Focused Interim Report
Pierce College District
Lakewood and Puyallup, Washington

PIERCE COLLEGE

possibilities. realized.

Presented to
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
October 14, 2010

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Introduction

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities conducted an accreditation visit to Pierce College District October 7-10, 2007. Following the visit, a letter dated January 23, 2008, from the commission instructed the District to prepare a focused interim report and host a commission representative in spring 2009 as a response to the evaluation team's six recommendations. As a result of the focused visit in 2009, the commission requested a second focused visit on recommendations 1 and 2.

This report, with accompanying documentation, addresses these two recommendations and describes the progress the district has made to reach full compliance. Each recommendation begins with a background and overview statement of the status of this topic up to the ten year accreditation visit in 2007, followed by actions and activities the District has engaged in since fall 2007 to fully address the recommendation. Actions covered in the 2009 focused visit report are summarized; actions since that visit are fully described. The report was collaboratively authored by a variety of college personnel actively engaged in the efforts related to each respective recommendation.

Table of contents

- Exhibit 1.7 – ECE Math Project
- Exhibit 2.1 – *Pierce College Catalog, 2010*
- Exhibit 2.2 – Pierce College Degree and Certificate Outcomes from Print Catalog and e-Catalog
- Exhibit 2.3 – Ruth Stiehl Publications List
- Exhibit 2.4 – General Education –Print Catalog and e-Catalog
- Exhibit 2.5 – *2008-2009 Institutional Effectiveness Report*
- Exhibit 2.6 – Professional/Technical Curriculum Sheets
- Exhibit 2.7 – Professional Technical Program Projects - Examples
- Exhibit 2.8 – Professional Technical Program Examination Pass Rates
- Exhibit 2.9 – Professional/Technical Faculty Assessment Summary Report 2009-2010
- Exhibit 2.10 – Prior Learning Assessment Policy
- Exhibit 2.11 – Transitional Education Learning Standards Analysis
- Exhibit 2.12 – Transitional Education Faculty Assessment Summary Report
- Exhibit 2.13 – e-Catalog Printouts

Figures

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Commendations and Recommendations
October 2007

The evaluation committee was favorably impressed with Pierce College District. The institutional Self-Study was well written, logically organized, and addressed the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Standards and Policies. The required exhibits in the team room were organized and easy to use. Faculty, staff, and students were especially helpful in answering questions and providing additional clarity. The institution's commitment to providing its students modern instructional facilities and highly qualified faculty and staff was evident throughout. The Board of Trustees demonstrated a unique commitment to the mission, vision, values, goals, and Expected Outcomes Policies.

The District met the Commission's Eligibility Requirement, Standards, and Policies. The evaluation committee provided six General Recommendations because the evidence collected during the visit suggested that these areas needed to be improved and strengthened.

Commendations

1. The evaluation committee commends Pierce College District for successfully securing State allocations to expand, repair, or renovate both campuses in the next 6-8 years, and also the Facilities Department for the stewardship of its resources and maintaining the buildings and grounds in excellent condition.
2. The evaluation committee commends the PCD Foundation for furthering the goals of the District through fund raising and resource support, including the capital campaign to support the childcare facilities at each college.
3. The evaluation committee commends the District Distance Learning Program for having consistent annual growth and maintaining a high completion rate. The military contract faculty is commended for their development and ongoing assessment of an extensive online curriculum delivered to its students throughout the world.
4. The evaluation committee commends the library faculty, staff, and administration for the outstanding work that they perform in support of the faculty and students and for receiving of the 2005 Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) College Library of the Year award.
5. Pierce College District is commended for an incredible array of student programs and services that meet the needs of a diverse student body. Student services are complemented by an award-winning student leadership program and student government programs offered each month and colorfully promoted in quarterly calendars.
6. The evaluation committee commends Pierce College District for its creativity in partnering with other colleges and community agencies in order to facilitate student learning as well as expansion of programs. Particularly noteworthy are

partnerships and community outreach in the areas of ESL classes, and the Dental Hygiene and Occupational Safety and Health programs.

7. The evaluation committee commends the faculty and staff of the District for their student-centered focus and their passion for education, which is pervasive throughout their campuses and sites.

Recommendations

1. The evaluation committee recommends that a process for assessing the five core abilities and general education outcomes be developed and implemented. (Standard 2.B.1, Policy 2.2)
2. While student learning outcomes and assessment activities are in place at course and program levels, the evaluation committee did not find evidence of learning outcomes for each of the district's degree and certificate programs. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution identify, publish, and assess the learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. (Eligibility Requirement 12, Standard 2.B.2)
3. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution develop policies and procedures for the evaluation of part-time faculty consistent with Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation. (Standard 4.A.5, Policy 4.1)
4. The evaluation committee recommends that the Pierce College District develop and periodically assess a policy on the use of part-time faculty in light of its mission and goals. (Standard 4.A.10)
5. The evaluation committee recommends that the District define and clarify the roles of the various constituents in its shared governance process. (Eligibility Requirement 7, Standard 6.A.1)
6. The evaluation committee recommends that the District implement and periodically review appropriate procedures to evaluate all administrators regularly. (Standard 6.C.3, 6.C.8)

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Commendations and Recommendations
April 2009 Focused Visit

Commendations

1. The college should be commended for developing and approving a clear and complete policy related to the use of part-time faculty in light of the college's mission and goals. The policy fully meets the intent of Standard 4.A.10.
(2007 Recommendation 4)

