

Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (Year 7)

Peer-Evaluation Report

Lower Columbia College

Longview, WA

October 15-17, 2025

NWCCU Liaison to the Peer Evaluation Team:

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

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I. Introduction

A four-person peer evaluation team conducted a Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) visit to Lower Columbia College from October 15 to 17, 2025 in response to the *Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report* submitted by the College to NWCCU on August 4, 2025. The comprehensive visit covered Standard One, and elements from Standard Two from the Year-Six Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) report.

II. Assessment of Self-Evaluation and Support Materials

The evaluation team received the self-evaluation EIE report and corresponding electronic exhibits from Lower Columbia College (LCC) with sufficient time to thoroughly review the documents before the visit. The exhibits included items linked within the report, a compiled supplemental evidence document, and the academic catalog.

The self-evaluation was succinct, easy to read, and followed the 2020 standards. The exhibits were well-organized and easy to navigate.

Supplemental materials including presentation slides, fiscal reports, and marketing materials-- were provided at the request of the evaluation team.

LCC's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) ensured that the evaluation team had all the necessary materials, and interviews were scheduled for a productive and thorough review of LCC's Fall 2025 EIE.

III. Visit Summary

Throughout the visit, the evaluation team met with and interviewed several individuals, departments, and groups including students, academic affairs leadership, the ALO, association (union) leaders, Board of Trustees, student affairs staff, Library staff, Human Resources personnel, and the president and his Cabinet.

Faculty, staff, and student forums were held with plenty of representation.

The evaluation team observed college-wide pride, especially of the success of the college's athletics and extracurricular programs. There were numerous examples of collaboration between faculty, staff, and college leadership, using assessment results to implement new strategies, guide curriculum changes, all focusing on student success.

The evaluation team appreciated LCC's hospitality and the candid feedback received from the college employees and students.

IV. Standard 1: Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

a. Standard 1.A: Institutional Mission

i. 1.A.1

1.A.1 The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.,

LCC's mission clearly states the college's educational purposes and commitment to student learning and achievement. Widely shared and understood, the mission reads:

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.

The Board of Trustees recently reviewed and approved their mission and values on July 30, 2025. The information is widely disseminated on the website, in the academic catalog, and in poster form at various location on campus. Additionally, LCC's Board evaluates one Board policy per meeting to make sure the policies align with their mission.

b. Standard 1.B: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

i. 1.B.1

1.B.1 The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

Lower Columbia College has a clearly defined and committed process towards assessing institutional effectiveness. The institution provides a transparent and well-maintained historical record of its assessment practices, with data extending back twenty-five years. This strongly demonstrates the commitment to assessing institutional effectiveness broadly throughout the institution.

The institution has integrated review of data with its ongoing Curriculum and Program Review cycle conducted across the institution for all academic programs. Support services and operational areas are assessed and reviewed. KPIs associated with the strategic plan KPIs are evaluated by monitoring committees with representation from across campus. Many assessment practices follow regular repeated cycles with some aspects, particularly the Curriculum and Program Review (C&PR), being replicated continually through the use of assessment days across the institution as several points across each academic year to allow coordinated work through (C&PR) work. Faculty and administrators broadly reported the value of and applicability of assessment days to the ongoing evaluative processes across the campus.

Alongside statewide initiative work, such as Guided Pathways implementation, the review of institutional KPIs are moved through the teams reviewing the data to the executive leadership team and strategic planning is a replicated and regular process each year. These processes culminate in the development of annual priorities. This consistent commitment to assessment supported by both the faculty and administration is laudable.

Concern: While the institution has a strong and inclusive planning cycle, it was unclear how, if at all, planning was aligned to resource allocation.

ii. 1.B.2

1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

Lower Columbia College has a clearly articulated set of goals, objectives, and indicators that define mission fulfillment; clearly situated within a lengthy history of data analysis tracking. These metrics or KPIs are grouped along five core mission areas of:

- Workforce and Economic Development
- Academic Transfer
- Preparation for College Level Students
- Student Access, Support, and Completion
- Institutional Excellence and Community Enrichment.

Within each of these mission areas, two to eight detailed metrics are presented for a total of 29 KPIs. These indicators are widely discussed and analyzed through the institution's monitoring team structure. Examples of metrics, such as under the core mission area of Academic Transfer, include "Percent of Transfer Students Achieving 45 College Level Credits within Two Years" and "College Level English Completion in First Year (Transfer Students Only)". These data are presented clearly with indicators of success.

