the expense was incurred. In accordance with the state capitalization policy, all land, intangible assets and software with a unit cost of $1,000,000 or more, buildings and improvements with a unit cost of $100,000 or more, Library collections with a total cost of $5,000 or more and all other assets with a unit cost of $5,000 or more, are capitalized. Depreciation is computed using the straight line method over the estimated useful life of the asset as defined by the State of Washington's Office of Financial Management. Useful lives generally range from 20 to 50 years for buildings and improvements, to 50 years for other improvements and infrastructure, 7 years for Library resources, 2 to 10 years for most equipment, and 11 to 40 years for heavy duty equipment.

The book value of buildings as of June 30, 2017, was $101,443,081, with $25,952,096 (25.58%) of accumulated depreciation. The book value of other improvements and infrastructure as of June 30, 2017, was $5,479,097, with $2,345,475 (42.81%) of accumulated depreciation. The book value of equipment as of June 30, 2017, was $6,555,105, with $4,154,260 (63.37%) of accumulated depreciation.   The book value of Library resources as of June 30, 2017, was $1,674,617, with $1,575,394 (94.05%) of accumulated depreciation.

The 2017 financial statements reflect that an investment of $1,185,006 in equipment was made during the year, meaning that 18% of equipment had been recently purchased, and the remainder of the rest of the equipment must be near the end of the useful life. Similarly, with a Library resources value of over $1.5 million and a useful life of 7 years, anticipated annual expenditures would be in the $225,000 range. However, the financial statements only reflect an investment in Library resources of $0 in 2014, $15,284 in 2015, $14,263 in 2016, and $60,377 in 2017.

Concern: The lack of recent investment in equipment and Library resources could pose a challenge to long-term sustainability.

Technological Infrastructure

2.G.5

Lower Columbia College's technology and infrastructure are sufficient to support its management and operational functions, academic programs, and support services.

The College's network consists of four sites: Lower Columbia College Campus, Barnes Head Start, Broadway Head Start, and Memorial Park Head Start, which is connected to the Washington State K-20 educational network for access to resources hosted by SBCTC and on the internet. The current bandwidth available on the K-20 network is 1 Gbps.

The College's internal network supports a variety of voice, video, wireless, and data services. A firewall that meets the SBCTC security standard protects the network from the K-20 network. Internal connections range from 100 MB to 10 GB, depending on the need. A Cisco infrastructure supports the faculty and staff workstations, voice services, computer labs, and a wireless network that extends to all buildings on campus.

In 2014, the College's data center moved to the Health and Science Building. where it has both battery backups and a backup generator. The previous location serves as a redundant site. Network services are balanced across 26 physical servers. The virtualized server environment expanded to 11 physical servers that support 63 virtual servers. This has allowed the College to recycle its 10 oldest servers in the past four years, reducing the total cost of ownership and increasing the reliability and stability of these services at the same time.

The College's Information Technology Services department supports 1,250 desktop and laptop computers deployed among 34 lab settings (spaces with five or more computers), 47 classrooms, offices, and a number of remote locations that support Head Start/ECEAP and rural outreach programs. Systems replacement occurs on a 4-5 year cycle. The current standard for purchasing a computer system is an Intel I5, 2.9 GHz processor along with 8 GB memory.

In 2014, all students received e-mail accounts supported by Google Education. Google Apps for Education provides a number of benefits, including:
- Access to 30 GB of email and data storage;
- Support for email readers like Outlook or Apple Mail;
- Connectivity from a smartphone;
- Elimination of the need for a USB drive;
- File sharing and collaboration with others by giving everyone access to the most recent version;
- Document tracking and reverting to a previous version, if necessary;
- Ability to open and read 30 different file formats without installing additional software.

2.G.6

The Information Technology Services (ITS) help desk provides multiple services for Lower Columbia College's faculty and staff, including desktop support, classroom support (audio-visual

and multimedia services), telecommunications, messaging, storage, backup and recovery, printing, security, and development services. ITS initiatives include the following:

- Faculty members are encouraged to use various instructional technologies and multimedia tools to create dynamic learning environments for students. Faculty receive support through formal and informal training sessions, personal visits from IT staff, remote assistance, and via FAQs and help guides which are available around campus. Recently, a technology fair took place for instructors to see and experience hands-on different emerging technologies.
- The eLearning Department Canvas Learning Management System assists faculty in learning and using instructional technology tools that are available. Department staff includes a Director of eLearning, a full-time program coordinator, and one part-time program assistant. These staff members provide primary support for all faculty and students using MyMathLab, G-Suite, Panopto, and other educational technology. Drop-in support, e-mail support, formal and informal trainings, and phone support for both faculty and students are available. Staff members also support faculty by visiting them in classrooms or offices.
- Faculty interested in developing an online course must take a course themselves, EDUC 295: "E Modality Instructions on Using Canvas." Additionally, the eLearning staff provides quarterly workshops and keep faculty updated when there are changes in the delivery system.
- Students can schedule a one-on-one Canvas training during the quarter with tutors or eLearning staff and between quarters. In addition, staff provides regularly scheduled Canvas orientations throughout the quarter. There is also an online orientation and a "self-quiz" diagnostic test that allows a student to determine if his or her learning style is congruent with the online experience.
- eLearning staff members also provide support for other instructional technologies. For example, faculty can receive help using Panopto, a lecture capture solution used for screen capture and more. The eLearning Department also provides support for faculty and students using the Whisper Room in the Learning Commons. The Whisper Room is a video/audio recording room supplied with a microphone, camera, editing software and Cintiq monitor.
- Human Resources also provides professional development and training opportunities through Canvas, including mandatory compliance training, environmental health and safety training, emergency preparedness training, diversity and equity training, and other professional development topics.
- Lower Columbia College is committed to providing its students with basic computer competency skills. Technology resources such as computers, interactive displays, audio-visual equipment and multimedia equipment for presentations are available throughout campus.

2.G.7

Lower Columbia College technology leadership, support staff, and constituencies collaborate across the College to develop effective technological infrastructure to support the demands of the growing institution. In 2012, the College conducted several open forums that focused on

Information Technology Services (ITS). These forums began a yearlong process of reviewing ITS goals, processes, projects, and resources with the intent of providing direction and transparency for the College's efforts in the communication, acquisition, implementation, training requirements, and maintenance of information technology. This process resulted in the formation of the Technology Education Committee (TEC), which has the responsibility to assist with identifying, recommending, and developing required policies and procedures, as well as prioritizing institutional technology needs and requests as they relate to current strategies. The TEC maintains an IT Services Strategic Plan.

