

REPORT OF A FOCUSED VISIT

TO

OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Bloomfield Hills, MI

March 24-25, 2003

For

The Higher Learning Commission

of the

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Report

The team's report is organized into five sections: (1) matters of preliminary information, (2) assessment of the areas of focus, (3) strengths and challenges, (4) advice and suggestions for institutional improvement, and (5) the team recommendations and rationale. Also included is the Statement of Affiliation Status Worksheet.

Accreditation History

Oakland Community College was initially granted candidacy status in 1968. In 1971, the institution received full accreditation with each campus accredited as an "operationally separate associate degree granting institution." The college was granted accreditation for five years in 1976 as a single college institution with multiple campuses. The next comprehensive visit occurred in 1981, and the institution was granted accreditation for a seven-year period. The 1987-88 comprehensive visit continued accreditation of the college through 1997-98 with the stipulation that a focus visit be scheduled for 1990-91 to review the progress regarding the development of a comprehensive institutional master plan. The focus visit occurred as scheduled. In 1997-98, the next comprehensive evaluation visit occurred, resulting in a recommendation to extend the college's accreditation to 2007-08. Also, the team recommended that a visit focused on administrative stability, institutional planning, and assessment of student academic achievement occur in 2002-03. Subsequent to the comprehensive and before the scheduled focus visit in 2002-03, another focus occurred in March 2002 centered on the Michigan Community Virtual Learning Collaborative, of which Oakland Community College is one of the partners. This report summarizes the focus visit that occurred on March 24-25, 2003.

Scope and Structure of the Visit

This evaluation visit is focused on three topics: (1) administrative stability; (2) institutional planning, and (3) assessment of student academic achievement as related to collecting and analyzing data and using the results to improve student learning. The team arrived in Bloomfield Hills on Sunday, March 23, 2003. On Sunday evening, the team met to review plans for the visit and to exchange impressions derived from the materials previously submitted by the college. On Monday morning, the team met with the Chancellor and the administrative leadership. Following this meeting and for the remainder of the visit, team members interviewed faculty, administrators, members of various college committees, students, and other staff at the college. Also, the team met with the Board of Trustees as well as the Chancellor.

During the visit, the team reviewed relevant documents, reports, and other materials, which were readily accessible in the resource room. Information was shared among the team members, and this overall report reflects the unanimous opinion of the team.

Review of Self-Study Report

The college prepared a focus visit self-study, which was distributed to team members, Board members, and internal staff. The report had the involvement of internal staff, with a team of 17 directly responsible. The self-study adequately addressed the three focus areas, although there could have been more context for a couple of the areas. The document seemed to be an honest analysis, particularly as related to student academic achievement. The identified challenges or findings should be pursued by the college.

II. EVALUATION OF THE AREAS OF FOCUS

Overview

Oakland Community College has made significant progress in addressing the concerns identified by the previous NCA visiting team. The narrative, which follows, will delineate the team's observations and findings.

Administrative Stability

The college has indeed made satisfactory progress as related to administrative stability since the last comprehensive visit. The institution has made a major switch in that it operates as a single college with several campuses in a matrix organizational format. Along with this matrix organization comes other issues which the college must resolve, particularly the role of the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, and the Campus Deans in this matrix organization.

District and campus leadership is currently in place. Although the Chancellor is retiring in a few months, a process is in place to replace him. For the next chancellor to be successful, the Board must become a more cohesive body, working together as a team. There was evidence, as the team met with the Board, that Board members were not trusting of one another and there may even be some friction between certain Board members. The team urges the Board members to address these issues and to make a concerted effort toward resolution.

The college has addressed the issues related to administrative stability on pages 49-58 of the self-study. Among the many actions that OCC has implemented are the following:

- The college has developed a college-wide position control system, which guides the institution in the filling of positions. The current number of open positions, interim appointments, etc., is not unusual for an institution of its size.

- The college has activated and given authority to a Vacancy Committee, which oversees all personnel.
- The institution has completed an overall staff inventory for the entire district.
- It has implemented a Board established guideline limiting personnel expenditures to 80% of the general fund.
- Oakland Community College has developed a system of councils for staff participation in the decision-making process of the college.
- The institution has created the Professional Development Training Center (PDTC) to assure consistent orientation for all staff and continuous training for all personnel.
- The college established the College Facilities Committee to plan, coordinate, monitor, and implement the expenditures that maintain and renovate Oakland Community College's physical infrastructure and properties.

Oakland Community College has implemented and clarified its decision-making processes, coordinated its personnel management into one college process (linked to budget), and implemented numerous strategies to ensure stability across the organization. It is the team's judgment that OCC has adequately addressed the issues related to administrative stability.