The institution has a clearly explained process in developing and selecting regional and national peers, to provide additional grounding. IPEDS data is used to provide national and regional comparison level data for graduation and transfer-out rates at the institutional level. Where available, assessment of the KPIs are compared against Washington-state wide averages to allow for comparison within the context of the other institutions in the state. While the institution clearly makes use of comparison data, this analysis focuses predominantly on the state-wide level. Institutional research staff reported being able to look at their intrastate peers within state board provided tools but may wish to consider clarifying the use of Washington state peers (in line with their selected peers) alongside systemwide.

iii. 1.B.3

1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Planning at the institution is an annual and ongoing process lensed through monitoring teams connected to each of the five core mission areas. Each of the planning teams is broadly representative of both the internal campus community (administrators, staff, faculty, and students) as well as a Board of Trustee member and community members. Student participation is strongly encouraged and supported with mandatory training and compensation for students. The campus's work to bring a wide array of individuals into the monitoring team analysis and review is clear and was seen broadly across the campus; with each team having around 20 members each.

Monitoring teams review and discussion is publicly available, and after synthesis and analysis by Institutional Effectiveness, is provided directly to the Executive Leadership Team for consideration in the annual revision of the strategic plan for the institution. This culminates in relatively short-term (annual) planning. Similarly, while the planning process

clearly demonstrates its inclusive nature as well as opportunities for comment by constituencies, it is less clear to the extent that the allocation of necessary resources and improving institutional effectiveness.

iv. 1.B.4

1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

The institution has clear and repeated data analysis that incorporates both internal and external environmental reviews. This is nested within the context of the overall KPI and core mission area metric analysis conducted annually within the monitoring team framework. The institution further conducts external data collection through the state and national sources broadly. Internal monitoring is done with instruments such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, Employee Satisfaction Surveys, Food Insecurity, and beyond.

Further, program advisory committees comprised of industry professionals from within the community are utilized in ongoing and systemic ways. These efforts are used to directly inform the curriculum and local needs within the service district to improve programs and learning outcomes in partnership with the program faculty. Through these avenues, the institution has created numerous avenues to bring data inputs into its processes for consideration within its work around planning and improving institutional effectiveness.

c. Standard 1.C: Student Learning

i. 1.C.1

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

LCC offers programs with appropriate content and rigor consistent with its mission to prepare students for transfer education and workforce participation. The institution provides a comprehensive array of academic transfer, professional-technical, and applied baccalaureate programs that align with Washington State Community and Technical College policies, which authorize member institutions to offer academic transfer, workforce, basic skills, and continuing education programs. LCC's applied baccalaureate degrees extend professional-technical pathways into upper-division study in fields with regional workforce demand. Degree and certificate programs are developed and reviewed through established faculty-governance processes, including the Curriculum Committee and the Curriculum and Program Review (C&PR) cycle. These processes align program learning outcomes with institutional learning outcomes and provide a structured mechanism for faculty to review course sequencing, credit requirements, and assessment practices.

Many academic programs and courses participate in Washington's Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) and Major-Related Programs (MRPs), ensuring that LCC coursework is comparable in rigor, content, and credit structure to that of baccalaureate institutions. The Institutional Effectiveness team provides benchmarking data from the ctcLink system as part of the C&PR process, supporting comparative evaluation with peer institutions across the state. Several professional and technical programs maintain external accreditations, such as Nursing and Medical Assisting, providing additional validation of rigor and collegiate-level standards. All professional and technical programs maintain Advisory Committees composed of employers, industry professionals, and community representatives who review curriculum relevance and student learning outcomes. The college's institutional learning outcomes, known as Global Skills, are grounded in the AAC&U VALUE rubrics, which are nationally recognized indicators of collegiate-level learning.

ii. 1.C.2

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

The institution demonstrates that credit, degrees, and certificates are awarded for programs grounded in clearly and consistently articulated student learning outcomes. Program learning outcomes are published across institutional materials including in the catalog, program maps, and syllabi. These reflect appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning for each credential level. Course syllabi consistently include clearly defined outcomes and show diverse assessment methods such as exams, projects, case studies, laboratory experiences, and reflective assignments that are evidence of appropriate depth and variety of learning experiences. Review by advisory committees ensures that credentials in professional and technical programs remain aligned with current industry standards and workforce expectations.