2. The college should be commended for the successful implementation of a newly revised evaluation procedure for administrative exempt employees. The procedure allows for an annual assessment of job description, goal setting and reflection and meaningful dialogue between employee and supervisor and fully meets the intent of Standard 6.C.3 and 6.C.8. (2007 Recommendation 6)

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the college fully define and implement all aspects of the educational assessment plan, integrating tools and mechanisms that have been developed into a cohesive, systematic process that generates clear evidence that supports the improvement of teaching and learning (Eligibility Requirement 12, Standard 2.B.1, 2.B.2, 2.B.3). Additionally, outcomes for the related instruction requirement for professional technical degrees should be developed, published and assessed. (Standard 2.C.1, Policy 2.1). (2007 Recommendation 1)

2. It is recommended that the college identify, consistently publish and assess outcomes for all degrees. (Eligibility Requirement 12, Standard 2.B.2). (2007 Recommendation 2)

Recommendation One

It is recommended that the college fully define and implement all aspects of the educational assessment plan, integrating tools and mechanisms that have been developed into a cohesive, systematic process that generates clear evidence that supports the improvement of teaching and learning (Eligibility Requirement 12, Standard 2.B.1, 2.B.2, 2.B.3).

Additionally, outcomes for the related instruction requirement for professional technical degrees should be developed, published and assessed (Standard 2.C.1, Policy 2.1).

Background and Overview

Student success is the focus of every Pierce College employee, with the faculty concentrating most specifically on curriculum and learning. Our commitment to identifying cogent learning outcomes, creatively teaching to those outcomes, and authentically assessing student progress has assisted us in becoming even more learning centered. Refining our assessment process and building an assessment culture has enhanced our skills as well as our self concept as a community of learners. This has transpired as a result of discussing different perspectives, analyzing assessment and instructional theories, examining student work, and reflecting on our own efforts.

The Council for Learning and Student Success (CLASS) (Appendix 1.1) is the District's shared governance committee with responsibility for curriculum, educational policy, and assessment of student learning. The faculty Assessment Team (Appendix 1.2) reports to CLASS and provides the day-to-day leadership for assessment of learning. Each Assessment Team member works with a specific group of faculty, either distribution area faculty, pro-tech faculty, or basic skills faculty, chairing the curriculum sub-committee for that group and coordinating assessment.

At the time of the 2007 decennial accreditation visit, faculty had designed course and departmental outcomes and assessments and had initialized efforts to assess degrees, certificates, programs and General Education. Core Ability outcomes and rubrics had been developed. From 2007-2009, faculty focused on extending that effort and developing a more comprehensive, systematic process to assess student achievement at all levels. We built upon existing systems and tools whenever possible and added what was needed to satisfy our goal of a workable and fruitful assessment process. The Assessment Team and CLASS led the development and emphasized inclusion by altering the assessment plan based on faculty feedback. While this extended our process, we believe the open process furthered our efforts in the long run by building consensus and developing a stronger culture of assessment.

Actions and Activities since April 2009

Guided by the NWCCU recommendation, we have been working since the April 2009 focused visit in three areas:

1. Integrating the assessment tools and mechanisms that have been developed into a cohesive, systematic process.
2. Generating clear evidence that supports the improvement of teaching and learning by fully implementing the assessment plan.
3. Developing, publishing, and assessing outcomes for the related instruction requirement for professional technical degrees.

The following sections of this report address our progress with each of these components of the recommendation and demonstrate our compliance.

1. Integrating the Assessment Tools and Mechanisms

In order to engage the program, certificate, and degree assessment process, the District faculty, CLASS, and Assessment Team have developed several useful tools. These include: definitions of General Education, Core Abilities, and Fundamental Areas of Knowledge; Degree, Certificate, and Program outcomes; Maps/POGS; Course Outlines; defined roles for CLASS; defined roles for the Assessment Team; Degree Outcomes Crosswalk; and a Comprehensive Assessment Plan. Each of these tools is described below.

Definition of General Education After extensive faculty discussion, a revised definition of General Education was approved in 2008. This definition provided the foundational element needed to assess the Transfer degree.

> ***General Education*** *prepares students to live and work in a dynamically changing world by emphasizing whole student development through fundamental areas of knowledge and five core abilities: Critical, Creative, and Reflective Thinking; Information Competency; Multiculturalism; Responsibility; and Effective Communication.*
>
> *-Council for Learning and Student Success, 2008*

Fundamental Areas of Knowledge (FAKs) District departments articulated the core "big ideas" or Fundamental Areas of Knowledge (FAKs) in the various distribution areas — general outcomes for humanities, communication, social sciences, natural sciences and quantitative reasoning (Appendix 1.3). FAKs describe transferrable learning outcomes; they reflect the concepts and themes common to courses within each distribution area (e.g. what makes a social science a social science?) Departments have also determined how these ideas could be assessed in their individual disciplines.

The Core Abilities In contrast to the FAKs, which are closely connected to academic disciplines, Core Abilities transcend specific courses and programs. The Core Abilities comprise skill sets and values that Pierce College has identified as central to our students' success as they transfer, enter the workforce, and engage in everyday life.

The five Core Abilities were defined in 1997 and revised in 2004 (Appendix 1.4). Professional/Technical, Transfer, and Basic Skills faculty identified the placement of Core Ability assessments within courses. CLASS established that faculty would teach and assess any Core Ability designated on their official course outlines. Rubrics for each ability describe student performance at the levels of emerging, developing, competent, and strong (Appendix 1.5).

