Oregon Coast Community College

Newport, Oregon

Mid-Cycle Evaluation — Fall 2022
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Introduction

The mid-cycle evaluation of Oregon Coast Community College took place over two full days on the Newport campus. The college's 37-page self-study was posted on time, with appropriate appendices and links provided. During the visit itself, the evaluators met with over 20 individuals representing a broad cross-section of the institution's leaders, teachers, and staff. Without exception, whether in groups or one-to-one, interviewees were both welcoming and forthcoming. The college's hospitality and openness are much appreciated.

The evaluators found OCCC to be justifiably proud of the many milestones it has attained over the past few years. The college's successful accreditation candidacy stands as an impressive achievement in itself. Since then, amid a pandemic, OCCC has transitioned from contracted to locally-managed tools for delivering a variety of services, from learning management to enterprise resources. Along the way, OCCC has continued to build a suite of local operational, planning, and assessment processes.

OCCC has not stood still while building these foundations. On the contrary, the institution has been energized by a powerful spirit of community engagement, innovation, and opportunity-seeking that has led to an impressive list of initiatives. Even while wrapping up its first strategic plan, OCCC has already set an ambitious course for 2023-2028. These accomplishments have been nurtured by a culture of shared vision, collaboration, and small-but-mighty optimism.

In that context, the evaluators' feedback is offered with respect and admiration for OCCC's remarkable progress in navigating change, identifying and addressing local needs, and building a climate of possibility. At the same time, the feedback is intended to suggest possible priorities for OCCC to consider in its ongoing efforts to reflect NWCCU standards and, in particular, to document that work in its Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness report.

Part I: Mission Fulfillment

Oregon Coast Community College continues to employ the language of core themes to frame its foundational measures of institutional effectiveness. The college has settled on two such themes, titled Core Theme One: Student Success and Core Theme Two: Educational Pathways. For each, OCCC has crafted a both a definition and a statement of over-arching goals. To support assessment, the college has further developed a dual set of Core Theme Assessment Tables to replace an older scorecard tool, retired in 2018. The new tables span some 11 sub-objectives and 20 indicators across the two themes, with descriptions of data sources, numeric targets, and target rationales for each indicator. The college continues to maintain a definition of mission fulfillment based on these metrics.

In the mid-cycle self-study, however, the tables had yet to be populated with OCCC performance numbers. Onsite, college leaders pointed out that the indicators for Core Theme One were essentially the same as the college's general student success measures (see Part II,

below). While there is some logic to combining those measures, a side-by-side comparison reveals some misalignment between the two. Meantime, for Core Theme Two, interviewees candidly admitted that the table had not yet been populated with OCCC actuals.

In discussion, it was noted that there is considerable variation in OCCC's capacity to generate some of the tables' metrics — particularly over time — given the transitions in data sources, systems, and definitions that have come with OCCC's independence. These complications arguably increase the urgency for OCCC to identify which data sources are currently most available, reliable, and useful for assessing institutional effectiveness, particularly if the college is to complete multiple assessment cycles prior to its next self-study.

At a more granular level, the day-to-day realization of OCCC's core themes is embedded in its systems for program review (see Part III of this report). For that function, OCCC relies on a cycle of formative and summative self-assessments called SPAREs and SPARCs. In framing next-step priorities, these reports require each unit to reflect upon the college's core themes and data. Further, each review includes an opportunity to submit resource requests, which are prioritized when the Executive Team meets to determine OCCC's annual budget investments. At present, that final step is largely a matter of judgement and negotiation, but as the system matures, it can be tied more closely to core theme priorities. Interviews confirmed that participants understood and found value in this integration of institution-level and unit-level goal-setting, an impression that the SPARE and SPARC documents reinforced. The Student Affairs division's advising-area SPARC, which led to a transformative restructure of student support services, offers a particularly complete example of this integration at work.