Institutional Planning

Since 1995, Oakland Community College has instituted major institutional planning components such as the College Planning Council and the Chancellor's Council, and has defined the role of councils and campuses in the planning. The campuses now have avenues for more collaboratively and fully participating in college-wide planning. In the words of the self-study, "In 1997 the Chancellor and the Chancellor's Council resolved to establish a planning process

that was reasonably simple in design, placed planning before budgeting, emphasized a council structure for decision-making, and involved a broad spectrum of the college community.”

The resulting structure has helped the college re-align its administrative and management structures, its operational systems, its fiscal and facilities operational processes, its budget, and its staff development plan, which is monitored by the Vacancy Committee. Major plans, which have been developed and are now in the process of implementation, are the College Technology Plan, the Master Facilities Renovation Plan, the Strategic Outcomes Assessment Plan, and the Academic Master Plan.

The major planning body at OCC is the College Planning Council. It is a broad-based committee, which includes college officers, directors, and faculty. Its primary functions are to assure that plans are aligned with the college mission, purposes, and strategic plan. It also ensures that campus and site operational plans align with college master planning and that resources are appropriately allocated. Additionally, the Planning Council is responsible for soliciting and funding new initiatives and for fast-track proposals.

The college created and adopted five-year strategic goals in 1997. In 2002, the college completed its first five-year plan and all goals were met. The second five-year strategic goals were developed by the College Planning Council and were approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2002. Since 1995, there has been tremendous progress in planning as documented in the self-study on pages 27 and 28.

The college has laid the groundwork for planning more effectively. The matrix structure, which the planning process is based on, permits college plans to go forward in an integrated way: campuses are aware of each other's activities at an early stage; the financial and facilities administrators are working with the campuses and the Vice Chancellor for Academic and

Student Affairs in early stages of a plan's inception so that they can go forward with adequate resources and effective coordination. The college's executive officers demonstrate a good understanding of the roles of the components essential to good planning and have begun to work together more collaboratively within the cross-functional planning structure. The college is now positioned to create concrete, measurable operational plans to flesh out the Academic Master Plan.

For the Academic Master Plan to become a living document, staff development and communication plans must be designed and implemented so that the college community, as a whole, understands how decisions are made within the planning process. To illuminate the planning process, the matrix relationships need to be clarified and made more accessible and transparent to the college community. In September 2002, OCC's Professional Development and Training Center presented a workshop, *Leading in a Matrixed Organization*, for administrative and management staff. This well-planned workshop laid important groundwork for creating a broader understanding of how matrix management works within an institution. As the planning and assessment processes and practices evolve, professional development activities can sharpen skills for formulating outcomes-based implementation plans within the Academic Master Plan. The staff development and communication plans will also be helpful in creating college-wide awareness of what the college's priorities and direction are.

At this point, it is not clear how effective the Campus Deans will be in their role of implementing new initiatives. Will they have conflicting priorities as they attempt to report both to the Campus President and to the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs? According to the job description of the Dean of Academic and Student Services, "The Dean of Academic and Student Services has campus-specific responsibilities as well as college-wide

assignments (matrix organization). For campus-based responsibilities, the Deans report to the Campus President; for college-based responsibilities, they report to the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs.”

According to his job description, the Vice Chancellor “coordinates, directs and assists with college-wide efforts” in academic and student affairs, but the Campus President, who reports to the Chancellor, also has academic affairs responsibilities: “ensures provision of quality programs and up-to-date curriculum...Plans and evaluates academic related programs and services. Reports to the Chancellor.” At this stage in the evolution of the college’s planning process, the means of establishing and, more importantly, implementing academic goals is ambiguous. This ambiguity maybe a contributing factor to the vagueness of the academic master plan.

A review of Deans’ Cabinet meeting minutes indicates that the Vice Chancellor is in the beginning stages of working with Campus Deans to develop action plans with “measurable progress by June 2003.” The Vice Chancellor will measure the success of the Campus Deans in accomplishing their institution-wide responsibilities through meeting with the Campus President and Deans on that campus to review action plan priorities and consider those in combination with campus-based deans’ goals and objectives. It is not clear who will formally evaluate the Dean and his or her achievement of the institution-wide goals and the weight that will carry relative to the campus responsibilities and goal achievement.