Transfer Degree Outcomes In addition to the transfer degree outcomes of FAKs and Core Abilities, several of the specialized Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) associates degrees also include outcomes focused on the discipline (Appendix 1.6).

Certificate and Program Outcomes The Professional/Technical faculty have developed outcomes for each of the Degree and Certificate programs that prepare students for employment in these fields, and the Basic Skills faculty have Program outcomes in place that define student achievement at all levels of ESL and Adult Basic Education.

Maps and POGS All instructional departments developed a "Program Map" (Map) that examines the student's journey through the curriculum, and a Program Outcome Guide (POG) that details the program outcomes, curricular concepts and themes, and assessments. These documents assure that courses align with the intended outcomes, and assist us in making critical decisions about how and where assessment occurs (Appendix 1.7). Maps and POGS are formal curriculum documents adopted by CLASS and must be revised and resubmitted whenever courses are changed/added/deleted. These have been foundational tools in our assessment process.

Course Outline Forms Course Outline forms detail the course curriculum including student learning outcomes for each course, program, and degree. A 2008-2009 pilot of our assessment process revealed inconsistencies in the course outlines. The faculty realized that because curriculum review was a six-year cycle at Pierce College, some courses were on old forms and had not been updated to include Core Abilities or FAKs. This limited our ability to conduct any parallel assessment.

To resolve this problem, faculty met as district departments in Fall 2009 and determined which FAK, Core Ability/Abilities, and/or Degree/Certificate outcome(s) would be assessed in each course. Course outline forms were then revised to reflect that choice (Appendix 1.8). Faculty teaching these courses assume responsibility for teaching and assessing the identified outcome within the format of the course. The side benefit of the course outline revision was a "cleanup" of the curriculum, as all course outcomes were updated and refreshed and outdated courses were purged.

The small percentage of courses that have not been transitioned to the new forms are taught only at specific sites where faculty were less available to attend meetings and receive support for their work in 2009-2010 (Exhibit 1.1). The Assessment Team will assist those faculty in closing the loop and bring us to 100% completion in Fall 2010. With closure on this process we will be up to date with curriculum review.

Crosswalk of Certificate and Degree Outcomes A crosswalk, or matrix, was developed in Spring 2010 illustrating which Degree and Program outcomes were assessed in each course (Exhibit 1.2). This provides a visual overview of the curriculum relative to assessment. The crosswalk revealed that while assessment of FAKs and Program outcomes are well distributed among courses, Core Abilities are not equally taught/assessed throughout the curriculum. The Assessment Team is the only group to have seen and discussed the crosswalk data thus far and will present it to CLASS in Fall 2010. Faculty will discuss next steps, such as determining whether all five Core Abilities are still valued, if some components of abilities could be collapsed, or if we would like to amend course outlines to include assessment of Core Abilities that were not well assessed.

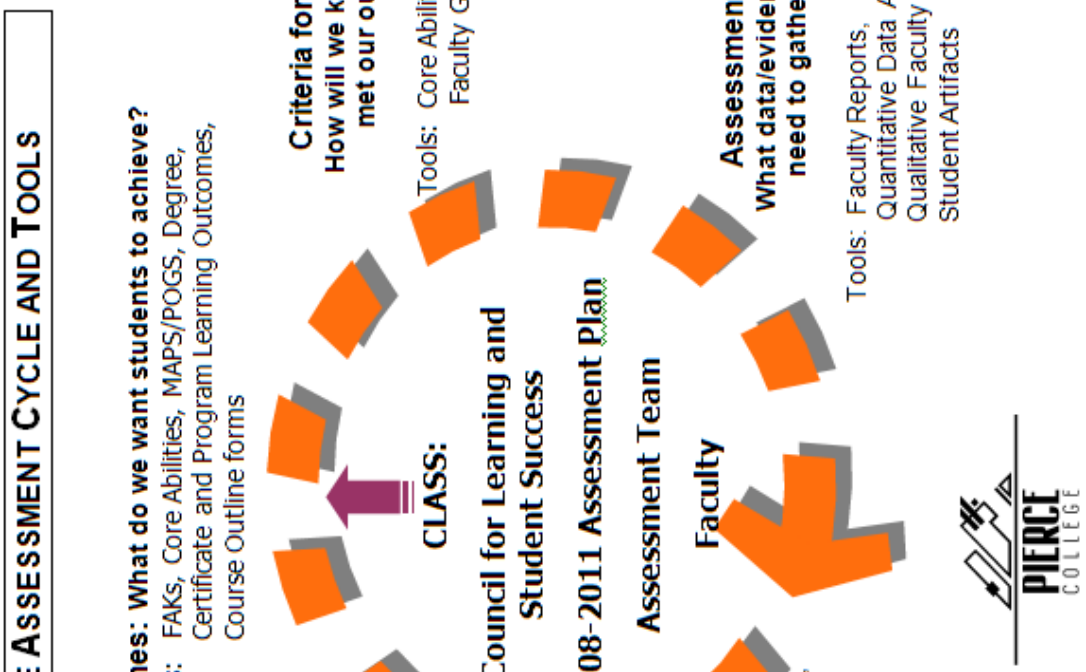
Defined Role for CLASS and the Assessment Team CLASS formally added assessment of student learning to their charge and affirmed that the Assessment Team reports to CLASS. Job descriptions and a formal application and selection process for Assessment Team members further clarified roles and responsibilities with assessment (Appendix 1.2).

