

Ad Hoc Peer Evaluation Report

Wenatchee Valley College

Wenatchee, WA

October 14, 2021

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

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Wenatchee Valley College Ad Hoc Evaluation October 2021
Report on Recommendations 2 and 3 from the
Comprehensive Evaluation Report April 2019

Overview of the Ad Hoc Visit

Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) received three Recommendations following the submission and comprehensive peer-evaluation of its Spring 2019 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Report under the 2010 NWCCU Standards. The Commission required that WVC submit an Ad Hoc Report with a visit in fall 2020 to address each of these recommendations. Following that Ad Hoc visit, the Commission decided that Recommendation 1 concerning security at the Omak Campus was fulfilled, but Recommendation 2 concerning a system of learning outcomes assessment and Recommendation 3 concerning the use of learning outcomes assessment results remained unfulfilled. The purpose of this Fall 2021 Ad Hoc visit, which was conducted virtually, was to assess progress made towards these latter two recommendations from the Spring 2019 Comprehensive visit. These recommendations have been cross-walked to the 2020 NWCCU Standards.

During the Ad Hoc visit, WVC faculty, staff, and administrators were welcoming and candid during all meetings and conversations. In addition, we wish to acknowledge and thank the college for its timely response to requests for additional information and for its work towards making the virtual visit successful.

The evaluation team met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Jim Richardson, President
- Dr. Tod Treat, Vice President of Instruction
- Dr. Chio Flores, Vice President of Student Services
- Ty Jones, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
- Instructional Deans
- Student Services Directors
- Assessment Committee representatives
- Faculty Chairs
- Learning support/non-instructional staff

Findings from the 2021 Ad Hoc Visit

Recommendation 2: *The evaluation committee recommends that Wenatchee Valley College document through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment, that students achieve identified learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level.*

Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes. (2010 Standards: 2.C.5 and 4.A.3; 2020 Standard: 1.C.5)

Academic and learning support assessment efforts are overseen by the Vice Presidents for Instruction and Student Services, respectively. To aid in developing a culture of assessment and to help faculty with the assessment process, the Faculty Assessment Committee was established as a stand-alone committee from what was previously part of WVC's Educational Achievement Core Theme Council. The Assessment Committee assists faculty with developing course learning outcomes (CLOs) and program learning outcomes (PLOs), collecting data, and analyzing assessment results towards documenting continuous cycle of improvement. In addition, four faculty were given release time to serve as Assessment Coordinators for a one-year period to assist the Assessment Committee in training and helping faculty. The Assessment Coordinators were made permanent in WVC's budget starting with fiscal year 2020-21. During discussions with the evaluators, the college President indicated that WVC will continue its commitment to fund the coordinators, noting how well-received and vital these individuals are to continuing to develop WVC's assessment culture.

Wenatchee Valley College has made progress towards an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of program learning outcomes assessment through its area plans, which were presented from academic years 2018-19 through 2021-22. Area plans are submitted annually by faculty chairs and non-instructional staff to instructional deans and student services directors. Area Plan submitters were asked to identify gains (items worth celebrating), gaps (areas for improvement), and goals for the future, which are tied to one of WVC's Core Themes. Beginning in 2019-20, plans were placed on a 3 year cycle per the recommendation of the Assessment Coordinators. Year 1 faculty and non-instructional staff were asked to identify one or more PLOs and tools they would use to formally assess the PLO(s). Year 2 focused on assessment data collection and results analysis, and year 3 submitters were asked to close the assessment loop by describing any planned changes following the analysis. The assessment process is then communicated in a series of "vignettes" that describe the assessment work being done by a program or department. While the 2021-22 plans marked cycle year 3, different programs and departments are still at various phases of the cycle.

Evaluators noted a progression in several of the Area Plans reviewed from the 2018-19 to the 2021-22 submissions. Earlier submissions stated program gains, gaps, and goals, where gaps were mostly described as resources requests rather than potential gaps in learning. PLO assessment, or at least plans for assessment, were seen in recent submissions. More data was seen in recently submitted plans compared to prior years, and in some cases quantitative benchmarks of outcomes achievement were stated, though it was not always clear what the criteria were that faculty used to arrive at the data. For example, writing prompts and discussion points were identified as the assessment tool, and then numbers or percentages of students were identified to have satisfied the PLO; however, an accompanying rubric or description of what constituted as having satisfied or achieving the PLO was not present. Going

forward, including these criteria in the Area Plan reports or as an addendum would strengthen this connection.