Because the college, in general, and the faculty, in particular, is much more attuned to the importance of assessment in the college’s vitality and growth, the stage is set for the use of assessment strategies in creating a more accountable, outcomes-based Academic Master Plan, identifying action steps, and measuring progress toward achieving their goals. The current

Academic Master Plan relies heavily on satisfaction measures for assessing its effectiveness; as the institution's assessment culture evolves, the faculty and administration should be able to devise clearer, more measurable assessments of its plan. For example, an assessment measure such as "Faculty success factors" needs clearer definition.

A dialogue to stimulate planning in functional areas such as academic departments or the technology unit around benchmarks of excellence beyond OCC's walls could create a healthy balance of internal and external validation of the effectiveness of areas in meeting their objectives.

The college has sustained planning in a consistent manner over the past seven years. The college has made good progress in its planning efforts. It is the team's judgment that OCC has satisfactorily addressed the issues related to institutional planning.

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

The college has made progress in its assessment efforts since the last comprehensive visit. The accomplishments as well as the continuing challenges are well documented in the self-study (pp. 59-104). The college has been forthright in its discussion of assessment.

Since 1998, the Student Outcomes Assessment Committee (SOAC), which was established in 1994, has continued to function as the prime mover for assessment at OCC. Until 2001, the committee focused on raising faculty awareness of the importance of classroom assessment. Based on information gained during interviews, the history of assessment is that it was not well received initially; the college struggled with how to do assessment over multiple campuses. However, it is the opinion of SOAC members that the assessment initiative is gaining ground now because political resistance has diminished, and there is more institutional support. Faculty members say that because SOAC is a committee of the Faculty Senate, this makes it

easier to obtain faculty buy-in on assessment. The Faculty Senate expressed its belief that “substantial progress” has been achieved with student outcomes assessment, that the effort was “focused,” and assessment was “getting there.”

To foster a culture of assessment, the college has invested heavily in the Professional Development Training Center (PDTC), allocating over \$500,000 to the center each of the past few years. The PDTC has offered numerous programs geared to moving the institution from a teaching environment to a learning environment; for example, Brain-based Learning; Affect, Cognition, Technology: A Recipe for Enhancing Learning; Technology instructional issues, and assessment. Reports by the PDTC indicate that Roundtable events have been particularly conducive to faculty sharing techniques and information about assessment. Faculty validated this point, stating that Roundtables and other events have contributed to establishing a culture of assessment. They acknowledge that the college still has a ways to go before assessment is truly integrated throughout the institution.

In 2001, a web-based classroom assessment report was created. Faculty use this report to summarize their use of classroom assessment techniques (CATS) twice each year. In meetings with the Faculty Senate and the SOAC as well as through materials in the resource room, the team validated that a variety of CATS are used and that most faculty use the data to make adjustments in their courses.

During the 2002-2003 academic year, the major effort of SOAC has been devoted to advancing program assessment. The committee emphasized that the assessment effort must provide meaningful data to faculty if it is to be useful and successful. Each program was to have a timetable for completion. No evidence of the timetable was located; however, the team reviewed evidence of 42 program assessment plans in the resource room. Of these, only a few

were fully implemented with indications of how the data was being used for program improvement or enhancement of student learning. Campus leaders in assessment of student outcomes appear to be Nursing, Emergency Medical Technology (EMT), Business Information Systems (BIS), Court and Conference Reporting, and Landscape Design. These plans could serve as models for the college. The data collection for the assessment initiative is now centrally housed at the Highland Lakes campus.

In General Education, eighty-two (82) courses listed one or more applicable attributes with an assessment strategy for each. Discipline groups, e.g., History, Economics, etc., met to discuss, determine, and vote on the attribute(s) to be assessed for each course. General Education is challenged to develop a methodology to assess the college-wide requirements for General Education.

To facilitate the assessment effort, SOAC established subcommittees. One of these, the Out-of-Classroom Subcommittee, developed a survey that was conducted in spring 2002 to assess student satisfaction in six student service areas. The data for each area has been compiled into a report. Personnel in each area are developing their assessment plans with a target date of November 1, 2003 for completion.

In their recent status report, SOAC has outlined an ambitious agenda for March 2003-June 2004. At their next meeting on March 28, 2003, the committee will prioritize the efforts under each of their objectives.

To summarize:

- Assessment of student outcomes has gathered momentum.
- Faculty report that they feel an assessment culture has been established.

- Classroom assessments are being conducted as evidenced by written reports to SOAC that identify strategies, results, and how the results are being used.
- The out-of-classroom assessment survey was completed, and the assessment plan for this area is targeted for completion in November 2003.
- Except for a few programs, data collection and analysis of the data for use in program improvement and/or student learning is lacking. This deficit presents a barrier to program improvement and/or student learning.
- Although there is assessment of the attributes for General Education, no methodology exists for assessing the college's General Education requirements.

