Mid-Cycle Evaluation (Year 3)

Peer-Evaluation Report

Central Oregon Community College

Bend, Oregon

April 19 – 21, 2023

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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Introduction

Founded in 1949 as part of the Bend-La Pine School District, Central Oregon Community College (COCC) is Oregon's oldest community college. The COCC District covers a 10,000-square-mile area, including all of Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties, as well as the southern part of Wasco County and the northern portion of Klamath County. A seven-member Board of Directors, elected from geographic zones, governs the College.

COCC educates students on its main campus in Bend and three centers in Madras, Prineville, and Redmond. COCC also contracts with the Oregon Department of Corrections to provide basic skills instruction, some college-level courses, and limited training at the Deer Ridge Correctional Institution in Madras. Across its campuses, COCC currently employs 115 full-time faculty members, 40 adjunct faculty (those working more than half-time, but less than full-time), and over 200 part-time instructors for credit classes. COCC faculty are required to have at least a master's degree in their field or equivalent industry training with a strong emphasis on practical workplace skills. Many full-time faculty members have doctorates in their disciplines or a terminal degree/licensure in their fields. The College also employs 107 classified staff and 119 administrators, all working to help the College achieve its mission.

In addition to traditional credit transfer and career and technical education (CTE) programs, COCC offers non-credit courses or programs relating to English Language Learners (ELL), Adult Basic Skills (ABS), Community Education (CE) and the Center for Business, Industry, and Professional Development (CBIPD), as well as dual-credit classes for in-district high school students. In 2020-21 COCC served 6,677 credit seeking students and 5,547 non-credit seeking students.

Visit Summary

Central Oregon Community College submitted a 22-page Mid-cycle self-evaluation report to NWCCU and evaluators in early March 2023, well in advance of the visit. The College has responded to the 2020 NWCCU standards and uses Institutional Success Indicators (ISI) related to student success and community enrichment to guide its mission fulfillment work and inform its strategic plan. The College is currently developing a new strategic plan and corresponding changes to ISIs that should be finalized in spring 2023. The College provided an electronic copy of their academic catalog and electronic access to appendices and exhibits. In addition, the College provided evaluators with access to data dashboards and examples of assessment reports through a secure portal. The self-evaluation narrative was clear, thorough, and well-written.

The Mid-Cycle review on-site visit was conducted April 20 – 21, 2023 in Bend Oregon. Logistics including travel, lodging, and meeting schedule for the visit were coordinator by Dr. Annemarie Hamlin, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Accreditation Liaison Officer. All arrangements

proceeded effortlessly, and the hospitality was exceptional. During the visit, the evaluation team met and conducted various meetings onsite at the main campus and also at the Redmond campus. Interviews were conducted with the president, executive leadership team, academic leadership team, college committees, and various subject matter experts. The team observed that COCC leadership, faculty, and staff are committed to the institutional mission, student success, and demonstrated a willingness to continuously improve institutional processes and procedures. Employees also exemplified a spirit of "we are here to help."

The meetings scheduled for the on-site visit were consistent with reviewing COCC's progress on mission fulfillment, student achievement, and programmatic assessment. Additionally, meetings were scheduled to fulfill USDE virtual visit follow-up certification requirements. Meeting participants represented the administrative, staff, and faculty mentioned or associated with the report and USDE certification requirements.

The interaction with college representatives consistently demonstrated the college's commitment to the improvement and success of the institution. Consistent with the Mid-Cycle review, evaluators focused on the current institutional progress and the provision of feedback in preparation for a successful, year seven, Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Review. Additionally, evaluators reviewed COCC's progress in responding to recommendations 1 and 2 from the spring 2020 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness.   The team has noted both strengths and opportunities for Mission Fulfillment, Student Achievement, and Programmatic Assessment components as follows within this report.

Part I: Mission Fulfillment

Institutional Mission

Central Oregon Community College's mission is succinct and clear. Based on community feedback, rather than continue its prior four core themes, the college has moved to using the key elements of "student success" and "community enrichment" to focus its assessment work (known as Institutional Success Indicators or ISIs). The mission covers both its educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement:

> *Mission: Central Oregon Community College promotes student success and community enrichment by providing quality, accessible, lifelong educational opportunities.*

While on campus, it was clear to the visiting team that the mission is widely known and valued. Many employees talked about the mission and, in turn, how it serves students, as a reason they stay at the college.