Part II: Student Achievement

OCCC currently receives institutional research support through contract agreement with Linn-Benton Community College. This arrangement provides OCCC with access to student achievement metrics that, at present, include persistence, credit attainment, completion of gateway writing and math, and graduation. Local results appear on OCCC's website in both aggregated and disaggregated form, with breakdowns for gender, race/ethnicity, age, Pell eligibility, geography, and first-generation status. The self-study notes that, given OCCC's short history of independence, its post-completion outcomes — professional licensing, employment, and transfer —remain a work-in-progress.

In its current form, the arrangement with LBCC could allow for benchmarking against the five other Oregon community colleges in that consortium. Meantime, motivated in part by Guided Pathways initiatives, Oregon is looking to build reports on key Guided Pathways performance indicators from 16 of the 17 community colleges statewide. As noted above, however, the required data-sharing agreements for either peer cohort have yet to be finalized. Further, at this time OCCC has not identified peer institutions from outside Oregon to include in its assessments of student achievement.

Since gaining independent accreditation, OCCC has been able to gather its own attainment data for 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22, comparing the results against locally-set thresholds. While OCCC has demonstrated the capacity to collect these internal measures of student attainment, the evaluators were unable to observe a systematic, institution-level process for analyzing and deriving college-wide priorities from them. Full implementation of an assessment process for Core Theme One: Student Success could provide that mechanism. In addition to monitoring post-completion outcomes, the college should look to add peer institutions inside and outside Oregon to meet the expectations of the standards and add visible, intentional comparisons.

Part III: Programmatic Assessment

Oregon Coast Community College has developed a multi-year cycle of programmatic assessment, covering both instructional and non-instructional units. In each cycle, the culminating report is a Comprehensive Service and Program Area Review (SPARC). An annual Service and Program Area Review and Evaluation (SPARE) provides a progress report in intervening years, allowing for informed engagement with the college's resource request process every year. As noted above in Part I, SPARC and SPARE reports require that programs reflect on institutional core themes. They also include a space for resource requests.

Instructional program review

Through the SPARC report, instructional programs gather data on program enrollment and student progression; address strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges; and identify actions and results associated with learning outcome assessment. The SPARC includes long- and short-term goals and resource requests. The intervening SPARE reports also address learning outcome assessment results, annual goals (inclusive of equity and inclusion objectives) and engagement with the college's resource allocation process.

Currently, after a COVID-related pause in 2019-20, the college has resumed its efforts to implement this process across the instructional programs. At the time of the visit, only one instructional SPARC was available. Since the college intends to stagger the SPARC reports over a four-year span, most programs will begin implementation with SPAREs. To its credit, the college has made revisions to the SPARC/SPARE protocol in the course of implementation. For example, OCCC has modified timelines to improving the alignment of program review with institutional budgetary processes. Reports are currently due in August/September, however, which presents challenges for faculty at a college that begins fall term in September. Given that the mid-cycle evaluators arrived in mid-October, timeline considerations were a likely significant contributing factor to the evaluation team not having all scheduled instruction-area reviews available to them.

Non-instructional program review

In effect, the instructional SPARC/SPARE process is mirrored for non-instruction areas, with Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) substituting for learning outcomes assessment. Respondents

are asked to link their SAOs to college priorities, including core theme outcomes and equity. During the visit, executive leaders in student services and administration described the SPARC/SPARE process as functional and useful for the units under their supervision. A spot-check of completed non-instructional reports confirmed that most of the scheduled 2020-21 SPAREs (n = 11) and one SPARC were complete. Though three non-instructional SPARCs were scheduled for fall 2022 completion, none were provided to the evaluators.

Part IV: Moving Forward

Oregon Coast Community College has designed thoughtful systems for its foundational assessment processes – institutional effectiveness, student learning, and student achievement — as well as for operational functions such as employee evaluation. The models are universally well thought out and well intentioned. Indeed, if there is an overriding impression from this evaluation, it is that OCCC's future work lies in fully implementing the models it has designed. At some level, this single suggestion could apply equally to core theme planning, learning outcomes assessment, the SPARC/SPARE schedule, and employee performance tracking.