The following governance structure provides opportunities for technology input to the staff tasked with implementing technology plans:

- **The Technology Education Committee** (TEC) provides a communication mechanism for each stakeholder on campus to raise technology issues for discussion and solution. This includes reviewing requests for changes, or exceptions to established standards. The TEC reviews requests for new projects and initiatives requiring a significant investment of time and money and recommending priorities for funding. The TEC reports to the Vice President of Administrative Services and makes recommendations for review by the President's Cabinet.
- **Association of Students Technology Fee Committee** makes recommendations and oversees the use and spending of assessed student technology fees. The Technology Education Committee has representation from this group.
- **Information Technology Services (ITS)** implements the plans and strategies developed by the TEC and resolves daily and ongoing issues resulting from the use of technology.
- **The eLearning Department** provides training and support for online solutions such as the Canvas Learning Management System. The eLearning Department also provides educational technology support to faculty, staff, and students for solutions such as lecture capture and other learning-related activities.
- In 2013, Lower Columbia College established an **eLearning Advisory Committee** for faculty to provide input on eLearning procedures and activities. This committee reports to the Director of eLearning and the Vice President of Instruction.
- A **Lab Users Group** exists for stakeholders who have an interest in the software and hardware available in the computer labs around campus. The Technology Education Committee has representation from this group.
- **Effectiveness and College Relations** is the department responsible for all web-related policies and activities, including the communication of information through emerging forms of online social media.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College for the active engagement of internal stakeholders in the development of the Technology Strategic Plan and for integrating the strategic planning themes as a critical planning element.

2.G.8

In order to support its operations, programs, and services, Lower Columbia College ensures that its technology resources and infrastructure remain reliable. To facilitate this process, the IT Services department maintains records of when equipment is purchased and when service level

and maintenance agreements expire. The department inspects equipment and implements preventive maintenance measures when necessary. To reduce downtime, IT Services maintains a list of standards and purchases standard equipment whenever possible which makes it easier to stock spare equipment. When new equipment is ordered, IT Services reviews the list of standards and technical specifications and updates them when appropriate. IT equipment includes the following:

Audiovisual, Multimedia, and Presentation Equipment: The college operates on a "just-in-time" philosophy to replace audiovisual equipment and uses the annual operating budget to replace a component when it fails. Standards and technical specifications for audiovisual equipment are typically updated when new buildings are built. Then equipment is upgraded to meet the college's current standards when it is replaced.

Mobile Devices: Mobile devices such as Chromebooks, phones, and tablets are generally not upgradeable. They are used until they no longer fulfill their purpose. Then they are sent to surplus and replaced with equipment that meets the College's current standards.

Network Infrastructure, Servers, and Switches: Network downtime is scheduled at the end of every academic quarter to inspect and update servers as well as core network infrastructure equipment. Servers are typically replaced every 8-10 years while data center and network infrastructure may still be effective after 15 years. The IT Services Department follows industry best practices to support, upgrade, and replace core equipment. Older equipment may be rotated to non-critical uses and when it has reached end of life it is removed from the College's inventory and given to the computer science department for instructional use.

Workstations: IT Services monitors the age of workstations and recommends when workstations should be replaced. Workstations are replaced on a 4-to-5-year cycle. Students, staff, and faculty have access to College-provided computer systems depending on specific needs. Student technology fees support the replacement of general use lab computers. The student Tech Fee Committee meets monthly during the academic year to review technology expenses and proposals. This committee takes recommendations from the IT Services department as well as faculty and staff and determines when to replace computers in the general use labs. Individual departments purchase replacement computers for faculty and staff based on recommendations from IT Services. If they have not yet reached end of life, computers that support instruction are rotated to other areas of instruction and staff computers may be rotated to other staff. When a workstation is no longer supported, it is removed from the College's inventory and given to the computer science department for instructional use.

IX. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Standard 3.A – Institutional Planning

3.A.1 – 3.A.5

Lower Columbia College has a culture of evidence, which after many years, has become part of its institutional "DNA." In fact, assessment is so ingrained in the culture of LCC that the evaluators observed many instances in which faculty and staff did not even realize that their assessment efforts were informing and influencing strategic planning and decision making. Creating intentional and explicit linkages between the assessment process and strategic planning process would alleviate this apparent unawareness.

Faculty are engaged in assessing learning outcomes, especially with respect to the College's Global Outcomes, through systematic and highly developed processes and timelines. Robust Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams are comprised of faculty and staff, who are invested in the process of Core Theme assessment as a means of informing the Board of Trustees with regard to the College's Mission, Core Themes, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators. The work performed by the Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams is highly valued by the Board of Trustees.

At the institutional level, the College follows a cyclical process that begins in February of each year after the Board of Trustees has had a chance to receive, review, and reflect on the Monitoring Reports and SWOT analyses, which have been given over the course of several months during the previous year. In February, the Board of Trustees evaluates the Mission, Vision, and Value Statements to decide if it is satisfied that the statements still articulate the Board's vision of Lower Columbia College. The Board of Trustees then reviews the Core Themes, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators to determine whether it wishes to make any modifications. Informed by the data, reports, and analyses they have received, the Trustees set the Strategic Initiatives for the upcoming year. College administrators, faculty, and staff then review the Strategic Initiatives to set Annual Priorities, which are reviewed and approved by the Board in July.

The process for setting the Annual Priorities is as follows:
- The Executive Leadership Team discusses and drafts the Annual Priorities.
- The initial draft of Annual Priorities is circulated among faculty, staff, students, and committees to ensure thorough vetting and buy-in of the Annual Priorities.
- Informed by the feedback received, the Executive Leadership Team makes appropriate revisions to the Annual Priorities in the second draft.
- The Annual Priorities are then submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Once the Annual Priorities are approved by the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff establish the Action Plans and Implementation Strategies. At the end of the cycle, the Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams once again gather the necessary data to prepare their Monitoring Report and complete their SWOT analyses. The cycle then starts over again.

Although the College's Annual Priorities derive from the Core Theme Monitoring Reports, it was not entirely clear to the evaluators how the work of the Monitoring Report Review Teams and ensuing Annual Priorities interface with the institution's strategic planning processes. Similarly, the evaluators perceived a lack of integration between instructional department planning and academic master planning. Clear articulation between these planning processes would provide clarity to stakeholders concerning how committee work related to Core Theme assessment and unit plans relate to higher level planning.

