OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE®

Phase II Data Capacity:
Enhancing the Culture of Evidence for Strategic Decision Making

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Prepared by:

College Brain Trust

Dr. Diane Troyer
Consultant

Dr. Eleanor Brown
Consultant

Dr. George R. Boggs
Team Leader

Executive Summary

The goals of Phase II of CBT's work to support OCC's data capacity focused on the development of a clear plan of action for enhancing the College's culture of evidence. This work builds on the recommendations from CBT reports on Data Capacity and Culture of Evidence and Benchmarking and Key Performance Indicators (dated December 2012). Significant progress has been made toward the implementation of the recommendations in those reports. Dr. Diane Troyer and Dr. Eleanor Brown, worked directly with Nancy Showers, the OCC Executive Director for Institutional Research, Quality and Planning (IRQ&P) to develop and implement strategic actions to support the effective application of evidence in the college's goal-setting, integrated planning, decision-making, and accountability.

At the core of the accountability system is the revision and implementation of a set of meaningful Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to articulate college goals and form the basis for college-wide accountability based on evidence. The initial stage of the KPI development focused on KPIs for the Educational Master Plan (EMP) launch. Nancy Showers developed a highly engaged college-wide process for implementing and measuring the EMP and associated KPIs, with clear assignments, timelines and communication structures. In terms of the support for OCC's culture of evidence, Nancy Showers has developed a Culture of Evidence Plan for the Chancellor that includes actions taken to date as well as the 2014 action steps for fully institutionalizing the effective use of data for strategic decision-making.

Task Overview

The analysis and recommendations regarding OCC's data capacity relate to the ability of the college to make decisions based on evidence and to integrate a culture of evidence into college systems. Phase II of the Culture of Evidence work focused specifically on:

1) The expansion of college-wide awareness, engagement and application of data,
2) The development and effective communication of KPIs for the Educational Master Plan as a model and the initiation of college-wide KPIs to track strategic goals, and
3) The development of specific steps to enhance the college's culture of evidence and effective use of data for strategic decision-making, particularly as it is applied to the improvement of student success and college-wide accountability.

Findings/observations

As noted in the 2012 report from CBT, the college's data capacity *per se* is not at issue. The College's Office of IRQ&P is fully capable of producing the data necessary for institutional planning and operations. The OIR is well resourced. Nancy Showers has effectively leveraged national research, networks and resources including Achieving the Dream and the National Baldrige Performance Excellence criteria toward the planning and development of a system for planning and accountability for OCC. The challenges in the improvement of the culture of evidence are:

- Expanding college-wide awareness of available data, including the display of data in understandable graphic formats (e.g. dashboards) to encourage department level application.
- Creating processes in planning and decision-making that require evidence be presented and considered before actions or recommendations are approved, funded or implemented. This requires a change in college culture and provides an opportunity for leaders at all levels to model behaviors that support data-driven decisions.
- Increasing the focus on the effective application of data to improve student success. Clear, measurable goals for the improvement of student outcomes should be articulated in the EMP.
- Implementing an accountability system to assure that decisions are tracked and results evaluated.

With these priorities in mind, Drs. Troyer and Brown provided on-site, email and phone consultation with Nancy Showers throughout the process of both developing plans and effective actions to support the enhancement of the OCC culture of evidence and systems for accountability.

Oakland Community College has identified five critical components in creating a culture of evidence:

- A culture that elevates evidence and inquiry – ensuring that there is an institutional commitment to make use of evidence a priority.
- Systemic use of data to drive decisions – institutionalizing processes to assure that data are a driving determinant in making key decisions.

- Put data into the hands of users – making sure processes to provide those individuals needing access to key data to make decisions are in place.
- Conduct specific analyses answering important questions – responding to research requests to guarantee that resources are available to conduct analyses to support the most critical questions.
- Consistently informs and drives planning and budgeting processes – creating processes that include the consistent use of data to determine plans and how resources will be allocated.

Using that framework, OCC has moved toward specific actions, primarily led by Nancy Showers to support the Chancellor's commitment to data-driven strategic planning and action. In summary, the following actions are being taken to enhance the OCC Culture of Evidence:

1. The launch of a College-wide Integrated Planning System.
2. The implementation of the Educational Master Plan (EMP) including action steps, leadership assignments, KPI's and a system for measurement and accountability using the Integrated Planning System framework.
3. The development of College-wide Key Performance Indicators   including Board of Trustee level, Student Success (Cabinet Level) and College-level (Academic Leadership Level) and review by the campus community.   The KPIs are currently in draft form.
4. The improvement of access and awareness by the college community in the use of data for decision-making including a monthly newsletter on research, metrics and accountability.
5. The identification of graphic presentation of KPIs and other measures to facilitate understanding and accessibility. The College is currently field-testing *Tableau* to determine if it provides the clarity and accessibility necessary for KPI dissemination and tracking.
6. Improvement of the college-wide understanding and application of data through the OCC Data Summit with plans to continue and expand on the Data Summit model throughout the academic year.
7. Development of the IR Research Project Process to facilitate unit-level research to support evidenced-based decisions.
8. The development of the 2014 Culture of Evidence Plan to articulate specific steps and timelines for the application of the principles of effective data-informed decisions and college-wide accountability.