The Curriculum and Program Review (C&PR) process provides a structured, faculty-centered mechanism for ensuring credentials remain current. Through this process, faculty are allocated dedicated time each year during three institutionally scheduled Assessment Days to analyze disaggregated student learning data provided by Institutional Research. Faculty use this time to reflect on program effectiveness and record observations regarding sequencing, alignment, and emerging workforce needs. The process is overseen by the Instructional Assessment Committee (IAC), which regularly reviews and refines the C&PR instrument and procedures to strengthen assessment practices and promote continuous improvement.

iii. 1.C.3

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

The visiting team reviewed evidence from LCC's program webpages, catalog entries, and a representative sample of syllabi. These materials are publicly accessible and clearly present program learning outcomes for degrees and certificates. A review of multiple program types including the Associate in Arts (AA-DTA), Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, and certificate programs showed consistent presentation and formatting of outcomes, reflecting a standardized institutional approach. At the course level, the college employs a standardized syllabus template that requires the inclusion of Course Learning Outcomes. A review of sample syllabi confirmed that these outcomes are consistently listed and aligned with corresponding program outcomes. During student forums, participants expressed confidence that they understood what was expected of them academically.

iv. 1.C.4

1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

The college catalog provides detailed and accurate information for each degree and certificate program, including total credit-hour requirements, required and elective courses, and general education options where applicable. A review of multiple programs across transfer (AA-DTA, AS) and professional/technical pathways (AAS, certificates) confirmed consistent presentation and formatting of program information, reflecting a standardized and transparent approach to documentation.

The Admissions webpage is well-organized, intuitive, and written in accessible language. It provides dropdown menus and FAQs that guide students through the admissions process, with clear links to the online application, placement procedures, financial aid resources, and orientation information. These materials ensure that prospective students can easily locate and understand the steps required for enrollment.

The institution prominently features a Google Translate function on all webpages, allowing translation of admissions and program information into multiple languages. This feature enhances accessibility for students, ensuring that essential information about application procedures and academic requirements is understandable to a broad audience.

v. 1.C.5

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

The C&PR process serves as the formal mechanism through which faculty assess student learning outcomes, review curriculum, and document improvements. C&PR operates on a two-year cycle with three designated assessment days each academic year incorporated into the institutional calendar. During these days, faculty collaboratively complete assigned sections of the C&PR instrument, supported by the Instructional Assessment Committee (IAC), deans, and Institutional Research staff who provide disaggregated student achievement data, technical support, and consultation.

The C&PR instrument guides faculty through analysis of student learning outcomes, identification of achievement gaps, review of external factors (including labor-market and industry data), and documentation of planned improvements. Peer and administrative review components, added in recent cycles, ensure accountability and consistency across programs. Deans review each submission and provide written feedback, which is used to inform local decision-making regarding curriculum and staffing.

The review panel found that faculty demonstrated clear understanding of the process and provided examples of how they have used assessment data to modify courses, update sequencing, or strengthen instructional practices. Professional-technical programs draw on advisory committee feedback and graduate survey data as additional input into the assessment process for maintaining currency and relevance. The inclusion of assessment days, peer review, and data-informed reflection underscores a mature, sustainable system of program evaluation.

Compliment: LCC has invested in a well-structured, faculty-centered assessment system supported by dedicated assessment days and integration with Institutional Research that reflects a deep institutional commitment to evaluating and improving student learning outcomes.

vi. 1.C.6

1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.

The evaluation team found that LCC has established and systematically assesses institutional learning outcomes consistent with its mission. These outcomes, known as Global Skills, include Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, and Teamwork, and represent the essential competencies expected of all graduates. The Global Skills are aligned with nationally recognized AAC&U Value rubrics that provide a unifying framework across programs and disciplines.

All instructional areas, including transfer and professional/technical programs, participate in Global Skills assessment. For transfer programs, assessment occurs through a summer institute in which faculty evaluators apply common rubrics to a sampling of student artifacts pulled randomly from a wide variety of programs across the college. Professional and technical programs conduct assessment within their departments using aligned procedures. Faculty consistently demonstrated awareness of how these outcomes are embedded and assessed within their curriculum.