To those ends, the evaluators were encouraged by OCCC's self-awareness of those imperatives. In its self-study, the college articulated 13 areas of focus for its "Moving Forward" chapter. Of these, more than half (specifically items 3 through 10) pointed directly to actions that promise to help OCCC prepare the college for its Year Seven self-study. Even more specifically, Items 3, 9, and 10 appear directly relevant to addressing the recommendations from OCCC's 2019 evaluation. As such, these guideposts provide a promising roadmap for moving forward.

Part V: Addendums

Recommendation 1: Fall 2019 Initial Accreditation
Fully implement the system of evaluation of its programs and services to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes and use the results of its assessments of services for improvement by planning, decision-making and allocation of resources and capacity (2020 Standards: 1.B.1, 1.B.3)

As described above in Part III, OCCC has designed and shared with the college community a process of program self-assessment that combines an intensive four-year review with annual short evaluations. The process reinforces alignment with the college mission values and core themes, informs the institution's resource allocation process, and reflects institutional priorities for assessment and equity. While implementation remains underway, as of this writing a few programs have yet to complete a SPARE report and few programs have completed the more demanding SPARC report. Given the four-year SPARE/SPARC cycle, OCCC will need to sustain the review schedule without disruption to assure that all programs have completed at least one SPARC report before the Year Seven self-study period.

Recommendation 2: Fall 2019 Initial Accreditation

Refine and fully implement the system for assessing student learning outcomes for courses, programs, and degrees, utilizing the results to inform academic learning, support planning, and practices leading to the enhancement of student learning achievement (2020 Standards: 1.C.5, 1.C.7)

OCCC has made significant strides towards creating a campus culture supporting learning outcome assessment. An Assessment Task Force (ATF) promotes and supports the assessment process. The college has recently committed release time in support of converting to a faculty chair for the ATF, supporting a peer-to-peer emphasis and commitment to assessment. In both fall and winter quarters, the ATF chair conducts in-service sessions on how to assess student achievement, how to align assignments with learning outcomes, and how to create rubrics. These sessions are designed for all faculty and highly recommended to new faculty. Additional in-service sessions have addressed equitable outcomes and institutional review of results. All sessions are recorded. The college's effort has produced significant engagement, with faculty participation in course learning outcome assessment approaching 50 percent in each quarter of the 2021-22 academic year.

The college maps course-level learning outcomes to Program/Discipline Learning Outcomes (PLOs, DLOs) and Comprehensive Institutional Learning Outcomes (CILOs). PLOs are primarily associated with career/technical programs and DLOs with transfer degrees based on statewide articulation agreements. As these articulation agreements include common learning outcomes for all signatories to the agreement, DLOs are inclusive of general education outcomes for the associated credentials.

At the end of the term, instructors participating in the process use common forms to note how many students achieve at least a "C" grade for the course, and then for chosen outcomes identify the number of students qualifying as *emerging*, *developing*, *competent*, and *proficient*. Informed by these results, faculty also respond to narrative questions that promote reflection and provide the ATF with feedback on the process. Both course and program level results are then embedded in the program review (SPARC/SPARE) process, with programs prompted to share the use of assessment results in the improvement of student learning and achievement.

For the assessment of institution-wide CILOs, the college has modified AACU's VALU rubrics to identify specific skills and abilities in oral communication, cultural awareness, problem-solving skills, and personal accountability. As with course-level assessments, instructors use common forms to identify how many students achieve at least a "C" grade for the course and, then, to rate student chosen CILO proficiencies from the rubrics. In the spring of 2022, the college coordinated an assessment of the CILOs. Results indicated that 70 percent of all students enrolled in the assessed courses met a level of *competent* or *proficient*. Discussion and evaluation of the CILO assessments was a component of fall In-service in September 2022.

In short, OCCC has designed a clear system of course learning assessment that incorporates program, discipline, and institutional learning outcomes. Course and program learning

outcomes assessment results are addressed in the college's program review process. The process's high participation rates suggest that the college has established a foundational culture that supports assessment. The recent appointment of a faculty member as Assessment Task Force chair affirms OCCC's commitment to faculty leadership there. OCCC has underscored its institutional commitment through regular in-service trainings and other assessment-themed sessions.