Comprehensive Assessment Plan In March 2008, CLASS approved a comprehensive assessment plan. The Assessment Team then led the faculty in activities in Spring 2008 designing the processes and tools necessary to fulfill the plan. This included assessment of the General Education outcomes of the Transfer Degree, and assessment of the Core Abilities in Transfer, Basic Skills, and Professional/Technical programs. The plan included a process to "roll-up" student learning from the course to the program and degree levels.

These assessments were piloted in 2008-2009 by 25% of the faculty across the district who assessed student learning in select Degrees, Certificates, and in the General Education distribution areas. As a result of the pilot assessments, faculty discussions, and a faculty survey, CLASS implemented a revised assessment plan in February, 2009 (Appendix 1.9). The *2008-2011 Assessment Plan* included annual formal assessment of FAKs and Core Abilities in one-third of courses taught by faculty, a collection of artifacts (student work), analysis by both the individual faculty member submitting the student work and an interdisciplinary faculty group, and a process for reviewing the results to improve teaching and learning. With this plan and assessment at the degree and program levels in place, faculty met the standard of systematically completing the assessment cycle. As gaps in the student journey are identified, the teaching and assessment will be adapted to address them.

The revised *2008-2011 Assessment Plan* and most of these tools were in place in time for the April 2009 focused visit, but the plan was only partially implemented and the tools not fully utilized. Not all faculty had had the opportunity to significantly engage with the data and evidence about student performance, discuss needed recommendations, or implement change. Now, after two rotations of the assessment cycle, we can fully demonstrate a cohesive, systematic process that generates clear evidence which supports the improvement of teaching and learning. The aforementioned set of tools supports each component of the assessment cycle as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Assessment Cycle and Assessment Tools



2. Generating Evidence that Supports the Improvement of Teaching and Learning by Fully Implementing the Assessment Plan

With a strong assessment plan in place, the Assessment Team focused on training faculty to implement the new Assessment Plan, outlining the process of reporting results of the student assessment of FAKs and Core Abilities, and refining assessments. At the 2009 Summer Institute and the Fall 2009 faculty in-service, the Assessment Team led workshops and activities on designing course-level assessments that align with a Degree, Certificate, or Program outcome (Exhibit 1.3). Faculty had the opportunity to learn from each other, discuss what they were and were not seeing in student work, and to brainstorm options for change. They also discussed how to complete the forms for reporting student responses and how to submit the samples of student assessments.

Faculty self selected which third of their courses they would contribute to the Assessment Team during the 2009-2010 academic year. Most faculty evaluated student artifacts from those courses based on a rubric that placed student achievement in one of four categories: emerging, developing, competent, and strong. Some faculty opted to use their own rubric but included rationale for determining the level of success for their students. Names were removed from student assignments and photocopies of the actual documents were submitted to the Assessment Team members along with the rubric data indicating how the entire class performed. This provided us with a substantial body of evidence with which to evaluate student progress with FAKs and the Core Abilities. The Assessment Team analyzed the data and the student artifacts for trends and insights, and summarized their findings in a draft assessment summary report.

In February and March 2010, the Assessment Team led four workshops to discuss the results of the 2008-2009 assessments (Appendix 1.10). Faculty participants broke into small groups to examine the draft assessment report and student work samples. A list of questions developed by the Assessment Team guided their discussions (Appendix 1.10). Faculty evaluated student artifacts from outside of their discipline using the rubrics. This helped us to use the rubrics and grading criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of our assessment strategies. Faculty participation in the assessment process was strong but not complete. The Assessment Team is adding department discussions to their list of activities for this year to add to the level of engagement and participation by all faculty. The distribution of assessments will assist the Assessment Team in determining areas where evidence needs to be strengthened.

Overall, there was consensus that the "strong" student work samples were indicative of the type of work we would want to see from Pierce College graduates. It was also fairly easy to see the types of skill deficits that were reported in the "emerging" category. What was more difficult to discern was the difference between the "developing" and "competent" students. It was not clear whether this was because faculty evaluators may have been unfamiliar with the content of the discipline, the assessments were not designed to allow for enough gradation, or whether faculty reports of their class' assessment did not articulate the distinction clearly enough. Faculty questioned whether three rubric levels would be better than four. The participants also noted that in a few instances it was hard to detect a clear connection between the student assignment and

the degree outcome. They determined that some further discussion about the outcomes and what constitutes clear evidence of achievement might be useful.

In addition to the observations about the assessment process, rubrics, student assignments, and student performance, we learned where there were communication gaps and what information faculty still needed in order to fully engage the *Assessment Plan*. For example, faculty suggested edits to the forms and the rubrics, recommended changes to the discussion questions used in the small groups, requested web-capable forms, and recommended additional instructions about what to turn in and when. We also learned how reports needed to be formatted in the future, what timelines were necessary to accomplish each step, and how to tabulate assessment results so the evidence was most useful for faculty. The Assessment Team plans to involve departments/distribution area faculty in the revision of forms and process.

Completing the Assessment Cycle –Making Changes Based on Evidence

A comprehensive report of the 2008-2009 assessment data – the *Institutional Learning Assessment Portfolio* – and the faculty response from the workshops analyzing student work was submitted to CLASS in June 2010 (Appendix 1.11). In the report, each one of the General Education outcomes was addressed individually, tabulating the number of students assessed and graphing the relative strength of student accomplishment in each area. Most significantly, the report outlined ten areas for further action that would result in changes in teaching/learning. CLASS accepted the report and developed subcommittees to address each action area. Committee chairs were appointed and timelines for reporting back to CLASS were established (Appendix 1.12).