In reviewing the related institutional success areas and institutional success indicators for each mission, the visiting team noted COCC does not currently connect the mission elements of "quality, accessible, and lifelong educational opportunities" to specific ISIs.

Additionally, the college is well known in the state as a leader in shared governance and executive leadership clearly articulated the value of their council and committee structure in decision making. This is useful to mission fulfillment, keeping multiple and disparate areas of the college in alignment, and ensuring broad college feedback to college initiatives.

Finally, COCC demonstrates clear commitment to the involvement of both internal and external stakeholders in the review of mission, vision, and values as well as identifying emergent needs of higher education, and the programming needs of COCC's community.

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC strengths:

- The mission is clear in its definition and commitment to student learning and achievement. The college has established a mission driven culture that is evident at all levels (2020 Standard 1.A.1).

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC opportunities:

- The college does not transparently articulate meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators for the second half of the mission statement (2020 Standard 1.B.2).

Institutional Effectiveness

COCC has made substantial progress towards improving overall assessment of mission fulfillment by moving to Institutional Success Indicators (ISI) which include metrics related to both student learning (retention, passing college level math and writing, graduation rates, transfer rates, and workplace experience participation) and support services (number of college sponsored events and related participation). There is evidence that evaluation is ongoing and systemic with data collected at regular intervals as needed for the unique targets; data analysis and purposeful use of the collected information in decision making is less clearly articulated by mid-level staff although evident in formal college documents.

The visiting team was impressed by COCC's commitment to an inclusive process in strategic planning. It is evident there was broad representation from across campus in the implementation of the last strategic plan. Staff also consistently described ways they were able to be involved in recent Kick Off events and forums related to the new strategic plan. This included events at satellite campuses as well. The college also ensures resource allocation and is particularly innovative in its approach to continually dedicate $100,000.00 annually towards ISI initiatives that advance strategic plan goals. This funding provides a pipeline for departments to be actively engaged in seeking opportunities for continuous improvement that advances mission fulfillment.

With the implementation of institutional success indicators, COCC established a process in which individuals at the college are assigned ownership roles for each metric. By assigning ownership to metrics, the college ensures there is consistent monitoring of metric status and progress of direct and indirect initiatives that will impact the metric. This format supports COCC in implementing systematic evaluation and planning to refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. This method could be useful to the college to replicate in its next strategic planning process. Between now and the year seven visit, it will be important for COCC to showcase how an assessment loop for these initiatives has been fully closed (showing not just initial data, but how the data was analyzed to determine effectiveness of the initiative, and what changes were made before assessing again).

COCC also recently finished a 5-year Title III Grant which was used to address institution infrastructure needs. Moving forward the institution will use ISI data to apply for new Title III funding in order to hire a Guided Pathways coordinator, to enhance their existing food pantries and clothing centers, and expand social services for students. COCC intends to purchase a data warehouse to better disaggregate data to identify areas of inequity for student success. In addition, COCC hopes to use Title III funding to develop a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and promote High Impact Practices and fund a manager for the CTL.

It is apparent that COCC has strong connections to the community and regularly solicits feedback for strategic plan revision, programmatic offerings that reflect industry needs, and

services to meet the needs of adult learners and Spanish speaking populations. The College President maintains regular, inclusive communication with Board of Trustees on the strategic planning process, who in turn respect the expertise of college leadership in guiding the new strategic plan process.

COCC has established strong partnerships with local school districts that builds student sense of belonging with higher education and offered courses specifically to celebrate the cultures of and provide college going information to LatinX, Native American, and Afro-centric high school students. Similarly, COCC has developed community programming to provide students with employable credentials through the completion of credit and noncredit programming. Highlighted in COCC's Mid-Cycle is the Early Childhood Education Business Accelerator program that offers credit and non-credit programming for community members to acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities to run an independent childcare program. This program is offered in both English and Spanish, increasing accessibility to this career opportunity to more community members. This program creates a strong pathway for program graduates that may not have previously realized their access to academic opportunities to expand their career options. Both the high school recruitment programming and implementation of bilingual accelerator credentialing programs are strong examples of how COCC centers mission areas of student success and community enrichment in recruiting and admitting students with the potential to benefit from COCC's educational programming.

COCC has established program outcomes, related instruction outcomes, and general education outcomes. Overarching to these outcomes are their Institutional Core Competencies (ICCs). The COCC Midcycle report, evidence (e.g., academic program review), and interviews suggest there is clear understanding of the general education outcomes, program outcomes, and related instruction outcomes. In the review there is less certainty of the role of the ICCs. While core competencies have been established, there remains the need to institutionalize how these competencies will be assessed across credentials one year in length or greater.