The figure below came from page 78 of LCC's self-study. As the evaluators studied this paradigm, it gave the impression that the six planning processes took place in isolation as individual silos. The evaluators sought clarification in multiple meetings on how the different plans were interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent. After considering what they had heard in meetings, the evaluators surmised that in a Venn diagram, the six plans would overlap with and inform the Monitoring Report Review Teams and Leadership Councils. The evaluators also concluded that if the interrelationships of the planning processes were unclear to outsiders, the same lack of clarity might exist on campus. Interviews seemed to verify this observation.

Figure 3A-1: Elements of Planning at Lower Columbia College

Strategic and Operational Planning

Concern: The evaluators are concerned that the institution has not fully clarified the connections among the different planning processes, along with the involved stakeholders. The conceptual diagram on page 78 of the self-study does not clearly capture how the six planning processes are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent. Additionally, the Academic Master Plan proved to be a less-than-ideal tool to inform future academic prioritization and planning.

X.   CORE THEME PLANNING, EFFECTIVENESS, AND IMPROVEMENT

Core Theme One: Workforce and Economic Development

3.B Core Theme Planning

Introduction

Workforce and Economic Development is at the forefront of the work of Lower Columbia College. Partnerships with community businesses and organizations make the focus of vocational and workforce training so successful. LCC is a critical life force for the communities of Longview/Kelso, and it works assiduously to meet the employment needs of the surrounding area. A representative of the Chamber of Commerce referred to LCC as the lifeblood of the community. He said that Economic Development is "tough in this area"; thus, LCC's focus on student success is a pivotal factor in keeping students in school. He added that students are successful because of the great faculty who treat each student individually. He said that LCC is adaptable to the needs of the community and used the example of creating the certificate for truck drivers when the area was in need of this skill. He also mentioned welding as fulfilling a workforce need. The College maintains impressive facilities and programs that are aligned with regional workforce needs.

The objectives of this Core Theme consist of providing quality professional/technical education, along with establishing partnerships with businesses and community groups. to provide workforce development and customized programs and services. The College offers Boot Camps that highlight different businesses and owners to help the business community learn about such topics as branding, sales, and marketing.

3.B.1

Planning for Core Theme One is consistent with the institution's plans and guidelines for selection of programs and services. LCC has well-defined planning, assessment, and improvement mechanisms in place that include strategic and operational plans, and Monitoring Report Review Teams, which focus on meeting the objectives and indicators of the Core Theme.

3.B.2

LCC uses three primary processes for ensuring effectiveness and improvement: Monitoring Report Review Team Reports; global skills assessment; and Curriculum and Program Review. LCC's Monitoring Reports document the process of the intensive annual focus on a set of institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

3.B.3

Planning involves collecting data to ensure that students are learning, that there is still a need for the program, that the needs of employers are being met, and that graduates are able to perform the jobs in a satisfactory manner. There is a campus-wide culture of assessment that includes

program reviews. In addition, the state of Washington mandates that each program have an advisory group made up of employers in the community. The advisory group meets twice a year and offers general advice on worker training. The Career Center meets with employers to explore workforce needs and communicates that information to students. Evaluators were unable to find evidence to support the claim that the Curriculum and Program Review reports are routinely shared with industry partners on the Workforce Program Advisory Committees to elicit feedback and effect program improvement.

Standard 4.A – Core Theme Assessment

4.A.1 – 4.A.6

Lower Columbia College regularly and systematically collects data related to the objectives and Key Performance Indicators of Core Theme One. Data for Core Themes has been collected and analyzed for close to 20 years. The Monitoring Report Review Team collects and analyzes KPI data, performs a SWOT analysis, and makes recommendations for improvement that are submitted to the Board of Trustees, which reviews the information provided and determines the College's Annual Priorities for the following year. The Monitoring Report Review Team for this Core Theme looked at pathways, recruiting and marketing, new certificates, and onboarding courses.

For analysis of Professional and Technical Programs, the College collects data on Student Performance, Licensure Rates, Placement Rate in the Workplace, and Relevance of Programs, which measures the level of graduate satisfaction with the training received.

Some programs are governed by outside standards, such as licensure for nursing or proficiency certification test scores as an indicator of student success, or the need for improvement for areas in which students are not successful in achieving their goals.

Standard 4.B – Core Theme Improvement

4.B.1 – 4.B.2

The planning cycle at LCC informs improvement. In addition, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges requires that all vocational or technical programs go through a viability analysis. The SBCTC requires that all programs "be continually reviewed for effectiveness in meeting industry training needs and fulfilling the college mission. Programs that are no longer effective should be subject to review for viability." In the next budget cycle, because of anticipated budget reductions and declining enrollment, several technical programs will be reviewed with this criterion in mind.

The Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Team for Professional/Technical and Customized Education has widespread participation from faculty and staff. The Monitoring Report Review Team evaluates current status, enrollment, and actions that resulted from the last report; perform a SWOT analysis; and suggests priorities for the coming year. The Monitoring Report informs the Board's establishment of Annual Priorities. Curriculum and Instruction is addressed in a

variety of committees that report to the Instructional Council, which is made up of department chairs and is the decision making body for faculty.

Faculty develop and assess learning outcomes. In doing so, they have latitude to assess outcomes in their own departments. In-service days are set aside most terms for assessment and to allow faculty to update their Program Reviews. The goal is to review each program every three years, but this has not happened due to turnover in leadership. Program Reviews, while considered by most faculty to be valuable, are seen as self-reflective. There is no requirement for deans to review the reports and give feedback. Feedback from Program Reviews improved and solidified requirements for College 101 and 102, the 1st-Year Experience. Faculty will continue to review this course sequence by examining the data around enrollment, student satisfaction, and achievement of learning outcomes.

Global Skills are assessed in the Summer Assessment Institute, in which artifacts collected by faculty are reviewed and normed based on an agreed-upon rubric. Information gathered informs improvement to teaching and learning in the general education curriculum.