Faculty continued to assess degree and program outcomes for one-third of their courses in 2009-2010 and contribute the data and student assignments to the Assessment Team. The results were compiled into a draft report and the faculty analyzed the work in small groups at the September 20, 2010, in-service (Exhibit 1.4). The normal assessment cycle would mean holding this faculty discussion in Winter 2011 after a full calendar year of data was collected. The timing of the October, 2010 focused visit inspired us to advance the timeline and draft the preliminary report to firmly demonstrate our commitment to closing the loop and faculty engagement with the assessment process. The draft report will be completed after the Fall quarter 2010 data is incorporated and faculty will hold their regular Winter and Spring quarter meetings to analyze the data, discuss observations, and recommend actions (Exhibit 1.5).

Further Learning

In addition to the faculty analysis sessions, the institutional portfolio, and the action items identified by the faculty, we have taken other opportunities to engage with the assessment process and make change based on evidence. Two of the best examples of our commitment to closing the loop are the annual Summer Institute and the ECE Math project.

The Summer Institute For more than ten years, Pierce College faculty have participated in the Summer Institute to focus on a teaching/learning/assessment topic.

In 2010, the Summer Institute centered on how different departments completed the various steps of the assessment process, accompanied by rich discussion about further refining classroom assessments to match the General Education and Degree/Certificate/Program outcomes (Exhibit 1.6). Participants brought sample assignments, rubrics, and assessment reports that they wanted to improve. Discussions and suggestions emerged from the group including the following:

- Aligning assignments with assessments - suggestions about modifying assignments to match outcome expectations, choosing an existing assignment in which an outcome is clearly demonstrated, or creating a new assignment that engaged the content, yet aligned with a specific outcome.
- Incorporating scaffolding as an instructional strategy – putting tools and support systems in place for students as they are introduced to concepts and then gradually removing them as they progress with the topic, including how to use it as a prelude to outcomes assessment.
- Using rubrics to break down outcome expectations into discreet, achievable skills units.
- A faculty group fully engaged the question of gradation from the *2008-2009 Institutional Learning Assessment Portfolio* and emerged with a recommendation that three rubric levels would suffice for our assessment work.

ECE Math Project Pierce College offers an associate degree program in Early Childhood Education (ECE), which prepares individuals to teach young children in a variety of professional settings. To transfer to a four-year college or university, students may choose to complete an A.A. (Associate of Arts) with electives in ECE, or complete both the ECE and A.A. degrees. An I-BEST program is offered in a two-quarter day or night cohort that provides a customized pathway for Levels 5 & 6 English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and Levels 3-6 Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED students to successfully complete the Certificate in Early Childhood Education. The training is part of a longer pathway with all credits leading to completion of an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education.

Program review and advisory committee input indicated the need to increase math proficiency for students pursuing the ECE degree; an identified major barrier for our students' success and degree completion. As a result, a new developmental math model was proposed in February, 2010 that calls for new learning outcomes to integrate ECE with developmental and college-level math (Exhibit 1.7). For students pursuing college-level math, this proposed model will substantially reduce the need for developmental courses. College-level math credit will allow students to move forward in either the Professional/Technical pathway or the Transfer pathway. The proposed model will limit the number of math outcomes to 10; a dramatic reduction from the potentially 25 developmental education credits in the current math model.

The ECE and Math faculty analyzed data revealing that the majority of students who take developmental math courses will have to repeat those courses at least once, thus requiring one year or longer for students to complete a college-level math course. With the new model, students who test into Math 54 and complete the developmental math

sequence will only need a minimum of three quarters to finish their quantitative skill requirements through Math 171.

The new model has two focal points. First, a new three-quarter math model has been created that will integrate learning outcomes from ECE courses and Math, 54, 60, 95/98 and 171. This model utilizes many features from I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education Skills Training). Some of these features include: small cohort, supportive instruction, overlapping instruction, and integrated math in other content areas. This program will not only allow students to complete the ECE degree and be eligible for employment as teachers in various early learning programs, but it also opens the possibility for students to enter a university teacher preparation program or work as paraeducators when they complete the degree with Math 171.

Second, the contextual math components in the current ECE I-BEST program will be strengthened to align with the new developmental math model. This will allow students who complete Basic Skills I-BEST and enter developmental Math 54 to continue to the next tier of integrated learning, with a distinctive focus on math. Faculty will proactively advise students leaving the Basic Skills I-BEST cohort to take their COMPASS test immediately, with the goal that they will be prepared to enter the new I-BEST developmental math model.

3. Developing, Publishing, and Assessing Related Instruction Outcomes

Related instruction at Pierce College is taught and assessed through individual courses that are a part of the requirements for Degrees and Certificates, and the majority is offered and assessed within General Education courses (Appendix 1.13 and http://www.pierce.ctc.edu/dist/proftech/requirements). This is an atypical model, as most other colleges integrate the related instruction into content courses. Because of our independent-course model, the related instruction outcomes are all included in the General Education assessment process and reported in the *Institutional Learning Assessment Portfolio.*

The department POGS provide a good illustration of this principle. The white inner ring of the POG details which courses are the domain and responsibility of the department. The gray outer ring of the POG specifies which courses are required for a particular degree, but are taught by faculty outside of the department. This outer ring of the POG represents the related instruction (Appendix 1.13).