The model of assessing higher level learning outcomes through mapping of course outcomes has achieved initial success with the institutional outcomes (CILOS). CILO results are shared college-wide. The assessment of program and discipline outcomes (PLOs and DLOs), though based on a similar construct, has not yet produced documented results from multiple assessment cycles. Given that there are significantly more PLOs and DLOs than CILOs, this is not unexpected, but to fully realize an effective curriculum-wide assessment regime, OCCC's framework needs to mature into a sustainable process with repeated cycles allowing assessment of improvement efforts.

Recommendation 3: Fall 2019 Initial Accreditation
Develop a purposeful, systematic, integrated, and comprehensive plan articulating priorities and guiding decisions on resource allocation and application of institutional capacity (2020 Standards: 1.B.3)

Alongside its core theme framework, OCCC maintains a separate strategic planning process. At the time of the mid-cycle evaluation, the college was in transition between two such plans: the 2015-2022 Five Big Ideas plan and its 2023-2028 successor, called simply the College Strategic Plan (CSP). While OCCC did not provide a formal assessment of the Big Five Ideas plan's success, the evaluators heard numerous examples of Big Five goals that had, in fact, had realized. Like its predecessor, the new CSP posits five overarching goals, in this case framed around student-centeredness, career-technical education options, infrastructure and resource sustainability, community profile, and community impact. The plan fleshes out each of these domains with aspirational end-point descriptors (e.g., "OCCC is a student-centered college"), each supported by a handful of more specific milestone objectives.

Structurally, the CSP appears to offer a workable, even inspiring blueprint for OCCC's next five years. Given the plan's newness, however, the mid-cycle evaluators were not able to assess its real functionality. The self-study (page 32) promises that supporting materials for the CSP – including first-year activities and metrics — would be available by fall 2022, but those materials were not provided to the current evaluators.

In discussions onsite, the evaluators and OCCC leaders considered carefully the implications of implementing a set of CSP-specific metrics, particularly since the CSP overlaps to some degree with the college's core theme framework. One choice, of course, is to develop measures for the CSP. Another, however, is to map CSP initiatives to the core theme (or other) institutional metrics that CSP's is intended to impact. Either way, OCCC is encouraged to articulate clearly the relationships among the CSP, mission, and core themes to achieve the "purposeful,

systematic, integrated, and comprehensive plan" envisioned by Recommendation 3. To OCCC's credit, among its "Moving Forward" items, the third speaks precisely to "integration of planning and goal setting, assessment, and linkage to budget throughout all levels of planning."

Recommendation 4: Fall 2019 Initial Accreditation
Assess the performance evaluation process, implementation, and feedback mechanisms, professional growth and development, and support resources for employees necessary for improvement of its operational functions (2020 Standards: 2.F.2, 2.F.4)

As requested, OCCC has engaged in an initiative to review and improve its performance evaluation materials and processes. That effort has incorporated implementation, feedback mechanisms, professional growth and development, and support resources for employees. Onsite, individual employee interviews confirmed that the evaluations have value and that they promote an awareness of available supports. Those conversations speak to a campus culture and community that is aimed supporting student achievement through a supportive environment for employees.

Professional development for OCCC employees includes full waivers of tuition for OCCC coursework, modest tuition reimbursement, and five days of in-service events annually, four every fall and one in spring. These in-service days include and emphasis on equity and support a culture of outcomes assessment. Since 2018-2019 faculty professional development funding is included in the budget, and applications are peer-reviewed. Additionally, the director of library services and media distributes links to professional development opportunities. In 2017 the college implemented a digital training platform, VectorSolutions (formerly SafeColleges) that provides a library of trainings that address safety, well-being, and inclusion. In each year since, the college has expanded the trainings available through VectorSolutions, particularly with an emphasis on compliance.

In its mid-cycle report, OCCC acknowledges its challenges in consistently completing employee performance evaluations. In response, Human Resources requested and received funding for an automated tracking and support system. In addition, Human Resources is collaborating with the vice president of academic affairs to expand the number of administrators with the authority to complete faculty evaluations. The college is currently in the process of completing the process review and embedding the evaluation process within the automated system.