

Mid-Cycle Evaluation

Peninsula College

Port Angeles, WA

April 15-16, 2021

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

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Evaluators

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Dr. Ron Larsen, NWCCU Liaison

Introduction

The remote evaluation team for the Mid-Cycle Evaluation of Peninsula College consisted of Suzanne Bolyard, Education Faculty at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon and Lee Stimpson, Director of Institutional Research at College of Eastern Idaho. Dr. Ron Larsen, Senior Vice President at the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), acted as the NWCCU liaison and Zoom meeting host during the visit.

On April 15-16, 2020, Mrs. Suzanne Bolyard and Mr. Lee Stimpson conducted a virtual mid-cycle review with the administration, faculty and staff of Peninsula College, a public community college located in Port Angeles, Washington. This town is located on the northern edge of the North Olympic Peninsula along the shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The college, established in 1961, moved into their current location in 1964. The main campus sits on seventy-five acres and houses fifteen buildings including ṽaṽk^wustəṽáwtx House of Learning, is the first longhouse built on a community college campus in the United States. It is located on tribal territory and was built in collaboration with six local tribal nations: Hoh River Chatlat', Quileute, Makah, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Jamestown S'Klallam, and Lower Elwha Klallam. The college also has two additional campuses in Forks, WA and Port Townsend, WA. In addition, the college also offers programming at Clallam Bay Corrections and Olympic Correction Centers. Peninsula College is one of Washington's thirty-four community colleges and is part of the Washington Community and Technical Colleges system.

Peninsula College offers post-secondary programs including certificates and associate degrees in a number of workforce programs and transfer degrees including a Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management degree, transfer Associate degree programs, professional-technical degrees and certificates, community education courses, and pre-college courses. It also has distance education and online learning options. PC serves approximately 3,362 enrolled students and the majority of students are full-time.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent travel restrictions, the mid-cycle review visit was conducted virtually using Zoom. Meetings were scheduled with various campus stakeholders including the president and administrative team, assessment committee, institutional research, core theme leaders, academic program faculty and dean of academics in the Cybersecurity/Computer forensics, and Early Childhood Education, student services leadership, student leaders, and the Board of Trustees.

Utilizing the Zoom platform and without the opportunity for face-to-face meetings, numerous conversations took place with an inclusive focus and goal of gathering as much information about the college as possible. The chat feature for Zoom was accessed, and participants were also able to ask questions by raising hands.

Dr. Mia Boster, Dean of Workforce Education & Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) was the prime college contact for the evaluation visit. Dr. Boster provided the evaluation team with the Peninsula College Certification Page and Peninsula College Mid-Cycle Evaluation Report 2021

in early March, allowing adequate time for review and was responsive to additional requests for documents.

Throughout March and April 2021, Dr. Boster worked with the evaluation team and the NWCCU liaison to finalize a schedule of Zoom meetings for the Mid-Cycle visit on April 15-16, 2021. The evaluation team also discussed the overall focus of a Mid-Cycle review and expectations of the process. The evaluators communicated with Dr. Boster and the rest of the college team pertaining to last minute meeting details. The evaluation team found Dr. Boster to be very timely and helpful in responding to our requests for information and any logistical questions pertaining to the visit.

In addition to documentation provided by Peninsula College to the evaluation team, the co-evaluators had the opportunity to review previous NWCCU reports and assessment documentation on the college's website and promotional You-Tube videos on the internet that showcased the college campus. This allowed the team to get a virtual sense of the campus. Additionally, the co-chairs participated in NWCCU training on conducting Zoom meetings and worked with the NWCCU liaison, Dr. Ron Larsen, on best practices for conducting a Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit using a virtual platform.

All meetings scheduled for the virtual visit were productive, informative, and consistent with the requirements for the Mid-Cycle Evaluation and included representatives from administration, staff, faculty, students, and Board of Trustees. The initial meeting of the visit was with President Luke Robins and his leadership team in order to exchange introductions, discuss the overall philosophy of the Mid-Cycle visit, set the stage for a virtual meeting with Zoom, and get a sense from the leadership team how they support the college mission and how that mission and core themes are intertwined. It was during this meeting that the evaluation team reviewed the key components of a Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit as a formative process and emphasized the newly adopted NWCCU 2020 Standards. It was relayed that the new standards focus on mission fulfillment with student success at its core, student achievement based on disaggregated data meeting published indicators, and programmatic assessment that fosters continuous improvement, influences campus-wide decision making, and determines resource allocation. Throughout the visit, the evaluation team gathered evidence pertaining to the college's assessment framework and its role addressing the college's mission and overall strategic planning efforts. When applicable, the evaluation team also provided feedback to the college regarding preparation for a successful Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness.

Part I: Overview of Institutional Assessment Planning

As outlined in Peninsula College's Strategic Plan, their general education competencies have been updated and are now referred to as Institutional Core Competencies (ICC) include the five core competencies expected of all Peninsula College graduates. Assessment at the course and programmatic-levels reflect the NWCCU recommended competencies and are established and

assessed in accordance with Standard 1.C.6. All certificates, associate-level programs, and bachelor's degree including in career and technical programs are assessed on regular cycles in accordance with the general education competencies and incorporate meaningful and relevant indicators with faculty at the central role in "establishing curriculum, assessing student learning, and improving instructional programs" reflecting Standard 1.C.5.