Global Skills assessment operates on a four-year rotation, with one outcome evaluated each year. Prior to each assessment cycle, the college provides preparatory workshops and training sessions to ensure faculty are well equipped to assess the designated skill. Results are compiled and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Research and reviewed by the Instructional Assessment Committee to

guide improvement efforts. Findings are also shared with instructional leadership for consideration in broader planning discussions.

The evaluation team reviewed examples demonstrating how assessment results are used to enhance student learning. For example, results from the Communication Global Skill assessment revealed weaknesses in documentation and citation practices, prompting faculty to develop improved instructional materials and student resources in response.

vii. 1.C.7

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

Faculty and administrators reported that assessment results are discussed broadly during Assessment Days, C&PR cycles, and divisional meetings. These processes have led to documented improvements in pedagogy, course design, and learning-support initiatives. Deans indicated that assessment reports inform discussions about resource allocation, with requests for resources being prioritized based on documented assessment outcomes. This is most clearly demonstrated with assessment data for the college's Global Skills learning outcomes. In this process, the data is incorporated into its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which serve as the primary framework for evaluating mission fulfillment. Each year, Monitoring Teams analyze KPI results, including Global Skills data, and produce SWOT analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) that synthesize findings from assessment and other institutional data. These analyses are reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and presented to the Board of Trustees, informing strategic priorities and guiding annual and long-range planning.

However, while this structured process establishes a clear connection between institutional assessment in the area of Global Skills and college-wide planning functions, the team found no comparable mechanism linking Program Learning Outcomes assessment results to resource allocation or strategic planning. At the program level, the use of assessment data appears to rely primarily on department level discussions and local awareness rather than a fully systematic, transparent process of documentation and integration into formal planning. As noted above under Standard 1.B.3, there is concern that planning processes are inclusive and data-rich, but the explicit linkage between program-level assessment findings and planning decisions is not evident. Strengthening this connection would enhance the college's ability to close the loop between evaluation, planning, and resource deployment.

viii. 1.C.8

1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving

institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

Transfer credit and credit for prior learning (CPL) policies are presented in both the college catalog and institutional website, outlining opportunities available through standardized examinations (AP, CLEP, IB), military training, professional certifications, and experiential learning. The Credit for Prior Learning webpage provides direct links to procedures, contact information, and step-by-step instructions for students seeking evaluation. Safeguards are in place to ensure that awarded or accepted credit is appropriate for LCC programs and comparable in content, rigor, and quality. Many equivalencies, such as Advanced Placement, military transcripts, and state-recognized occupational certificates, are pre-established using statewide or national benchmarks. When no prior standard exists, subject-matter faculty are assigned on an *ad hoc* basis to evaluate student-submitted evidence against LCC course learning outcomes. This process ensures expert academic oversight and consistent application of standards. Credit limits for CPL awards are published in the catalog and on the website, providing transparency for students. Transfer credit is accepted only from regionally accredited institutions, with recognized accrediting agencies explicitly listed and evaluation procedures clearly outlined.

LCC also participates in Washington's statewide articulation and transfer frameworks, including the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) and Major-Related Programs (MRPs), which guarantee the transferability of associate degrees to public universities. The college also adheres to the Washington Community and Technical College Common Course Numbering system, supporting consistent course alignment and facilitating student mobility within the two-year system.

ix. 1.C.9

1.C.9 The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

d. Standard 1.D: Student Achievement

i. 1.D.1

1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

Lower Columbia College is an open-access institution with a mission focused on both the professional and personal learning of its students. This commitment to the student and their potential to benefit from its programs was articulated through its orientation practices. All new students take part in mandatory new student advising (NSA) appointments, either through scheduled appointments or drop-in sessions; these appointments were scheduled

for an hour, providing strong time to orient the student to their program academic requirements and policies.

The institution has a designated “One-Stop” starting point for students that coordinates student needs around admissions and registration, financial aid, advising, TRIO, and similar services to better help and support student onboarding. These departments have weekly cross-departmental collaboration on changing policies and student needs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness these functions.

Of note, orientation has made use of data to assess and improve its offerings, for example, recently adding an additional onboarding process “Red Devil Welcome Days” to further onboard students to the campus and creating an online version. Once admitted, the institution requires students with less than 30 transfer credits in a 2-credit College Success course to further orient and prepare students to succeed with introduction to areas such as college culture, study-skills, and test-taking skills as examples. During this course, students are required to reach out to their advisor.