Oakland Community College has made some significant strides in building an organization that uses ongoing assessment of student outcomes for the improvement of learning. Yet, there is more to be done. Overall, it is the team's judgment that the college has made satisfactory progress in the area of student academic achievement.

III. STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Strengths

1. The planning process engages members of the entire college community in thinking about achieving Oakland Community College's future.
2. The professional development activities form a solid foundation for planning and assessment activities.
3. Overall, there has been a positive change in the campus climate as it relates to planning and the assessment of student learning.
4. The college has been forthright in stating where it is in the assessment process.

Challenges

1. The college needs to develop concrete, measurable action plans supporting the accomplishment of the Academic Master Plan.
2. As indicated in the previous team's report, the lack of data collection for the assessment of program outcomes presents a barrier to program improvement.

IV. CONSULTATIVE ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS

The advice and suggestions listed below are offered by team members in their roles as consultants to the institution. These comments are presented as topics for review and discussion by the college.

1. The college should consider the development of a communication plan (beyond meeting minutes) to assist all college staff in their awareness of college priorities and planning processes as they evolve throughout the planning process.
2. The college should consider ways to clarify and communicate more precisely what the academic priorities of the institution are and how accountability for meeting these priorities is measured.
3. The matrix management concept, particularly as related to the roles within the academic organizational structure, could be further clarified for more effective functioning.
4. The college may want to consider featuring programs with fully implemented student outcome assessment plans at an assessment best practice event or in conjunction with PDTC offerings on assessment.
5. The college should utilize the findings and challenges identified in the self-study to improve institutional effectiveness.

V. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

Recommendation

The team recommends that the next comprehensive visit remain scheduled for 2007-2008.

Additionally, the team recommends that a progress report be submitted by March 30, 2005, documenting that assessment plans for all programs have been fully implemented, including the collection and analysis of appropriate data and how this data is being used for program improvement and/or student learning.

Rationale

The team's recommendation regarding the comprehensive visit is based on the fact that the college has made progress in the three focused areas. Additionally, the college is in stable financial condition, and the expectation is for continued financial viability. There is a strong commitment to providing a good teaching and learning environment. The college administration is committed to a strong institution, operating effectively and particularly to a continued strengthening of the areas identified in this focus visit.

- Progress Report – The team recommends that the college submit a progress report by March 30, 2005 documenting that assessment plans for all programs have been fully implemented, including the collection and analysis of appropriate data and how this data is being used for program improvement and/or to enhance student learning.

The college has moved forward with assessment activities over the last few years. The faculty feel that an assessment culture has been established. However, data collection and the analysis of the data for use in improving programs are still not

widely done. The last team identified this area as a concern, and this team finds that this issue is still lacking. The team has no doubts about the institution's commitment to assessment but, since this issue related to data has not been satisfactorily resolved, the team believes it is appropriate for Oakland Community College to file a progress report with the Commission.

WORKSHEET FOR STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION: OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2480 Opdyke Rd.
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304-2266

TYPE OF REVIEW: A visit focused on administrative stability, institutional planning, and assessment of student academic achievement

DATE OF THIS REVIEW: March 24, 2003 — March 25, 2003

COMMISSION ACTION:

STATUS: *Accredited (1971- .)*

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

HIGHEST DEGREE AWARDED: *Associate's.*

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

MOST RECENT ACTION: *June 27, 2002.*

TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: *Degree programs delivered on-line are limited to those facilitated by The Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative.*

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

NEW DEGREE

SITES: *Prior Commission approval required.*

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

PROGRESS REPORTS

REQUIRED: *April 1, 2003; A report on through the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative detailing the implementation of a strategic plan for the Collaborative. April 1, 2005; A report on through the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative on assessment of the Collaborative effectiveness and the assessment of student learning.*

Team *Recommended Wording:* 3/30/05; A report documenting that assessment plans for all programs have been fully implemented, including the utilization of appropriate data for program improvement and/or improved learning. 4/1/05; A report on through the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative on assessment of the Collaborative effectiveness and the assessment of student learning.

MONITORING REPORTS

REQUIRED: *None.*

Team *Recommended Wording:* NONE.

CONTINGENCY REPORTS

REQUIRED: *None.*

Team *Recommended Wording:* NONE.

OTHER VISITS

REQUIRED: *None.*

Team *Recommended Wording:* NONE.

LAST COMPREHENSIVE

EVALUATION: *1997-98.*

TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

NEXT COMPREHENSIVE

EVALUATION: *2007-08.*

Team *Recommended Wording:* REETAIN ORIGINAL DATES