Core Theme Two: Transfer and Academic Preparation

Introduction

LCC's second Core Theme is clearly tied to the mission statement to "ensure each learner's personal and professional success" through robust academic offerings. It is tracked by two Monitoring Reports: "Basic Skills and Pre-College Monitoring Report" and "Transfer Monitoring Report." An archive of these Monitoring Reports is located on the College website. Associated with the Core Theme are three objectives with well-defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with appropriate measurable metrics. Data is gathered for these metrics both at LCC and from state or federal sources as appropriate to each KPI.

The Curriculum and Program Rreview process, along with the global skills assessment via the Summer Assessment Institute, provides data for assessing some KPIs in this Core Theme. However, only some aggregated data from these activities is used in the Monitoring Reports, as the volume of data is judged too vast to report to the Trustees annually. A process for aggregating this data is not well defined in any policy, but it does seem to take place via planning lunches in January, as well as through discussions among faculty, deans, and executive level administration. The lack of a defined process enables some ability to adapt to changing needs for the evaluation process. However, it also leaves the process vulnerable to failures in communications, particularly at the dean level. Inconsistency also arises due to a lack of definition; thus, some departments excel in informing Core Themes and planning while others lag behind.

Overall, the process appears to be working and is generally viewed as satisfactory by the college community. However, further definition of process and more clear connections between assessment and planning priorities would likely enhance efficiency.

Standard 3.B – Core Theme Planning

3.B.1

The report describes synergy between planning and Core Themes and objectives, with some evidence that this process is being monitored for quality and effectiveness through the Monitoring Reports. The connection between the different levels of assessment, and the resulting plans, does not appear to be well defined or documented, but interviews with faculty, staff, and administration reveal that this integration is in fact taking place.

3.B.2

The report and supporting documents show alignment between assessment and planning. It is not clear whether the process is deliberate or well documented, but the Monitoring Reports do provide clear examples of assessment that effect change in programs and inform institutional planning. Students were largely disconnected and not well aware of strategic planning nor how they were directly contributing to the process. Most students did feel as though their voices were heard, and there is evidence to indicate that students are participating, even if they are not fully aware of the larger process. Faculty generally did not see a clear connection between the Strategic Plan and their regular assessment practices; however, there was consensus that they had input with the planning process.

3.B.3

Data, collection methods, and sampling take place in an appropriate way through well-defined KPIs, informed by annual planning meetings and input from the Monitoring Report Review Teams. Some data from Curriculum and Program Review is not clearly integrated, but faculty express that there is a sense they are informing the process. Reports from the Summer Assessment Institutes inform planning as confirmed by faculty and staff. The mechanisms by which this process takes place are not well defined or documented and there is a lack of understanding among many contributors about how, exactly, their contributions are integrated into the planning process. Nonetheless, there appears to be a general sense throughout the LCC community that the faculty and staff have some input into the Plan

Standard 4.A – Core Theme Assessment

4.A.1

The institution engages in the collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data in order to assess the Core Theme Two objectives. The objectives and KPIs are reasonably well informed by the data collected, and the process is regular and ongoing. Any mechanisms for improving the assessment process are not well defined or documented, but they do seem to be in place, even if in a less formal way than usual. LCC's campus culture seems to prefer this structure, but it does lead to some confusion among faculty, staff, and students as to how their assessment practices are informing other areas of the College.

4.A.2

It is clearly evident that teaching faculty are primarily responsible for this process, while being supported by administration. The nature of that support is not well defined or documented; thus, it is vulnerable to changes in administrative personnel, particularly at the dean level. Most programs have well defined goals with achievement levels that are monitored by the Curriculum and Program Review process. Assessment of Global Skills (general education outcomes) is well designed, robust, and faculty driven. The associated Summer Assessment Institute deserves compliments on its design, inclusiveness, and thoughtful use of results, as well as its own self-assessment process.

4.A.3

Faculty with teaching responsibilities are the responsible evaluators of student achievement based on clearly identified learning outcomes. LCC uses the global skills assessment as a measure of student success beyond simply the completion of program requirements. The Summer Assessment Institute is an important contributor to the assessment and improvement of student success.

4.A.4

When faculty were surveyed regarding the Global Skills assessment, the overall response was that the system was working. Though it had room for improvement, it included self-correcting mechanisms. The faculty see the curriculum and program assessment process primarily as a self-reflection and self-improvement process, but they do not seem well informed about how or whether their assessments inform planning at the institutional level. Despite this lack of understanding, the process does seem to accomplish the established goals, but results are perhaps not well communicated to all of the college community.

4.A.5

The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment. However, documentation and clear definition of the process of evaluation is lacking, as evidenced by interviews with College personnel at multiple levels. The evaluators also detected a misunderstanding of how assessments were integrated at the institutional level.

4.A.6

The various methods of assessment used to inform Core Theme Two planning at LCC all include self-correcting mechanisms built into the processes. It is not always clear how these assessments inform changes, but a record of improvements can be seen upon examining long-term results. Of particular note is the global skills assessment at the Summer Assessment Institute, which have clear self-correcting mechanisms that seem well understood by participating faculty and have led to immediate and concrete improvements in teaching and learning.

Standard 4.B – Core Theme Improvement

4.B.1

Results of Core Theme Two assessments at the institutional level are based on meaningful indicators of achievement with oversight from the Monitoring Report Review Teams. Although the Core Theme Two institutional level results are used to inform planning and allocation of resources, the decision making process is not perceived as transparent or well defined, particularly by faculty and students. The results are disseminated to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner. It is of note for the Core Theme Two objectives that assessment practices inform programs, courses, and instructional practices on their own level before being integrated into the larger Core Theme planning process. The feedback mechanisms are not all well defined, but they are happening in a non-linear fashion as an interconnected series of loops, both large and small. This makes documenting and clearly defining the process difficult, but it does seem to allow for the ability to adapt more quickly to changing needs, particularly on the part of instructional faculty.

4.B.2

For Core Theme Two objectives, the associated assessment activities feed back into academic and learning-support planning and practices at many levels. Despite some lack of clear definition in the process, which leaves some potential vulnerabilities in the system, the culture at LCC seems to use these multi-level feedback loops to enhance student learning. Results are made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner. However, it is not always clear to those constituencies how or if their assessment work is being integrated into the results they see. This seems to be largely a communication problem, which could be cleared up with a better definition of process.

Core Theme Three: Student Access, Support, and Completion

Introduction

Core Theme Three examines how well the College is accomplishing its mission by serving the educational needs of students within the two-county college district. There are two objectives:
- Objective 1 -- "Offer a full array of educational programs and support services to meet the diverse needs of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties."