Compliment: The institution offers a comprehensive orientation program for new students, which has been refined based on student feedback.

Following the initial onboarding, student meetings with their advisors are voluntary, but incentivized by the use of permitting early (priority) registration for students; these holds are removed at the point of open registration, allowing enrollment freely.

There are processes in place to provide timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation policies and graduation audits to support students. However, there is no mandatory requirement for advising. The evaluation team heard concerns from students, and staff that the voluntary nature of advising may not be serving students well. The SWOT analysis conducted by the strategic planning committee identified this as an area for improvement.

Concern: The institution has identified a gap in the advising support provided to students and would be well-served to prioritize this issue.

ii. 1.D.2

1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally

meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).

The institution has 29 Key Performance Indicators within its five core mission areas. Primarily, the institution makes use of data provided by the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) as well as federal data on its national peers from IPEDS. The robust comparison data within the Washington system provides strong comparison data, though used mostly as a system versus subset of peer institution level. Adding in both the system and using a subset of the state peers could help refine the comparison and make use of the campus's work in identifying and validating peers in the region/nation.

The institution makes use of disaggregated data, both internally and alongside its comparison data, where available. Disaggregates vary along data sources but include enrollment status (full or part-time), gender, race, ethnicity, age groups (traditional versus non-traditional), first generation status, and economic need. The institution is transparent in its data sources and where it may disaggregate and to what level.

The data for the institution is annually updated, alongside its data from other sources, making the collection of data for analysis and improvement alongside its planning processes.

iii. 1.D.3

1.D.3 The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources.

The institution's indicators of student achievement, which includes a lengthy historical archive of its data and review, are easily accessible on the website. Similarly, internally, data are widely provided through the monitoring teams which contain broad representation from across the campus community. The data provided include both institutional data as well as system or other comparison data as available from surveys and other data sources.

These data are benchmarked, where possible. However, as noted, the benchmarking tends to prefer comparison alongside the entirety of the Washington system as opposed to the specific subset of WA institutions identified as their peer comparators. The annual monitoring team process directly reviews and considers these analyses as part of developing the strategic plan and annual priorities.

iv. 1.D.4

1.D.4 The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

The institution clearly documents its data sources and methodologies in collecting data. These methods are broadly replicable each year and have a lengthy history of being collected and reviewed through its monitoring teams. Strategic initiatives and annual priorities have clear connections to data review and work through the monitoring teams process. Better clarifying the allocation of resources as a direct result of these efforts could strengthen these processes.

Concern: It was unclear how these processes aligned with resource allocation.

V. Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity

The following Standard 2 elements were specifically reviewed during the visit as either PRFR findings, items included in the self-evaluation report addenda, or as areas of interest resulting from meetings during the visit.

e. Standard 2.A: Governance

i. 2.A.1

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

The Board of Trustees at Lower Columbia College consists of five members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Washington State Senate. Board minutes and interviews attest to practices reflective of a policy governance model. Board members seemed to demonstrate strong values, clearly communicating their opinions about policy and budget oversight of the college.

Board policies are clearly written, easy to understand, and appear to be up to date. The Board reviews the policies on a regular basis, including an assessment of one Board policy per Board meeting.

Proper delegation of authority is given to the Lower Columbia College President. An annual evaluation is conducted on the president by the LCC Board of Trustees. During the many meetings the evaluation team heard examples that confirm how the President listens to and involves faculty, staff and students in planning and decision making processes. However, the evaluation team found ample evidence that indicates the need for a rigorous shared governance structure that needs to be embedded in the college organization.

ii. 2.A.4

2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration

of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

The institution's decision-making structures are outlined in Policy 101 – Definition of Governance and are publicly available on its website.

For students, Section 101.5 of Policy 101 explicitly describes student involvement in governance as representation on committees and councils, as well as opportunities to present proposals and ideas.

Compliment: The institution considers the views of students in governance by including representatives from the Associated Students of Lower Columbia College in council and committees, such as the Instructional Council.

Procedure 101.1A lists all the councils, committees, teams, and task forces. While the policy defines governance, it does not clearly articulate the roles or mechanisms through which faculty, classified staff, and exempt staff participate in governance processes.