  It was also unclear to the visiting team how the ICCs assess skill sets above and beyond the state mandated general education outcomes. The designation and assessment of ICCs has occurred approximately within the last two years. The college could enhance communication of the purpose, use, and measurement of ICCs broadly to all faculty, staff, and administrators and emphasize their relation to ISIs, the Strategic plan, and assessment of student learning outcome processes.

Finally, diversity, equity, and inclusion are addressed in strategic planning, program offerings, and campus activities. The college administrators candidly expressed that they recognize the current faculty, staff, and administrators do not equitably mirror the demographics of their student population. However, they indicated they are working towards enhancement of their hiring practices to achieve greater equity in support of student success.

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC strengths:

- The college uses its planning process to assign resources by allocating targeted funding for mission fulfillment initiatives and advancement of strategic planning goals (2020 Standard 1.B.1).
- The planning process is inclusive of all campuses and all employees with ample opportunities for larger community involvement in mission definition, development of ISIs, and Strategic Planning (2020 Standards 1.B.3 and 1.B.4).
- Data is appropriately used to assess institutional effectiveness with ongoing and systemic evaluation processes that are focused on student success (2020 Standard 1.B.1)
- In alignment with its mission, the college is deeply committed to responding to community needs. (General mission fulfillment)

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC opportunities:

- Ensuring the Institutional Core Competencies are assessed across credentials one year in length or greater and the relationship between ICCs to other instructional and/or college planning is broadly shared and understood (2020 Standard 1.C.6)
- Ensuring the demographics of the staff and faculty reflect the student body in alignment with the "accessible" portion of its mission (2020 Standard 2.F.3).

Part II: Student Achievement

Student Achievement

COCC is emerging in its ability to compare local college data with regional and national peer colleges. While the college has plans in place for doing this comparison work in the future, the visiting team is concerned about the ability to regularly and timely receive the appropriate data from other "comparator" institutions.

COCC has developed and publishes institutional success indicators that monitor student persistence and completion in alignment with the expectations of the NWCCU. Published institutional success indicators provide overall student achievement metrics. Disaggregated indicators are available to college employees, and it appears that college units are receiving and/or viewing disaggregated data, but it is not clear how they are using the data for improvement or how their planning processes are data-informed from disaggregated data. Disaggregated data is discussed and used by Deans with faculty.

At this time, since the disaggregated data and benchmarks with peers are not yet widely available, the visiting team did not find evidence that this data was directly and consistently used to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. Furthermore, it is not clear how this data is used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to specifically mitigate gaps in achievement and equity.

As a new initiative that is focused on Student Achievement, the college is working to establish Guided Pathways planning for implementation in fall 2023 with workgroups that account for key processes in the student education lifespan.

Finally, during on site conversations the visiting team heard clear examples of how general data on campus is used for decision making both at the institutional level and department level. Examples include:

- Based on data gathered from campus surveys and 360 evaluations, new leadership in Human Resources office led to a restructure of positions and shifting the culture of the office to be more proactive and customer service focused.
- Based on data gathered in community feedback and the student facing HOPE survey, a new building at a satellite campus will include CTE programs like Early Childhood Education (taught in Spanish) and Nursing Assistant as well as an 80-slot childcare center
- Based on data from vendors, Library staff created a holistic report related to cost per use of online subscriptions and databases. This information was used to determine how to reallocate fiscal resources and work with faculty to improve student use of key resources.

- Based on local, state, and national data related to racially minoritized individuals' access to college and subsequent completion, COCC created classes and programming for high school students who identify as Native American, Latinx, and Afro-centric. Data showcases significantly positive impacts of participating students in both high school completion and college enrollment.

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC strengths:

- The college cares about continuous improvement and making changes that will enhance the student experience, improve student learning, and lead to completion (2020 Standards 1.B.1 and 1.D.2).

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC opportunities:

- The college should provide data from regional and national peer institutions as a comparison to existing internal college data. This should be published and widely available to the community (2020 Standards 1.D.2 and 1.D.3).
- The college should publish its disaggregated student achievement data on its website and use them to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources (2020 Standard 1.D.3.).
- The college should examine how its student achievement data is used to allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity (2020 Standard 1.D.4).