  This objective has three associated KPIs that look at participation rates within the service district; participation and success rates of students disaggregated for students of color, students with disabilities and students receiving VA benefits; and enrollment tracked by FTE.

- Objective 2 -- "Provide students with the support needed to pursue and achieve their educational goals."

This objective has five associated KPIs which track student persistence; student progress/completion; student satisfaction with support services as evaluated by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE); success of academic support programs available through the LCC Tutoring Program; and faculty-student engagement as evaluated by CCSSE.

Standard 3.B – Core Theme Planning

3.B.1

Core Theme planning is consistent with the institution's comprehensive plan, although it is less clear to the evaluators how aligned this process is with guiding the selection of programs and services to ensure they align with and contribute to the accomplishment of the Core Theme's objectives.

The current Core Themes and objectives were developed after the Commission published revised standards in 2010. Previously, in 1999, the College developed a comprehensive set of KPIs based on the publication *Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges*, which was published by the American Association of Community Colleges. The College also developed a fine-tuned system of collection and reporting, including a scorecard, which was reviewed yearly by the Board of Trustees. Because the Board of Trustees and the College personnel greatly valued this data, in 2010, the College adapted this framework to develop its Core Themes, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators. The current Core Themes, Objectives, and KPIs are reviewed and approved annually by the Board of Trustees.

When evaluators spoke with two different Monitoring Report Review Teams, the team members indicated they did not have any input into the annual process to approve Core Themes, objectives and indicators, and some felt that additional or revised objectives and KPIs might better demonstrate mission fulfillment.

3.B.2 and 3.B.3

Currently, the institution uses a comprehensive annual process and planning cycle, and Core Theme Three is overseen by a Monitoring Report Review Team. The team is chaired by the Vice President of Student Services, and membership on the Monitoring Report Review Team is open to all members of the campus community. This team, comprised of approximately 20 people, is composed of engaged faculty and staff and typically has at least one student representative appointed in the fall by ASLCC. During the fall, the Office of College Effectiveness and Relations assembles KPI data, which is then forwarded to team members one week before their scheduled review meeting in December. At this meeting, the team reviews and analyzes the data, with particular attention given to flagged areas within the report where further explanation is required. The team performs a SWOT analysis, which is included with the final report. The final report is presented to the Board of Trustees at one of their monthly meetings. The Trustees complete the final page of the report with their analysis on "pluses and deltas." This assessment information is then used at the Board's annual summer retreat to guide planning for the upcoming year.

In January, the Monitoring Report Review Team meets with the President and Executive Leadership at a lunch meeting to discuss the report and their findings and analysis. This information then informs College planning, strategic initiatives, priorities, and budget development by the President and Executive Leadership.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the Monitoring Report Review Team members, who value the opportunity to participate in this process and especially appreciate the January lunch discussion with the President and Executive Leadership. Team members were able to give specific examples of information and recommendations coming from the team that led to redesign of the pre-college Math and English programs in a way that has positively impacted students and improved Student Access, Support and Completion.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College for the format of the Monitoring Report, which is complete and includes a summary of actions taken because of past reviews, clear data tables with current and historic data that facilitate examination of trends, and a summary of the Monitoring Report Review Team's SWOT analysis.

Concern: The evaluators spoke with several different faculty and staff, many of whom are members of Monitoring Report Review Teams. Although members were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the process and felt their participation and contributions were valued, many did not seem to be aware of how this directly connected to the Strategic Plan and budgeting process. Members were also not clear on the connection of the Core Theme monitoring process to the Academic Master Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan and other master plans.

Standard 4.A – Core Theme Assessment

4.A.1

The College has a long standing and clearly defined process for evaluating the accomplishment of the Core Theme objectives. LCC has established meaningful, assessable and verifiable KPIs and these are included in the Student Access, Support and Completion Monitoring Report. The Office of College Effectiveness and Relations engages in ongoing systematic collection of meaningful and verifiable data and annually provides this to the Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams for analysis as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of its Core Theme objectives.

LCC has demonstrated over time a consistently high level of accomplishing Core Theme Three objectives and meeting established benchmarks. The evaluators reviewed evidence that this process resulted in improvements in student learning that favorably impacted completion rates, including changes in pre-college English and Math course sequences.

Compliment: The evaluation compliments the College's excellent graduation rate, which, according to its IPEDS reports, has steadily improved from 2012-16, increasing from 25% to 38%. This accomplishment reflects the College's commitment to student success in a meaningful and sustained way.

It is of note that in the case of the Core Theme Three, two KPIs rely on CCSSE data and are updated every three years because the survey tool is administered on a three-year cycle. Evaluators clarified with the Vice President of College Effectiveness and Relations that on the years that the CCSSE is not administered, an internal student survey is administered, and results regarding student satisfaction with services are shared individually with appropriate departments. During the Student Forum, a few students mentioned "survey fatigue" and seemed unclear about how survey information is used. "Non-CCSSE" information is not included in the annual Monitoring Report, nor through any formal reporting mechanism. Evaluators wonder whether an opportunity may exist to include this data in the annual Core Theme Monitoring Report and also to broaden the understanding of how students feel about support services through focus groups or other types of qualitative data collection.

4.A.2 and 4.A.3

Evaluation of LCC's instructional programs and services occurs through the Curriculum and Program Review Process, which is continuous and takes place over a two-year cycle, and Global Skills assessment which happens yearly during the Summer Assessment Institute. The Instructional Assessment Committee, chaired by a faculty member and supported by administration, facilitates both processes, and faculty have a primary role in evaluating the achievement of educational programs and services. However, as previously noted in this report, the evaluation committee did not find evidence of a process for systematic oversight of the Curriculum and Program Review Process, and the evaluation committee observed that variability existed in the quality of the plans. Additionally, the information from this inclusive review process is not shared with the campus or the Workforce Advisory Committees in any systematic manner. And lastly, instruction in the high schools that may result in students obtaining college credit (excluding Running Start students who are integrated with LCC students in courses) are not included in instructional assessment processes in a consistent manner. (See concerns listed under 2.C.1)

Assessment of student learning at LCC occurs at the course, program and degree level. It is undertaken by LCC faculty with support from the Office of Instruction and College Effectiveness and Relations staff. However, as noted previously in this report, the evaluation team discovered that participation in assessment work at the course level is completely voluntary, and no systematic process is in place by the Curriculum Committee or the Office of Instruction to assure regular review and updating of course and/or program outcomes. (See concerns listed under 2.C.1)

4.A.4 and 4.A.5

Through the work of the Monitoring Report Review Team, the institution evaluates holistically the programs and services that support Student Access, Support and Completion with respect to

the Core Theme objectives. The evaluation team reviewed evidence that the College consistently meets or exceeds benchmarks in all areas except III.C (enrollment 2016-17) and III.F (student satisfaction with support services, 2015-16).