There are four actions that the CBT Team would like to single out as particularly important in the support of the goal to enhance the culture of evidence and accountability for OCC.

First- Implementation & Measurement of the EMP: Nancy Showers utilized the framework of the OCC components for a Culture of Evidence (above) in the development of the processes and measurement architecture for college-wide Integrated Planning System. The first step in implementing Integrated Planning was to utilize the Educational Master Plan (EMP) as the model for future planning and measurement. The process developed to implement the EMP included 1) a well-designed college input and involvement system, 2) clear timelines and assignment of leadership and responsibility, 3) research and data to support actions, 4) the development of Key Performance Indicators and 5) an accountability system including an action plan template with measurable action steps. This was an important step in building the foundation for an enhanced Culture of Evidence at OCC. It will also serve as an effective template for Integrated Planning and accountability for other departments and college operations as the Integrated Planning Model is fully launched.

Second- Data Summit and Data Accessibility: At the heart of improved use of data is the College-wide awareness and accessibility of data and research findings to encourage their application in academic and other college decision-making. The Data Summit should be noted as a particularly important tool in supporting this goal. The Data Summit builds on earlier workshops by Nancy Showers. That effort included a statewide perspective and a proven design for "demystifying" the use of data at the unit, department or college level. This is an excellent first step toward the broader understanding and accessibility of the types of data that are important for strategic decision-making. The Data Summit should not be an isolated event and plans are underway for additional Data Summits in the future.

Third- Draft College-wide KPIs: In the draft College-wide KPIs, it should be noted that the Student Success KPIs (Cabinet Level) are clearly aligned with a strategic vision for student success: Improved Progression, Persistence and Completion. A collaborative process to finalize the Student Success Statement is currently underway, engaging all levels of faculty and staff. This emphasis on student outcomes is an important articulation of the college's primary focus – improving the educational outcomes and success of its students. The college has applied national (Achieving the Dream and Volunteer Framework for Accountability) standards for cohort progression and data definitions to determine accountability around these

KPIs. The draft KPIs have the potential to drive institutional reform and improve educational processes and programs.

Fourth- Culture of Evidence Plan: While many important steps have been taken toward enhancing the Culture of Evidence and accountability for OCC, it will be important that these efforts are fully institutionalized and incorporated into college systems as a "way of doing business". This is in effect a culture change. It requires that the process for decision-making mandate specific steps for data examination and application before decisions are approved or implemented. Nancy Showers has developed a clear and accountable plan outlining the 2014 actions to further enhance the College's commitment to data-driven decisions. The Chancellor and Cabinet have taken bold leadership demonstrated by the commitment to require data for all college decisions. Through their leadership, those processes can be implemented college-wide at the department/unit and college level. The leadership commitment for these processes by the Chancellor and Cabinet set an important standard for future accountability and evidence-driven decisions.

Analysis

As noted in the earlier reports by the College Brain Trust OCC Team, the challenges OCC faces in enhancing its data capacity are similar to many, if not most, community colleges.   There are two major shifts in data trends within colleges that impact OCC. First, community college data systems and institutional research functions are designed primarily as compliance systems to provide the necessary data to governmental and accreditation agencies. *The collection, application and display of information necessary to improve student outcomes must be fundamentally redesigned.* OCC has taken the steps necessary to provide the information necessary for data-driven decisions.

The second shift is away from anecdotes and assumptions about who students are, what they need, and what happens to them to clear analysis of fact. Increasingly, colleges are being challenged by policy-makers, foundations, funders, and government to be accountable for outcomes ranging from developmental education success to graduation rates.

Through its plan for enhancing the Culture of Evidence, OCC is addressing both of these challenges. The Data Summit expanded awareness of data and improved accessibility of data at all levels. The second challenge is being addressed through the development of student outcome-driven KPIs as proposed by the Cabinet and Academic Leadership. These new KPIs will track specific goals in student outcome

achievement provide accountability for factors leading to student success (placement into developmental education, completion of developmental education, credit accumulation and others). These KPIs provide a clear blueprint for OCC's values and vision as well as a system of accountability to assure improvement is accomplished.