Part III: Programmatic Assessment

Program Assessment and Academic Program Review

The COCC planning process is inclusive of college support services including libraries, their testing center, eLearning, the registrar, and other student services departments. It is evident that all services are interconnected and collaborative. Many services have been centrally located within one building to be more accessible by students and faculty and has contributed to greater unit collaboration. There are future plans to locate a Center for Teaching and Learning as well as Assessment and Curriculum within the same building   Unit plans align with the college strategic plan and are evaluated for effectiveness in the Academic Program Review (APR) and Administrative Unit Review (AUR) process. Disability Resource Centers, Tutoring, Testing, eLearning, and Residence halls utilize a new database to document planning and data collection.

Examples of continuous improvement efforts that have direct impact on Student Success Indicators (ISIs) include the embedding of Librarians as scorers in humanities assessments; purchasing of technology resources to meet student needs; implementation of first year experience/orientation, and expansion of eLearning to offer education on delivering instruction across multiple modalities.

COCC has plans to integrate their Canvas LMS with Assessment data collection by utilizing the learning outcomes feature with rubric scoring. Planning has allowed eLearning to enhance their synchronous streaming capacity and address the strategic plan of closing equity gaps through greater accessibility (online, remote, streaming). Student Services follows this pattern as well by being accessible to students in-person and online. A current focus of eLearning is investigating ways to meet the needs of non-credit students including promoting college readiness and digital literacy. eLearning also provides pedagogical support to faculty to improve teaching methods in traditional and online learning environments with informal follow up for monitoring faculty implementation practices.

The planning process has helped COCC assure accessibility compliance within Canvas LMS and webpages and increase efficiency of disability resource services. Academic units also complete Academic Program Reviews which include show and tell sessions. Highlighted in COCC's Mid-Cycle report was APRs and continuous improvement efforts of the math and GIS departments:

The Math department recognized how department planning is involved in institutional effectiveness by aligning to the strategic plan. It allowed them to be more forward thinking and enhanced their future planning. The department recognized the need to be more collaborative with other departments since Math touches all degrees and certificates. A Title III grant allowed faculty to receive release time to enhance Math offerings to be relevant to diverse populations and math placement alternatives with multiple measures, and alternative pathways to reduce math preparation course pathways and streamline by using co-requisites. One barrier is that

students don't recognize the value of the new co-requisite course pathways and that they can opt into self-directed Math course placement. Faculty and administrators are looking at ways to provide greater communication to students through advising and marketing and college-wide communication. The college could investigate ways to enhance students' valuation of the co-requisite math course offerings through partnerships with internal services and external higher education institutions. Programs have recognized potential funding sources for future activities and resources.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has strong connections with community partners. Those partners as well as Alumni helped participate in APR. The APR process helped them recognize technology barriers for students and develop strategies to increase technology accessibility. They also recognized that the profession is predominately white males and has sought opportunities and partnerships to build broader interest and knowledge of the field in hopes to bring more diverse representation to both the program and the field.   As part of this work the GIS program created a Foundations course with online labs to inspire students to be aware of career possibilities and transfer possibilities. Additionally, they have established a seamless transfer pathway that enables dual enrollment with universities.

Both Math and GIS plan to be strategic in determining possibilities for degree guided pathways. The guided pathways workgroup explored guided pathways activities such as faculty advisors and career exploration within general education courses of pathways.

Opportunities discussed to enhance the APR process include streamlining the time, space, and work allocation needed to complete the process. In addition, changes could include refinement of questions posed in the template and explanation on how to align the data received from Institutional Effectiveness to those questions. They recognize the benefits of a de-briefing process to digest what they have learned and close the loop on future activities. Programs do present their APR results.

Declining enrollment and pandemic conditions resulted in the cancellation of many courses. All but one program had completed their first cycle APR by the time of the site-visit. Many disciplines have completed their second cycle APR. Formal or revised Academic Program Reviews (APR) were implemented in 2016-2017. However, not all programs have participated in APR. As evidenced in APRs, the information gathered informs academic planning and practices to improve student learning outcomes.

The AUR and APR process have resulted in greater employee interest in grant opportunities to implement activities identified from the APR process as well as reinforces the strong alignment of their continuous improvement work alignment with mission fulfillment. COCC recognizes the desire to pursue a permanent grants manager to seek internal and external grants.