Review of Core Theme objectives and indicators occurs annually by the Board of Trustees, and the process supports and informs planning and assessment of the College's programs and services. However, it was not clear to the evaluators whether this annual assessment by the Monitoring Report Review Team is holistically aligned with institutional planning and resource allocation in a way that is transparent to the campus community and aligned with the Academic Master Plan and other relevant master plans. Evaluators heard a few comments from faculty that specific suggestions and recommendations from this process were included in the strategic priorities for the following year, but they had no idea how or why certain things were chosen, and others were not. This appears to be just a communication issue, not a process issue.

4.A.6

The evaluation team found ample evidence that LCC is committed to planning and assessment, and regularly reviews the processes and the results to assure that they represent authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement. The College conducted a survey of Monitoring Report Review Team members in May 2017. The survey showed a high degree of understanding of the members' roles and responsibilities.

LCC has well established processes and tools in place for Curriculum and Program Review and assessment of student learning at the course, program and degree level. Evidence demonstrated that the College is interested in improving these processes and has responded to suggestions for improvement from faculty regarding assessment day activities and Curriculum and Program Review. A survey and focus groups conducted in 2017 by College Spark Washington found that a substantial number of faculty had used data to improve teaching and that student learning had increased over the past four years.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College's commitment to using data for decision making. The College Effectiveness and Relations staff support these processes in an exemplary fashion. There is a clear culture of assessment for improvement of student achievement and mission fulfillment, which is well supported by faculty and administration.

Standard 4.B – Core Theme Improvement

4.B.1

Each year, the Board of Trustees reviews the KPI Dashboard as well as the complete Core Theme Monitoring Reports. Areas that are identified as priorities for improvement are included in the strategic planning cycle and operational allocation of resources.

In the case of Core Theme Three - Student Access, Support and Completion, meaningful institutionally defined indicators of achievement are made available to the committee in a timely

manner and inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. As previously mentioned in this report, there is an opportunity to better educate and inform the college community about how this process is aligned with institutional planning and resource allocation.

4.B.2

The Instructional Assessment Committee, which is chaired by a faculty member, oversees assessment of student learning to support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. As a result of this well-developed process, the evaluators reviewed many examples of improvements made at the course and program level as the direct result of assessment data. For example, because of Summer Institute work on the Global Skill Communication, an ongoing concern about the outcome dealing with the ability to document source information resulted in a fall 2017 assessment day activity. This activity allowed faculty to participate in an authentic discussion about teaching strategies to improve this area, and a "make and take" document was developed and placed on the Global Skills webpage. This outcome will be re-evaluated in four years, but faculty can perform the assessment sooner if necessary.

While all full-time faculty are required, and part-time faculty are encouraged, to participate in assessment day activities and training, actual participation in course level assessment and Global Skills assessment is voluntary; thus, it is possible that certain courses may never participate in the assessment process and thereby enhance student learning. This and other concerns are more completely discussed in 2.C.1 of this report.

Although the College is clearly using data to improve student learning and has an ongoing culture of assessment, parts of the process remain informal. The evaluation committee believes that a system that formally documents use of student learning data in all aspects of instructional assessment and planning would address many of the concerns pertaining to process that have been mentioned in this peer-evaluation report.

Core Theme Four: Institutional Excellence

Introduction

Core Theme Four addresses institutional excellence and community enrichment at LCC and, as with the College's other Core Themes, is assessed and monitored through an associated interdisciplinary review team and an annual Monitoring Report. The team is robust and represents faculty, staff and students from across the institution. This Core Theme addresses issues of physical and financial infrastructure, and the engagement and satisfaction of staff, community, and, to some degree, students.

Standard 3.B – Core Theme Planning

3.B.1 – 3.B.3

Evaluators found that this Core Theme looks at a host of indicators that are indirect in terms of student learning but important in the overall function of the institution. The Core Theme is reflected in LCC's Strategic Plan and guides programs and services as they relate to the Core Theme. Two objectives have been developed for this Core Theme:

- "Demonstrate Our Commitment to Institutional Integrity by Investing in our Campus, Students and Employees,"
- "Uphold Our Reputation for High Quality and Contribute to the Value of the Community by Promoting Excellence in Our Programs, Services and Activities."

Each objective has three associated key performance indicators, all of which are appropriately defined and used to evaluate the accomplishment of the Core Theme objectives.

The three categories of key performance indicators associated with Objective One focus on professional development of faculty and staff, faculty/staff satisfaction and morale, and the condition of infrastructure. Those associated with Objective Two consider external perceptions/satisfaction with the College, student/graduate satisfaction with instruction, and the cultural enrichment of students and community.

Standard 4.A – Core Theme Assessment

4.A.1 – 4.A.6

Evaluators found that the indicators related to Core Theme Four are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable in evaluating the accomplishment of the Core Theme's two objectives. Data associated with these indicators are reviewed annually by the Monitoring Report Review Team, which provides additional analysis (including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) relating to the data and the theme itself in its Monitoring Report. The Monitoring Report also captures actions taken over the previous year in response to the data and/or Core Theme area.

While the indicators related to this theme are appropriate, some could be made more meaningful with more complete data. Specifically, the indicator addressing professional development of faculty and staff, which measures the accrual of professional development units, does not appear to be complete due to issues in reporting/tracking, and it does not include employees other than full-time faculty. Furthermore, the quality and type of the professional development is not addressed or delineated. Prioritizing professional development in all employee classifications related to student retention and completion would present an opportunity to align, correlate, and integrate objectives across College plans.

Secondly, the only student indicator present—that related to student satisfaction—addresses only satisfaction with instruction from those who are graduating. Satisfaction surveys from the student body at large could provide more complete data to measure the effectiveness of both objectives related to this Core Theme.