While several committee websites describe faculty involvement through membership, the role of how staff could participate was unclear. This observation aligned with staff feedback indicating uncertainty regarding their role in shared governance.

Concern: It was unclear how the views of staff are considered through institutional decision-making structures and processes.

f. Standard 2.F: Human Resources

i. 2.F.1

2.F.1 Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

Human resources systematically offer training to new and existing employees, encompassing mandatory sessions as well as optional offerings informed by employee feedback. Supervisors receive specific training on conducting staff evaluations, while faculty evaluations are overseen by the Office of Instruction. Upon hire, employees are informed of their conditions of employment, work assignments, and rights and responsibilities. Although staff are informed of their work assignments upon hire and review their responsibilities annually or biannually through performance evaluations, feedback indicated that there is some ambiguity regarding these responsibilities among staff.

ii. 2.F.2

2.F.2 The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

Human Resources offers the Red Devil Wellbeing program, where quarterly emails are sent to employees highlighting professional development opportunities and instructions for participation. Additionally, one of the sessions in the quarterly onboarding training for new employees provides information on professional development resources and support. While faculty stated they were aware of professional development support, staff were mixed in their awareness of, and ability to participate in, professional growth and development.

g. Standard 2.G: Student Support Resources

i. 2.G.7

2.G.7 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.

The institution has an identity verification process that requires students to submit a photo of themselves alongside a valid photo ID. As a proactive measure, the institution also flags and investigates potential cases of identity fraud. In the classroom, instructors either administer proctored exams or assign introductory activities designed to familiarize themselves with each student's writing style and voice prior to assigning more substantive written work. The institution submitted an addendum describing their comprehensive process for ensuring regular and substantive interaction (RSI) in their distance education programs. The institution has employed a designated instructional designer to support RSI. Faculty are provided training during the Fall In-Service conference, new classes are evaluated by peer reviewers. Nonetheless, LCC should define RSI evaluation in their faculty contract.

h. Standard 2.H: Library and Information Resources

i. 2.H.1

2.H.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

The Library and Learning Commons provides in-person and online resources to support the campus. Requests for new materials are reviewed and prioritized through the Library Development Committee. Library employees collaborate with academic departments to secure grant funding for resource acquisition, as was done with the ESL and Diversity programs. The library conducts annual assessments of student learning outcomes and utilizes the findings to enhance and refine instructional services.

Compliment: The Library & Learning Commons was remodeled to be a welcoming and engaging environment for students. The lower level was intentionally organized to feature

popular reading materials and student-centered activities, such as puzzles and “Inspiration to Go” notes, fostering a supportive and interactive learning space.

i. Standard 2.I: Physical and Technology Infrastructure

i. 2.I.1

2.I.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution’s mission, academic programs, and services.

Lower Columbia College is a campus of approximately 39 acres, with facilities that were well-maintained and clean. A new building was underway to address space limitations and better accommodate student needs. For example, the new welding booths in the new building will provide adequate space for welding students, addressing current constraints. In response to previous student feedback, the institution has also prioritized the inclusion of dedicated study areas in new buildings to create environments that support its mission, academic programs, and student services.

VI. Summary

Lower Columbia College’s Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness report was concise, well organized, and provided a good self evaluation of the college’s assessment and planning processes. The faculty, staff, students, and administrators interviewed were candid, actively engaged, and generous with their time.

LCC’s is mission-focused and data informed. As evidenced in the report and supported by data and conversations heard throughout the visit, LCC actively demonstrates a strong commitment to mission fulfillment, frequent systematic assessment, and continuous improvement focused on the success of its students and institutional effectiveness. Additionally, the evaluation team heard numerous examples from faculty using assessment data to improve the quality of learning in their programs.

VII. Commendations and Recommendations

j. Commendations

i. Commendation 1:

The peer evaluation team commends the institution for creating and maintaining a welcoming and supportive environment in the Library and Learning Commons to support student learning and engagement.

ii. Commendation 2:

The peer evaluation team commends the institution for its demonstrated commitment to a broadly inclusive culture of assessment, reflecting institutional support for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

k. Recommendation

i. Recommendation 1:

The Evaluation Team recommends that the institution strengthen, clarify, and publicly document decision-making structures and processes to ensure that the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students are considered in shared governance (NWCCU 2020 Standard 2.A.4).