Summary

The District is proud of our four-tier comprehensive assessment program to evaluate student learning at the course, program/certificate, degree, and institutional levels. Through the actions described above, we have demonstrated how Pierce College integrated the existing assessment tools into a systematic process, generated clear evidence we are improving teaching/learning, implemented the assessment plan, and published and assessed related instruction outcomes. With the *Assessment Plan* in place and the assessment cycle fully embedded in our processes and timelines, we come into full compliance with the required NWCCU standard. We believe this approach, combined

with our overall focus on Institutional Effectiveness, will continue to demonstrate Pierce's high quality instruction and the excellent work of our students.

Challenges and Next Steps

- Maintaining our positive momentum
- Continuing to support the Assessment Team
- Adding department assessment meetings to add to faculty engagement and participation
- Educating part-time faculty about the Assessment Plan
- Fully utilizing the results of assessments to enact change in times of significant budget cuts
- Increasing Professional/Technical faculty assessments to include both program and Core Ability outcomes
- Engaging faculty in analysis of Core Ability distinctions and FAK and Core Ability distinctions (Information Competency and Critical Thinking; Effective Communication and the FAK outcome for Communications).

Appendices

- Appendix 1.1 – CLASS – Council for Learning and Student Success Membership
- Appendix 1.2 – District Assessment Team Membership and Job Description
- Appendix 1.3 – Fundamental Areas of Knowledge (FAKs)
- Appendix 1.4 – Core Abilities
- Appendix 1.5 – Core Ability Rubrics
- Appendix 1.6 – A.A./A.S. Transfer and DTA Degree Outcomes
- Appendix 1.7 – Map and Program Outcome Guide (POG) - Examples
- Appendix 1.8 – Course Outline Form - Examples
- Appendix 1.9 – *2008-2011 Assessment Plan*
- Appendix 1.10 – Assessment Workshop Materials – Engaging the Data and Evidence
- Appendix 1.11 – *Institutional Learning Assessment Portfolio 2008-2009*
- Appendix 1.12 – CLASS Action Plan, June 2010
- Appendix 1.13 – Related Instruction Requirements and Program Map Illustrating Professional/Technical Program Curriculum with Related Instruction

Exhibits

- Exhibit 1.1 – Course Outline Revision Matrix
- Exhibit 1.2 – Crosswalk of Program and Degree Outcomes
- Exhibit 1.3 – Summer/Fall 2009 Assessment Team Materials and Handouts
- Exhibit 1.4 – September 20 In-service Materials
- Exhibit 1.5 – *Institutional Learning Assessment Portfolio 2009-2010 DRAFT*
- Exhibit 1.6 – 2009 and 2010 Summer Institute Handouts and Activities

- Exhibit 1.7 – ECE Math Project

Figures

- Figure 1.1 Assessment Cycle and Tools

Recommendation Two

It is recommended that the college identify, consistently publish and assess outcomes for all degrees (Eligibility Requirement 12, Standard 2.B.2).

Background and Overview

The District offers seven Associates degrees, twenty-six Professional/Technical Degrees, and numerous Certificates (Appendix 2.1). Outcomes for each of these Degrees and Certificates are available for students in the print *Pierce College Catalog* and the web-based *e-Catalog* (Appendix 2.2 and 2.3 and Exhibits 2.1 and 2.2). At the time of the 2009 NWCCU focused visit, the 2007 catalog was in use but was published before the outcomes were developed. The website version of the catalog is deemed the official version, but was under redesign with an awkward placement of the outcomes. The new 2010 catalog clearly displays degree outcomes and also refers students to a completely revised website that will be updated as changes are made by CLASS.

Degree and Certificate outcomes describe what we want our students to be able to do after completing all required courses and integrate this learning into individual courses. All outcomes were updated during the 2005 departmental self study process in conjunction with developing curriculum Maps, a visual representation of a student's journey through a program from a curricular perspective. The Map assists the faculty in refining course sequencing and assessment. The companion to the Map is the Program Outcome Guide (POG) that details the program entry requirements, outcomes, curricular concepts and themes, and assessments (Appendix 1.7). These documents assure that courses align with the intended program, Core Ability, and FAK outcomes, and assist us in making critical decisions about how and where assessment occurs. The Map and POG are based on the work of Ruth Stiehl (Exhibit 2.3) who served as a consultant to our process. Pierce College has adopted several of Stiehl's philosophies, including the concept that outcomes are "out there," or beyond what might be visible in the classroom, and that it is our job as educators to provide students with the experiences that will add up to the fulfillment of those outcomes on the job or in the baccalaureate classroom. Outcomes were developed in consultation with former students and program advisory boards.

Although faculty had been working with learning outcomes and assessment for some time, the Stiehl model facilitated group discussion and collaboration of these concepts in relation to student learning and achievement as opposed to courses. The model has enabled the district to use a common vocabulary related to outcomes assessment that makes the sharing of ideas and observations about assessment more productive.

Identifying and Publishing Degree, Certificate, and Program Outcomes

The following sections describe how Pierce College defines, publishes and assesses Degree outcomes, Professional/Technical Certificate outcomes, Basic Skills Program outcomes, and individual course outcomes.

Degree Outcomes

General Education Transfer Program Outcomes Fundamental Areas of Knowledge (FAKs) and Core Abilities describe Pierce's General Education experience for students. The FAKs demonstrate transferrable learning outcomes in the distribution areas; the concepts and the themes that serve as a thread within the distribution and distinguish one distribution area from another. Core Abilities describe the interdisciplinary skills and values the faculty have integrated into the curriculum. Each of the seven AA degrees incorporates these outcomes which are available for students on the Pierce College website under the Academics tab (http://www.pierce.ctc.edu/dist/degree/aa) and in the print catalog (Exhibits 2.1 and 2.4).