The College's Strategic Plan identifies two strategic initiatives associated with Core Theme Four: one concerning rebalancing the institution's "revenue mix" by increasing alternative sources of funding and utilizing resources wisely in support of student success; and one concerning strengthening LCC's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusiveness (DEI) through training and implementation of targeted intervention and recruitment strategies. The first of these represents a continuation of ongoing practices which are, to some degree, reflected in the existing indicators associated with this Core Theme, and addressed in the Monitoring Report. Concerning the second initiative focused on DEI, there are currently no associated indicators. From conversations with College personnel, the evaluators surmise that the newly developed Strategic Plan will inform and influence the College's understanding of what constitutes Core Theme achievement. As such, appropriate objectives and meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators will need to be developed for the strategic initiative associated with DEI for Core Theme Four.

LCC regularly reviews its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement. Members of the Monitoring Report Review Teams, including those related to Core Theme Four, periodically receive surveys to assess their current understanding of their role, and to evaluate the orientation process.

Standard 4.B – Core Theme Improvement

4.B.1 – 4.B.2

Data from the Monitoring Report is presented to the LCC Board for its review three times a year, once in a presentation focused on the Core Theme Four Monitoring Report, and twice more in a dashboard that aggregates data related to indicators associated with all four of LCC's Core Themes. Monitoring Report Review Teams may recommend revisions or updates to the Core Theme indicators, but the Board alone approves any such changes. Each Monitoring Report Review Team participates in annual planning sessions that drive the institution's annual and strategic planning processes, resulting in identification of Annual Priorities and periodic updates to the College's Strategic Plan.

Indicators related to Core Theme Four show high levels of achievement. The following are some examples:
- **Item IV-A:** *Professional development of faculty and staff*, shows five consecutive years of meeting or exceeding mission fulfillment.
- **Item IV-B:** *Faculty/staff satisfaction and morale*, which has been in place since 2016, shows that the stretch goal has been met each year.
- **Item IV-C:** *Condition of infrastructure (facilities overall)*, shows five consecutive years of meeting mission fulfillment. Of particular note in this regard, the Music Department is to be complimented for having taken exceptional care of the Bösendorfer Imperial Grand Piano that was donated to LCC nearly ten years ago.

Analysis and improvement related to these indicators, and to the Core Theme generally, is captured in the Monitoring Report, which is issued annually. Analysis and improvement are also

evident in the Annual Priorities, which reflect actions associated with each Core Theme. Examples of such priorities include the following:

- "Increase unrestricted and endowed giving through the LCC Foundation."
- "Develop multi-year equipment replacement/enhancement plan."

In these examples, the former originates directly from the indicators that are tracked in the Monitoring Report, while the latter derives from input provided annually by the Monitoring Report Review Team.

XI.   MISSION FULFILLMENT, ADAPTATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Standard 5.A – Mission Fulfillment

Lower Columbia College has a long history of developing and refining its institutional assessment processes. Even before the implementation of Core Themes, LCC had a cyclical process of institutional assessment to determine the degree to which it was fulfilling its mission. The current use of the Core Theme Monitoring Report Review Teams ensures that an extensive spectrum of the college community becomes invested in the College through participation on these teams. The process gives participants the opportunity to gain a holistic view of the College's Mission, Vision, and Values.

Ultimate statutory authority for determining mission fulfillment rests with the Board of Trustees. Each year, the Trustees carefully examine the quantitative and qualitative data they are provided to determine whether they deem the current Core Themes, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators as assessable, verifiable, and meaningful measures of determining mission fulfillment. During the many interviews the evaluators conducted, they learned that the Board of Trustees exercises their prerogative to determine if the goals and stretch goals are adequate. The evaluators were told that on occasion, the Trustees have determined that the goals need to be modified or made more rigorous. The many dashboards that are created provide a concise way of reviewing the status of each Key Performance Indicator so that there is a clear indication of what the College is doing well and how the College needs to improve.

Compliment: The evaluation committee compliments the College for maintaining the momentum on Core Theme Assessment and Planning over a lengthy period of time.

Standard 5.B – Adaptation and Sustainability

5.B.1 – 5.B.3

Within the context of its mission and characteristics, the institution evaluates regularly the adequacy of its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of operations to document its ongoing potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its Core Theme objectives, and achieve the goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered.

The Strategic Plan focuses on the following four themes-Core Theme One: Workforce and Economic Development, Core Theme Two: Transfer and Academic Preparation. Core Theme Three: Student Access, Support and Completion, and Core Theme Four: Institutional Excellence.

The Strategic Enrollment Plan focuses on the following themes:

- **Academic Advising**: integrate mandatory and intrusive academic advising model throughout LCC.
- **Athletics**: increase the number of student athletes attending LCC.
- **BAS degree**: explore the possibility of adding one or more applied baccalaureate degrees.
- **Career assessment**: develop a directed career self-assessment to assist students in choosing a "meta-major."
- **Corporate training**: increase the amount of revenue obtained through contract training.
- **International Programs**: increase the number of international students attending LCC.
- **Multicultural outreach**: increase racial and ethnic diversity in the LCC student population.
- **Arts**: increase course offerings in the performing arts.
- **Non-academic supports**: increase non-academic support for students and build a "one-stop" center for student engagement.
- **eLearning**: increase the number of direct transfer courses offered online.
- **Professional/Technical Enrollment and Outreach**: increase enrollment in workforce programs.
- **Reputation/Brand Identity**: increase the overall reputation of the institution through enhanced brand identity.
- **University Center**: increase the number of students transferring from LCC to baccalaureate programs.

The current Annual Priorities include:

Core Theme One: Workforce and Economic Development

- Identify sustainable partners for the Lower Columbia Regional University Center.
- Continue to work toward approval for offering an Applied Baccalaureate degree in education.
- Improve career guidance given to students in partnership with K-12.
- Expand career and technical dual-credit opportunities by strengthening employer engagement and increasing course alignment with K-12.
- Explore pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

Core Theme Two: Transfer and Academic Preparation

- Continue to refine and monitor pre-college English pathways.
- Continue to refine and monitor pre-college math pathways including strategies to get more students to college level math within a year of entering college.
- Increase the proportion of students transitioning from Basic Education for Adults to college level studies.
- Utilize cross-functional groups to develop "Meta Major" pathways.

- Strengthen onboarding for students who are not college ready, including clarifying options for Basic Education for Adults, high school completion and pre-college.