Recommendations:

The CBT team working with Nancy Showers to enhance the Culture of Evidence believes that tools and systems are in place to promote effective data-driven decisions at all levels. The following recommendations summarize the college actions that support the college's commitment for a strong Culture of Evidence.

Recommendation #1: Fully Implement the Culture of Evidence Plan

Nancy Showers has developed a clear set of goals for 2014 in the Culture of Evidence Plan developed for the Chancellor in February 2014. In that Plan, Nancy Showers sets the following goals with corresponding actions to accomplish each:

Goal I: Enhance the Culture of Evidence and the application of data to decisions

Goal I Actions:

A. Data Summit: The earlier Data Summit and workshops aimed at the demystification of data and the improvement of awareness and accessibility of data at all levels. While the progress to date has been impressive, the Data Summit must be an integral part of college life strategically targeting the areas necessary for deeper understanding, awareness and application of data.

B. Professional Development: Professional Development workshops are planned as a good first step and should include a series of ongoing workshops. The college should consider requiring data workshops for key leadership staff to assure a common understanding and basis for decision-making for all college leaders.

C. Formal Decision-making Model: The third action step for Goal I focuses on the formalization of the decision-making process to assure and document the application of data for all decisions. While the cabinet has committed to a data based decision-making process, this formal process including the integration of resources and accountability will provide an

excellent model to fully institutionalize the College's commitment to a "Culture of Evidence".

Taken as a whole, these three action steps support and expand commitment to place data in the hands of those making decisions at all levels. To accomplish this goal, data and research cannot be "behind the curtain" or owned by the Institutional Research Department. Rather it must be accessed, discussed, challenged and applied at all levels. The Chancellor and Nancy Showers have taken important steps with these goals to support this goal.

Goal II: Make College community aware of current and ongoing internal and external research, particularly related to academics

Goal II Action: College-wide Research Forums

The plan to schedule Research Forums will continue to provide findings related to pertinent community college issues. Though the OCC involvement with Achieving the Dream, many leaders and faculty within the College were able to challenge assumptions about how students progress through   the institution. Expanding communications and accessibility to research and data will support the culture change necessary to shift to a more research driven institution. Making academic decisions based on data requires both data and an understanding of current research and its application to education reform at OCC.

Goal III: Simply display of data for stakeholders.

Goal III Actions:

A. Data Display: As noted in previous CBT reports, the accessibility and understanding of data at all levels within the institution requires clear displays that enhance the understanding of both standards and progress. *Tableau* software is currently being field tested as that vehicle.

B. College Stakeholders: Plans are in place for the expansion of meaningful input from stakeholders on both the data necessary for decision-making and the clarity and accessibility of data presentations. In particular, stakeholders will provide valuable input on the selection and implementation of the dashboard or other display mechanisms being explored for adoption.

Recommendation #2: Finalize the Draft KPIs and Establish the College-wide Accountability System

The accountability and measurement system developed for the EMP is an excellent model for the identification of action steps, timelines, standards and accountability for the EMP. That system should be applied toward the approved College-wide KPIs as soon as possible. The adoption of College-wide KPIs will require a formal review and accountability process to track progress and adjust college operations to improve outcomes. The KPIs should be benchmarked both nationally and against Michigan peer colleges.

Recommendation #3: Establish a process and timelines for adoption of Integrated Planning and accountability to all College Departments and Functions.

The approach to College-wide involvement in the implementation and accountability of the EMP provides a valuable model for data-driven Integrated Planning through all departments and functions within the College. A clear model for Integrated Planning and the procedures necessary for linking planning at all levels to both accountability and resource allocation will be the next important step for OCC.

Recommendation #4: Schedule periodic evaluations of progress toward the goals for improved data-driven decision-making including the review of meeting minutes, participation by stakeholders, and other indicators of an effective Culture of Evidence.

The tools, plans and strategies are in place for OCC to fully implement its vision of improved student outcomes and a culture in which all decisions are based on clear and credible data. The Culture of Evidence Plan contains several important components including the expanded understanding, accessibility, display and application of data at all levels. Over the next academic year, it will be important that the progress toward the College's goals to fully implement its goals for data-driven decisions be regularly tracked and evaluated.   It would be important for Nancy Showers to provide regular evaluation reports to the Chancellor and/or the Cabinet on the progress toward the goals and timelines for the Culture of Evidence Plan, the full implementation of Integrated Planning and the accountability system in place for the EMP.

Appendix:

I. Integrated Planning and EMP Accountability and Action Plan (Power Point)
II. Oakland Community College: College-level KPIs
III. Creating a Culture of Evidence at Oakland Community College (Nancy Showers, February 2014)