As detailed in Recommendation One of this report, the faculty has engaged in a thorough discussion of General Education resulting in the following:

- A revised definition of General Education that clarified their original intent
- General Education Outcomes (Fundamental Areas of Knowledge and Core Abilities)
- An assessment plan for General Education at the course, program, and institutional levels
- An assessment plan timeline that addresses implementation
- A structure for the Assessment Team and Curriculum Committees that aligns with the assessment plan
- A revised Course Outline Form that formalizes and documents outcomes and assessment within course

Since the Core Abilities have been adopted by the faculty as important aspects of a Pierce education, the Core Abilities outcomes are also incorporated into Professional/Technical and Basic Skills courses. Publication and assessment of the abilities for these programs are detailed in the sections of this report that focus on those areas.

A comprehensive assessment plan as described in Recommendation One of this report (Appendix 1.9) details the process faculty use to assess General Education learning outcomes. Departmental faculty also examine student work for each of these learning outcomes for evidence of achievement in the individual disciplines. These collegial discussions assist faculty in refining curriculum and uncovering the nuances of student learning in courses and in determining potential changes they can make to positively influence learning. The evidence of student learning, outcomes data, and themes that emerge from departmental faculty analysis are forwarded on to the Assessment Team. The team compiles the data from the department processes and drafts an analysis. This provides a holistic picture of student achievement at Pierce College, and from the patterns and trends across the distribution areas we can identify practices, policies, or

actions that will increase student learning and success. What can we uncover about student learning that will lead us to continue practices or to change practices?

Core Ability and FAK data is also included in the annual *Institutional Effectiveness Report* (Exhibit 2.5). The report includes faculty self analysis of what they most often taught and assessed, and student self perception of where they have made progress. For example, in the most recent report more than 75% of student respondents agreed they made progress in 8 of the 10 Core Ability learning outcome elements (2 elements for each ability). Critical, Creative, and Reflective Thinking was reported by faculty as the ability most often taught assessed, and students self reported they made the most progress with this ability.

Transfer Degree Outcomes In addition to the transfer degree outcomes of FAKs and Core Abilities, several of the specialized Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) associates degrees also include outcomes focused on the discipline (Appendix 1.6).

Professional Technical Degree and Certificate Outcomes

Degree and certificate outcomes for Professional/Technical programs were revised in 2005 when Maps and POGS were created; nearly all programs were operating with outcomes prior to this work. Outcomes are published on each program's website and the link to that site is published in the print catalog in the section detailing the Degree/Certificate requirements (http://www.pierce.ctc.edu/proftech/programs.php and Appendix 2.3 and Exhibit 2.2). These websites contain other program resources such as job information, points of contact, enrollment and advising information, and curriculum sheets that are updated annually and list program outcomes (Exhibit 2.6). Advisory committee members work with faculty to ensure course and program outcomes are current and relevant to what students will be asked to know and do in the workplace. Advisory committee members have also recommended sequencing of skill standards in program pathways.

Assessment of Professional/Technical Degree and Certificate outcomes begins at the course level; all outcomes are mapped to courses to ensure alignment and student achievement. Each group of program faculty has identified or is identifying a degree/certificate assessment method that is unique to the program and reflects the distinctive nature of the field of study. These certificate and degree level assessments include a work-based learning experience where skills are applied and assessed by the student, faculty member, and internship provider. Several programs (i.e. Early Childhood Education, Digital Design, and Business Management) also include a culminating project experience such as a portfolio or career presentation to close the loop on assessment and provide data for program analysis (Exhibit 2.7).

The assessment progression is outlined in the POG and Map with many programs containing a specific sequence of skills courses which must be taught and assessed prior to students progressing to the next level of courses. This is particularly true in the allied health cohort group programs of nursing, dental hygiene, certified nursing assistants, and veterinary technology. These programs also mandate certification and licensing exams (i.e., NCLEX for Nursing, American Dental Association Board for Dental Hygiene)

which provide an assessment that is standardized and required prior to students being able to practice in their profession. Pass rates for these exams are tracked as part of the program accreditation process and Pierce students consistently meet and exceed standards (Exhibit 2.8).

Other Professional/Technical programs also connect students with certification assessments including the following:

- Industry certifications in Computer Information Systems and Business Technology (BTECH) programs
- The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services administered Interpreter certification process
- Fire Command national certifications
- Occupational Safety and Health standard requirements

The assessment plan for Professional/Technical faculty calls for them to meet annually to assess student achievement at the degree and certificate levels (Appendix 2.4). Facilitated by the Assessment Team, each program revises the mapping of Degree and Certificate outcomes to courses, and affirms the mapping and an assessment cycle timeline with their advisory committee. Program faculty then review student work and evidence of achievement of the outcomes. In that review, they identify outcomes where student achievement is strong to elicit why and how that accomplishment is evident to them, and what in the pedagogy contributed to that success. They also identify outcomes where student performance is weaker than desired, and commit to changes in pedagogy, course sequencing, etc. that will increase student success. A summary report documents this process and the plan for action/change (Exhibit 2.9).