Results of the assessment of the Institutional Core Competencies are shared with the Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, Core Theme leaders, and the college executive leadership team and improvements were made and resources allocated in accordance to the assessment results. (Standard 1.C.7) Program assessment data are uploaded into a student database with institutional research staff disaggregating the data by race, ethnicity, gender, PELL eligibility, first generation college student, and are compared to available peer institutions in accordance with Standard 1.D.2.

The college has developed four core themes that direct all assessments:

- Core Theme One: Advancing Student Success
- Core Theme Two: Achieving Academic Excellence
- Core Theme Three: Fostering Equity and Inclusion
- Core Theme Four: Strengthening Communities

Peninsula College reevaluated and updated their Core Themes and indicators during the 2018-19 academic year and are measured by meaningful and relevant indicators that are directly connected to the programmatic and Institutional Core Competency assessments. Data analysis involving the indicators occurs at regular Core Theme and leadership meetings and are reviewed by the executive leadership team and in turn presented to the Board of Trustees. Analysis of internal and external feedback is used to develop the Core Themes and provides the strategic direction of the college including data analysis in comparison to peer institutions. (Standards 1.D.2 and 1.D.3) Based on the assessment results for each Core Theme, action items are determined with the intent of continuous evaluation and improvement. (Standard 1.C. 7, Standard 1.D.4) Assessment of student learning is carried across campus with student services administrators and staff heavily engaged in the Core Theme evaluation process. Student surveys (CCSSE, graduate exit surveys, student orientation surveys, etc.) are incorporated into the indicators for each Core Theme and provide valuable feedback. In addition, these play a role in overall recruitment, admission, and student support efforts. (Standard 1.D.1)

Peninsula College exhibited a newly developed assessment plan for the college that includes all stakeholders across campus. The energy around the recently developed Assessment Committee, Center for Teaching and Learning, Equity Work Group, and Faculty Professional Development Committee was exciting to observe. These committees were created to further develop and implement assessment work and were demonstrated throughout the evaluation team's visit. Faculty and administration proved to be particularly engaged and enthusiastic about the changes to the assessment focus on student achievement and continuous improvement. There is an

evident cohesion between student services and instruction which further enhances the assessment process and addresses student needs holistically and effectively with a highly developed alignment with student learning outcomes. Furthermore, assessment planning is on an intentional multi-year cycle and is intended as evidence for changes to improve student learning. The college adopted Guided Pathways in 2016. With that development and a Title III grant, the College's data gathering and analysis is directed towards a highly sophisticated and transparent level that will enable the college to proactively make changes that improve student achievement at all levels. (Standard 1.B.1) The evaluation team applauds the college for creating a positive and constructive climate enabling significant improvements in assessment and encourages Peninsula College to continue with this wonderful atmosphere of cooperation between administration and faculty to delve into the assessment work of future analysis and decision-making.

Part II: Examples of Operationalized Assessment

Peninsula College selected the Cybersecurity/Computer Forensics program as a career and technical education program to showcase. This is a new program for the college developed to respond to job trends in the area. Faculty member Eric Waterkotte developed the program. Enrollment, graduation rates, persistence rates, retention, and student employment trends were exemplified and data disaggregated by gender, age, race, ethnicity, age, first generation, and Pell eligibility. The program was linked to indicators for each Core Theme, with data collected each semester to assess program-level and course-level learning outcomes. Data results and analysis are systematically sent to the Assessment Committee and the institutional research team for further reflection and consideration. (Standard 1.C.1.) The evaluation team encourages the program to assess further the action items for their effectiveness and close the continuous improvement loop as the evaluation cycle repeats and to support college efforts for increased enrollment and sustainability of the program.

The second program showcased as an example of programmatic assessment operationalized at the college was the Early Childhood Education program, which has been a long-standing program at Peninsula College. Faculty member Anna King provided the overview of their program and what was learned in the assessment cycle. Disaggregated data, with similar criteria to the Cybersecurity/Computer Forensics program, provided a basis for examining recruitment, academic advising, academic support, student engagement, curriculum, scheduling, and financial support. Reflection based on the assessment results yielded goals to improve partnerships and agreements with other peer institutions to set more established benchmarks for data analysis (Standard 1.B.2.), to improve the data collecting and reporting process. It was clear from our interviews with the program faculty, administrators, and faculty from other disciplines who support the assessment work, that the Computer and ECE Department demonstrates a vested interest in continuous improvement with the goal of establishing rigorous programs to meet students' educational and career goals. Standards 1.C.2, 1.C.7, 1.D.2, and 1.D.4.