Core Theme Three: Student Access, Support and Completion

- Continue to simplify onboarding process for students.
- Continue to improve services for veterans.
- Implement first phases of Guided Pathways Work Plan.
- Implement mandatory academic advising for all degree and certificate-seeking students.
- Begin to revise class scheduling practices.
- Address Student Center, Learning Commons and other student study space needs.

Core Theme Four: Institutional Excellence and Community Enrichment

- Increase unrestricted and endowed giving through the LCC Foundation.
- Continue to implement safety improvements in instructional lab and work environments.
- Continue to refine emergency preparedness efforts.
- Continue to prepare for implementation of ctcLink.
- Continue to offer and support employee professional development.
- Continue to prepare for 2018 accreditation report and visit.
- Develop multi-year equipment replacement/enhancement processes.
- Continue to develop strategies for increasing diversity outcomes on campus for students, faculty and staff.
- Continue to expand international student enrollment, and integrate housing and support
- services.
- Implement Accessible Technology Plan including providing training opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Implement online time and effort reporting system.
- Complete Main Building Project.
- Maintain and promote sufficient revenues and reserves to provide sustainability for the College.

The operational budgeting process remains focused on preparing an annual budget. There was no evidence of a comprehensive long-term financial plan. Per the 2017 audited financial statements system-wide unrestricted net assets at June 30, 2017 were only $104,788 (0nly .23% of the fiscal year 2017 operating expenses) of $44,653,606.

A review of the financial information since 2013 revealed only a modest growth in revenue from $20,071,824 to $23,621,046.

For 2018 83.9% of operating expenditures were for salaries and benefits, 13.6% were for goods and services, 1% were for travel, 1.4% were for equipment/technology, and 1% was for grants/subsidies. Considering that the operating budget must also provide for utilities, software licenses, legal fees, etc. it can be seen that it will be challenging to make reallocations within the budget without impacting personnel.

The book value of buildings at June 30, 2017 was $101,443,081 with $25,952,096 (25.58%) of accumulated depreciation. The book value of other improvements and infrastructure at June 30, 2017 was $5,479,097 with $2,345,475 (42.81%) of accumulated depreciation. The book value of equipment at June 30, 2017 was $6,555,105, with $4,154,260 (63.37%) of accumulated depreciation.   The book value of Library resources at June 30, 2017 was $1,674,617, with $1,575,394 (94.05%) of accumulated depreciation.

The 2017 financial statements reflect that an investment of $1,185,006 in equipment was made during the year meaning that 18% of equipment has been recently purchased and the remainder of the rest of the equipment must be near the end of the useful life. Similarly, with a Library resources value of over $1.5 million and a useful life of 7 years anticipated annual expenditures would be in the $225,000 range. However, the financial statements only reflect an investment in Library resources of $0 in 2014, $15,284 in 2015, $14,263 in 2016, and $60,377 in 2017.

Recent annual audits have noted that "Those preparing the statements lacked adequate resources to ensure transactions were appropriately reported under generally accepted accounting principles."

With the budgeting process only focused on preparing the annual budget and working in an environment of limited resource growth and high staffing costs it has been difficult to ascertain the College has the underlying resources to achieve the desired long-term outcomes.

Concern: In spite of the Strategic Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan, Annual Priorities, and Annual Accomplishments, much of the documentation associated with the institution's ability to be adaptable and sustainable is accomplished in a short-term planning mode. While the Facilities Master Plan and Technology Strategic Plan serve as models for multi-year planning, the operational financial planning remains focused on the short-term. Short–term budget balancing practices such as reducing equipment purchases and delaying operational maintenance can come at the expense of long-term stability.

XII.   SUMMARY

The Peer Evaluation Committee has been honored to study Lower Columbia College's institutional self-study and supporting documentation, and then to spend just over two days on the campus to verify, clarify, and amplify the information provided to evaluate the College on the basis of the NWCCU's Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies. Lower Columbia College is an excellent institution of higher education and adds immeasurable value to Longview, Washington, and its surrounding service area. The Commendations and Recommendations that follow succinctly capture the areas in which Lower Columbia College truly excels, along with areas in which LCC can make improvements to become an even more vibrant and robust institution of higher learning.

XIII. COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations:

1. The Commission commends Lower Columbia College's faculty, staff, and administration for the remarkable investment of time, energy, and financial resources in cultivating a culture of safety. The College makes extraordinary provisions for ensuring the safety and security of its students, employees, campus visitors, and property at all locations where it offers programs and services.
2. The Commission commends the Library and Learning Commons faculty and staff for their dedication and enthusiasm in their support of the campus community and for their success in the use of assessment data to improve services for students and faculty. The initiative to pilot and embrace Open Educational Resources (OERs) to make textbooks affordable for students is especially noteworthy.
3. The Commission commends the College, particularly the faculty leadership, for developing—and sustaining over a long period of time—a robust process for evaluating and improving student learning in Global Skills during the annual Summer Assessment Institute. The ongoing level of faculty participation, enthusiasm, and demonstrated continuous improvement resulting from this Institute is a testament to the authentic culture of assessment that has been nurtured and sustained at Lower Columbia College.
4. The Commission commends the College for its exemplary commitment to student success by meeting students where they are and then helping them in the following ways:
   a. Consistently supporting strong retention and graduation rates;
   b. Having robust i-BEST and tutoring programs;
   c. Creating a food pantry;
   d. The Foundation's establishment of a Student Success Fund to assist students who are experiencing acute, short-term financial needs; and
   e. Providing the students with beautiful and well-maintained campus facilities.

Recommendations:

1. While noting the ongoing efforts to strengthen controls, train staff, and improve financial reporting, the Commission did not find evidence that all issues relating to staff turnover transition, internal controls and segregation of duties, and financial statement preparation and the requisite oversight have been resolved. Therefore, the Commission recommends that staff be provided adequate training and resources to implement an adequate review process over the College's internal controls and financial reporting to ensure the financial information is accurate, complete, and in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). (Standard 2.F.4)
2. The Commission recommends that the College articulate identifiable and assessable learning outcomes for related instruction—communication, computation, and human relations—that align with and support student learning outcomes in applied certificate and degree programs. (E.R. 12, Standard 2.C.11)

3. **The Commission recommends that the College perform ongoing review and regular, systematic evaluation and revision, as necessary, of *Administrative Policies* that promote effective management and operation of the institution and ensure they are consistent, fair, and equitably applied to its employees and students. (Standard 2, Standard 2.A.12, Standard 2.A.18)**