During 2007-08, a Prior Learning Assessment Policy and processes were approved by CLASS. This provides faculty and students a vehicle to assess and align industry skills with course and program content (Exhibit 2.10). We are currently providing prior learning assessment in the Fire Command program, and the Homeland Security program has moved to a modularized format for computer applications skills so students can be assessed and placed at the appropriate skill levels. There is additional work to do in this area, but getting the policy and process in place was a large step forward.

Basic Skills Program Outcomes

Although Basic Skills is a non-credit program, it is designed to teach and reinforce skills that students need in order to be successful in college. With this in mind, the Transitional Education faculty elected to incorporate the college Core Abilities into every Basic Skills course outline and to use them as one measure for formal assessment (Appendix 2.5). The Core Abilities are assessed based on the applicability to real-life context in particular skill areas (i.e., writing, reading, oral communication and math), and one-third of course assessments are contributed to the Assessment Team in the same manner as other faculty.

The content outcomes in course outlines are developed using the *Washington State Adult Learning Standards*. Faculty assess these outcomes each quarter through the use of classroom assignments, portfolios and standardized CASAS testing. District-wide,

student progress toward the Learning Standards and the Core Abilities is documented and tracked using the college's Student Tracking Database (STS). Additionally, student CASAS testing gains are recorded using SBCTC's WABERS system. All program outcomes are published in the print catalog and the website describing each of the Basic Skills programs - Adult Basic Education/GED, English as a Second Language and IBEST. CASAS testing is used as a key indicator to determine student level advancement and program completion. Although the testing results are useful, they are only used to measure student gains in reading, listening and math. Additionally, faculty examine how much each student has progressed toward the Learning Standards in their current level and utilize additional classroom assessments (exams, portfolios, etc.) to determine whether or not the student is ready to advance to the next level (Exhibit 2.11).

The Transitional Education faculty meet annually to assess student achievement for each program (Exhibit 2.12). Facilitated by the Assessment Team, faculty review student work to identify outcomes where student achievement is strong to elicit why and how that accomplishment is evident to them and what in the pedagogy contributed to that success. They also identify outcomes where student performance is weaker than desired and commit to changes in pedagogy, course sequencing, etc. that will increase student success. A summary report documents this process and the plan for action/change.

Course Outcomes

Learning outcomes for all courses were developed in the late 1990's and revisited between 2002 and 2005, and again in 2009-2010. Course-level learning outcomes guide the teaching and assessment. Each course outline details learning outcomes (including Core Abilities), and are developed by program/department faculty and approved by an interdisciplinary committee of faculty members. Course outlines also include methods of assessment that faculty use to demonstrate student achievement.

Pierce College uses software developed and hosted by Walla Walla Community College as the driver for our *e-Catalog* (http://134.39.200.118/cat/program_listing.cfm?CC=110, Appendix 2.6, and Exhibit 2.13). The *e-Catalog* facilitates student access to program information, requirements, and course descriptions but is still a "work in progress." We began uploading course learning outcomes to the e-catalog in 2009 but soon realized that the software was not sufficiently robust. The District is now working to develop our own course management system that will replace the Walla Walla Community College-based system and tailored to our needs. We expect this to be completed this academic year at which time the course outcomes will be available for all to view.

Summary

Using the tools and processes described in the preceding paragraphs, we have demonstrated how we have met the requirements of the recommendation by identifying outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and programs, publishing the outcomes in a manner that facilitates student access, and regularly assessing student achievement of the outcomes. We are confident that these processes will assist students in understanding their educational path and assist faculty in understanding student achievement along that path. We look forward to continuing our discussions and advancing our own knowledge as educators as well as the learning and achievement of our students.

Next Steps/Challenges

- Including more part-time faculty in the departmental assessment discussions
- Designing assessment of related instruction so that Professional/Technical faculty can more effectively isolate student achievement for their programs
- Obtaining approval of assessment cycles from all Professional/Technical Advisory Committees
- Analyzing the design of the web catalog to achieve even greater student understanding and access to information
- Discussing the role of the POGS in transfer departments

Appendices

- Appendix 2.1 – Pierce College Degrees and Certificates
- Appendix 2.2 – Pierce College A.A/A.S Degree Outcomes and Requirements Published in the e-Catalog and Print Catalog
- Appendix 2.3 – Professional/Technical Degree and Certificate Outcomes – Examples from e-Catalog and Print Catalog
- Appendix 2.4 – Professional/Technical Assessment Process
- Appendix 2.5 – Basic Skills Course Outline – Examples
- Appendix 2.6 – e-Catalog Contents - Examples

Exhibits

- Exhibit 2.1 – *Pierce College Catalog, 2010*
- Exhibit 2.2 – Pierce College Degree and Certificate Outcomes from Print Catalog and e-Catalog
- Exhibit 2.3 – Ruth Stiehl Publications List
- Exhibit 2.4 – General Education –Print Catalog and e-Catalog
- Exhibit 2.5 – *2008-2009 Institutional Effectiveness Report*
- Exhibit 2.6 – Professional/Technical Curriculum Sheets
- Exhibit 2.7 – Professional Technical Program Projects - Examples
- Exhibit 2.8 – Professional Technical Program Examination Pass Rates
- Exhibit 2.9 – Professional/Technical Faculty Assessment Summary Report 2009-2010
- Exhibit 2.10 – Prior Learning Assessment Policy
- Exhibit 2.11 – Transitional Education Learning Standards Analysis
- Exhibit 2.12 – Transitional Education Faculty Assessment Summary Report
- Exhibit 2.13 – e-Catalog Printout