Part III: Mission Fulfillment & Sustainability

During the 2019-20 academic year, Peninsula College finalized a 2020-25 Strategic Plan that provides the college direction to support the college mission. Input from faculty, staff, students, and community members were involved in the development of the Strategic Management Plan. A Strategic Planning Committee representing Cabinet, Instruction, Student Services, and Administrative Services engaged campus and community stakeholders in a series of surveys, focus groups, and conversation that identified top strategic priorities addressing the college's challenges and opportunities. The Strategic plan serves as a dynamic overarching framework guiding continuous improvements within the college's planning and assessment cycle, tying the college mission and core theme objectives directly to Academic Unit Program Reviews and Administrative annual Plans as well as to the Operational Plan. The evaluation team confirmed with the Board of Trustees that these strategies or similar would continue to drive the college's new plan and intersect with the college mission (Standard 1.A.1):

Peninsula College educates diverse populations of learners through community-engaged programs and services that advance student equity and success.

With the four established Core Themes, Assessment Committee, Institutional Research department, and an engaged leadership team, the mission of the college is prepared to conduct assessment systematically based on meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators for courses, programs, and at the Core Theme levels. The evaluation team encourages the college to intentionally incorporate the new strategic plan with the assessment planning cycles and explicitly tie in the Core Themes assessment outcomes to the mission fulfillment for demonstrating overall institutional effectiveness. (Standards 1.B.1, 1.B.4)

PART IV: Prior Recommendations

The most recent affirmation of Peninsula College's NWCCU accreditation took place at the NWCCU's meeting June 27-29, 2018 after a Year Seven Evaluation of Peninsula College in April 2018. Based on the April 23-25, 2018 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Peer-Evaluation Report and as outlined in the NWCCU reaffirmation letter dated July 26, 2018, Recommendation 3, Spring 2013, Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report was to be addressed in an addendum to the Spring 2021 Mid-Cycle Report. In addition, Recommendations 1, 2, and 4, Spring 2018, Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report were to be addressed in an addendum to the Spring 2021 Mid-Cycle Peer-Evaluation Report.

Recommendation 3, Spring 2013, Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report

“The evaluation committee could not find specific general education program outcomes in relation to the Colleges' mission and core themes. The committee recommends that Peninsula College communicate a clear connection between the assessment of general education course and program outcomes and the College's mission and core themes” (Standard 2.C.10).

Peninsula College demonstrated that they have made significant progress toward this recommendation and have developed a system for aligning Core Theme assessment to the overall strategic planning process. General education program outcomes were evident in the 2021 Peer-Evaluation Report and throughout the visit. The evaluation team recommends that this recommendation could be satisfied through an Ad Hoc Report due Spring 2022.

Recommendation 1, Spring 2018, Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report

“Develop, implement, and review a technology update and replacement plan to ensure its technological infrastructure is adequate to support its operations, programs, and services” (2.G.8).

Much work in this area is evident, though a formal equipment replacement plan was not demonstrated in this visit. As such, the evaluation team determined that this recommendation could likely be satisfied through an Ad Hoc Report due Spring 2022.

Recommendation 2, Spring 2018 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report

“Implement a comprehensive system of institutional planning that exemplifies the interdependent nature of its functions, operations, and resources to accomplish its core theme objectives and to fulfill its mission” (3.A.1; 3.A.2; 3.A.3; 3.A.4; 3.B.1).

Peninsula College demonstrated that they are making satisfactory progress toward this recommendation and have developed a system for aligning Core Theme assessment to the overall strategic planning process. The evaluation team determined that the satisfaction of this recommendation is evident in the 2021 Peer-Evaluation Report and demonstrated throughout April 2021 visit.

Recommendation 4, Spring 2018 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report

“Documents and evaluates its cycle of planning and assessment of results to ensure their adequacy, alignment, and effectiveness and uses the results to make changes, as necessary, for improvement” (5.B.2)

While tremendous progress towards the institution establishing systems for assessment is evident, the college needs to demonstrate that it has used assessment results to inform decision-making and further improvements.

PART V: Conclusions

Peninsula College is well-situated in its preparation for a Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness comprehensive visit. It was evident throughout the evaluation team's visit that the college personnel are dedicated to student success and place student-centered learning at the forefront of their planning and resource allocation. The student supports in place at the college that offers one-on-one advising and encouragement was exemplary and spoken too among the students that the evaluation team interviewed. The administrators, faculty, and staff with whom the evaluation team met were welcoming, transparent, informative, and candid which allowed for constructive discussions throughout the visit. The engagement with and dedication to the assessment process and mission of the college was evident throughout and reflected an adherence to Standards 1.B.3. and 1.B.4 as the involvement was demonstrated from the Board of Trustees to the students at all levels. The evaluation team encourages the college to continue to represent the prodigious assessment work on its website and highlight established partnerships with four-year universities that represents the ongoing collaboration and curriculum development of rigorous degree pathways for students.

The college demonstrated an infectious enthusiasm and commitment to the mission, core themes, and the assessment of their effectiveness. In all instances of the visit there was evident a desire for the college to succeed in serving students and community with a focus on diversity and inclusion.

Finally, it should be noted that throughout the visit at Peninsula College during a time of unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it was evident that the president, leadership team, faculty, and staff have done an outstanding job of responding to the crisis with minimal impact to delivering instruction, enrollment, and student success. Peninsula College is clearly responsive to its community and a beacon of hope for student educational and career opportunities.