Many of the Area Plans reviewed presented indirect measures of learning outcomes achievement as opposed to direct measures. For example, some plans reported Lickert-scale surveys given to students to indicate their level of self-reported achievement or confidence in achieving learning outcomes. Other plans reported correlative grade distributions or completion rates. While it is valuable to include assess PLOs with multiple including indirect measures, direct assessment of student work that is both reliable and valid provides the strongest evidence achieving specific learning outcomes. During discussions with the evaluators, however, members of the Assessment Committee, faculty chairs, and learning support staff responsible for submitting area plans were able to clearly articulate examples of direct learning outcomes assessment, the use of results to improve at the course and program levels, and the relationship between CLOs and PLOs. Although not all CLOs and PLOs have been mapped, faculty exhibited a solid understanding of CLO to PLO or institutional SLO mapping while conversing with the evaluators. Furthermore, WVC's Curriculum Committee, the group responsible for approving curricular submissions, recently implemented this mapping as a requirement within its master syllabus template. Going forward, WVC academic faculty and learning support staff are encouraged to integrate more direct measures of PLO assessment. For academics, direct assessment measures may largely take place at the course level but can be examined at the program level through mapping.

Despite potential room for improvement, instructional deans and student services directors enthusiastically remarked on the increased level of depth and sophistication to the area plans during conversations with the evaluators. Deans and directors described the plans as having undergone a huge evolution from a mechanism of budget and staffing requests to more attention paid to student learning outcomes achievement in a deep and meaningful way. They noted a more collaborative atmosphere among faculty towards assessment and lauded the work of the Assessment Coordinators in what they have been able to do for faculty and learning support staff on an individual level. Indeed, each of the faculty, staff, and administrative leadership groups that the evaluators spoke with highly praised the Assessment Coordinators and attributed their progress and emerging shift in culture around assessment to their work. The evaluators' observations of their excellent assessment modules and resources in Canvas, and key note addresses in videos of the previous year's Launch Week and Deans Day further support this commendation.

Overall, WVC has made noticeable progress since the last ad hoc visit towards implementing a regular and effective system of program learning outcomes assessment. With the Assessment Coordinators and their training resources provided is well-structured towards making this system comprehensive across both instructional and non-instructional areas of the college.

Recommendation 3: The evaluation committee recommends that the college use the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. (2010 Standard: 4.B.2; 2020 Standard: 1.C.7)

WVC leadership at all levels has placed effort into addressing the issues outlined in Recommendation 3 of the October 22, 2021 Ad Hoc Peer-Evaluation. WVC Assessment Committee has made significant improvements in the adoption and widespread use of Area Plans. Evaluators noted in both the Ad Hoc response language and through interviews, numerous examples of Assessment Coordinator mentorship, transparency and direction that has greatly improved the participation of faculty and student affairs into assessment processes. Evaluators noted that “vignettes” demonstrated the existence of an emerging culture of assessment and practices distributed widely across transfer, professional-technical, and non-instructional areas. During a meeting with the Assessment Committee, committee members reported that the use of assessment continues to grow and mature; more faculty close the loop in assessing their programs; put interventions into place, measure and use data to inform decision making toward improvement. Our observations agree with these claims.

WVC collects data through a variety of assessment efforts. Those data inform both academic and student support planning, improvement and practices. Assessments indicated both direct and indirect methods to acquire data. It was demonstrated to evaluators that data is used to improve student learning outcomes and student achievement at a PLO level. During conversations with faculty, some were able to share excellent examples of how data informs change to courses and/or programs. Similarly, non-instructional areas frequently engaged in post-event surveys and in some cases, the results were used to make changes in programs or services. It is the evaluator’s observation that both faculty and non-instructional staff are taking ownership of assessment and the use of results to improve their programs toward a goal of student learning achievement. Going forward making data more broadly and readily available for assessment needs will be important.