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC strengths:

- The College has created and sustains numerous programs that promote social equity for student success. The College has pursued and acquired various grant monies to establish and sustain academic programming and student services including revising placement practices, updating pre-college education, and establishing a first-year experience program. Success metrics show positive increases and achievements. This is a strong example of how individual departments used data to implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity (2020 Standard 1.D.4).

The visiting team acknowledges the following COCC opportunities:

- Continued progress in completing all cycles of the established APR process supports a more holistic impact on improving student learning and achievement (2020 Standard 1.B.4, 1.C.4, and 1.C.7).

PART IV: Moving Forward

Planning is evident in next steps as well as actions for improvement at the institution level. Between now and the year seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness review, the college has plans to include all programs and units in the AUR and APR process. The College has moved forward with identifying comparator colleges of which they will use peer data to inform changes to their strategic plan and ISIs. In areas where additional planning is needed, such as a new Master Plan, the college is clearly aware and ready for the work to begin.

The College has chosen to develop a Guided Pathways framework as a means of improving student success, not just for underrepresented populations but for all populations. There is evidence of college support and enthusiasm for this initiative and the timing is optimal given the concurrent process for the next strategic plan.

COCC is well positioned in moving forward for a year seven visit. In addition to the planning for mission fulfillment, strategic planning, and move to guided pathways described above, the visiting team believes the investments made by the college in having the right people focused on the right work will ensure a successful visit. There were many examples of this observed by the visiting team including but not limited to the following strengths:

- It is clear there has been a substantial and positive improvement within the human resources office that was strongly confirmed in all meetings throughout the visit. Comments included:
  - "They are so helpful."
  - "They approach HR as a customer service model."
  - "It has been a total transformation."
  - "I had a great onboarding experience."
  - "Exceptional."
- The inclusion of the satellite campuses in the full COCC experience was obvious. This includes alignment with college planning, provision of support services, an extension of library services, and the clear support felt by employees from the main campus.
- Library staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of their students and college faculty. Their commitment to information literacy and approach to collaborating with writing faculty and other programs (both transfer and CTE) to ensure students learn these essential skills is commendable.
- The positive impact of the facilities and custodial crews was immediately noticeable. The campus buildings and grounds are immaculate, and the obvious care and pride taken in the maintenance and upkeep of the campuses allows students to focus on learning.
- The college has an overwhelming commitment to care for students and meet their educational and social needs. Faculty and staff consistently talked about their love for this campus and the work it does.

PART V: Addendums

Recommendation 1: [2020 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness]

The Evaluation Team recommends that the institution set and articulate meaningful objectives and indicators of its Community Enrichment goal to define mission fulfillment, and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions. (2020 Standard 1.B.2)

Progress on Recommendation 1

The College has adopted Institutional Success Indicators, or ISIs that focus on the two main elements of its mission: student success and community enrichment. COCC has established implementation and data collection processes for each metric including direct and indirect initiatives that will impact the metric. There is a consistent monitoring process with dedicated staff ownership of each metric.   It is evident that COCC is implementing systematic evaluation and planning to refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. Between now and the year seven visit, it will be important for COCC to showcase how an assessment loop for these initiatives has been fully closed (showing not just initial data, but how the data was analyzed to determine effectiveness of the initiative and what changes were made before assessing again). The work to compare data with peer institutions must be complete before the next visit.

Recommendation 2: [2020 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness]

Refine its current practices to create an effective system of evaluation that systematically (integrated across all levels of course, program, and general education) assesses student learning outcomes to ensure currency and improvement of teaching, learning and student success (2020 Standard 1.B.1, 1.C.5, 1.C.6, 1.C.7).

Progress on Recommendation 2

Assessment days help faculty assure curriculum mapping and valid assessment processes. It is evident that there is a prevalent culture of assessment that is inclusive of Dean leadership. COCC has established innovative ways to improve student success and discussed the positive benefits of identifying a "Math minstrel" who brings innovative math teaching styles directly to faculty for enhancement of their teaching methods. The Math minstrel's focus is on CTE and related instruction faculty. To sustain this position the college uses faculty release time.

The college faculty have focused on refinement of learning outcomes, tracking, planning, reporting, and data use over time. COCC recognizes that they could do a better job of integrating learning outcomes at all levels. The college is looking to enhance assessment by

moving processes to a digital format within their Learning Management System. Digitizing the integrated assessment process will allow COCC to aggregate student learning outcome achievement across courses, programs, general education, and institution levels for greater transparency in determining whether the system is effective.