

Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report Evaluator Response

Bates Technical College

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Evaluators

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Introduction

Bates Technical College (BTC), a community college located in Tacoma, Washington, was founded in 1940. The college has three campuses and annually serves 3,000 career training students and 10,000 more community members. Bates Technical College's accreditation was last reaffirmed in 2013 after evaluation of its 2013 Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report. The college is now in the middle of its next seven-year accreditation cycle. This report includes a formative evaluation of their Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report during a visit to the college on October 24-25, 2016.

The evaluator team would like to thank the college for its generous hospitality and for working to clarify questions about the report and its supporting materials during the time leading up to the campus visit and during the visit itself. The college was very open to frank discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of various processes and is clearly committed to making the changes needed to create a more successful system going forward. The assistance that the college provided was greatly appreciated.

Mid-Cycle Evaluation Format

As directed by NWCCU, the intent of this report is to evaluate the processes that Bates Technical College is using as it continues to assess its core themes in support of verifying mission fulfillment as well as assessing student learning. The evaluation team has chosen to address each part of this evaluation report using the same format as used in the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report.

Part I: Overview of Institutional Assessment Plan

Part I of the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report is intended to be guided by standards 1 and 3-5. In describing the institution's plan for aligning the mission with mission fulfillment and sustainability, the report should answer the following questions:

1. Describe/explain your process of assessing mission fulfillment. Who is involved in assessment? Is the Board of Trustees involved?
2. Are your core themes and objectives still valid?
3. Is the institution satisfied that the core themes and indicators selected are providing sufficient evidence to assess mission fulfillment and sustainability? If not, what changes are you contemplating?

The evaluators were unable to identify the answers to the aforementioned questions, which caused a great deal of confusion for the evaluators in determining what elements of planning had been accomplished. The institutions progress in relation to mission fulfillment and sustainability is at an initial stage, with a great deal of work still to be done.

Bates Technical College has established multi-faceted layers for planning, which includes the institutional mission, vision statement, values, strategic priority areas, core themes, and strategic directions. Bates has identified four core themes: (1) Workforce Education, (2) Student Centered, (3) General Education, and (3) Community Relationships. The four strategic priority areas are (1) Grow New Clienteles & Programs, (2) Increase Student Achievement, (3) Enhance Efficiency & Expand Capacity, and

(4) Expand Delivery Options. Both the strategic directions and the core themes have distinct goals, objectives and indicators; however, the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report neglected to identify for the evaluators the objectives and indicators specifically related to the Core Themes (Standard 1.B.2). Much of the report was a historical view, focused on the review process the institution used to update the mission and core themes rather than a future view of how the institution will use the completed work to assess, on an ongoing basis, their achievement of mission fulfillment beyond an acceptable threshold (Standard 1.A.2, 3.A.3).

The adoption of two similar, yet competing processes, with the Core Themes and Strategic Directions, may prove to distract and complicate measurement of mission fulfillment. While there is a cross-walk connecting the Core Themes to the Strategic Plan, it is not a one-to-one connection, which complicates the institution's ability to assess achievement of the individual Core Themes as well as the goals and objectives that make up each core theme.

Additionally, direct measurements and targets specific to the Core Theme objectives and indicators was not identified in the report (Standard 1.B.2). The institution appeared to be in the process of identifying and adopting the measurements and targets, which will inform achievement of mission fulfillment. It is suggested the institution simplify its planning framework by aggregating similar components in order to create a clear vision of what they are measuring and why. It is also suggested the institution make establishment of targets a high priority in order to adequately inform the improvement process related to the Year Seven report.

Overall, the institution has not articulated how it will quantify mission fulfillment (Standards 1.A.2; 3.A.3). The evaluation team found evidence that conversations have taken place in the past related to assessment of mission fulfillment; however, this area seems to have taken a back-seat to assessment of the strategic plan and has been forgotten (Standards 3.B.1, 3.B.2). While it has identified an extensive amount of data, it has not yet put meaning behind the data in order to inform mission fulfillment (Standard 3.B.3). BTC is encouraged to establish this threshold and metric for mission fulfillment as quickly as possible, leaving ample time to collect and analyze relevant data prior to the Year Seven Comprehensive Self-Study.

Part II: Operational Examples

Part II of the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report involves providing two representative examples of how the college has operationalized its mission and core themes, progressing from objectives, to indicators, to outcomes, to mission fulfillment, and comes from the core theme(s) focused on student learning.

The college did provide two academic program examples for this report. Looking at Example 1, they used their Administrative Medical Assistant Program. They listed two core themes that applied to the student learning in this program – Student Centered and Community Relationships. Each core theme had two related objectives listed with 2-4 indicators used to measure achievement of the objective. The objectives and indicators did not match any of the objectives or indicators used in the strategic plan. At one of the meetings with staff, a separate report was produced on Core Themes that had not been presented before and was not mentioned in the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report. This document did include the two objectives used under the Student-Centered Core Theme in the Mid-Cycle Self-

Evaluation Report, but these objectives were under the Workforce Education Core Theme in this document. The indicators, however, did not completely match the ones in this document.

For the Community Relationships Core Theme, the first objective had been modified from the Core Theme document. The second objective and corresponding indicators could not be found in any of the documents. In addition, the indicators did not have any thresholds listed or measurements given as to how well the college has done in those areas. There was no way to determine how the Administrative Medical Assistant Program has contributed to mission fulfillment and there was no data to indicate how or if they are “closing the loop” on student learning assessment.

Regarding the three questions asked about each example, the college did include answers to these questions. They indicated that the indicators are meaningful, but there is no evidence to support that statement since there was very little data included. It is unclear how the indicators measure success of the objectives, which do not match the Core Theme objectives that should be used to measure mission fulfillment.

It was not explained how the data has been used to date and if it is what they were looking for. They also did not explain what they had learned so far or what changes are contemplated.

For the third question (how are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?), they did not explain how the data is being collected, analyzed and utilized, only that it was done. They did list ways that the program worked to develop partnerships and create certificates, but did not really explain how the findings of the indicator data was communicated to constituents.

Example 2 focused on their Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technology program. The two objectives under the Workforce Education Core Theme are the same as in Example 1. The indicators are different for this example even though the objectives are the same. It became clear that the indicators are specific to the program, and they should all be the same under each Core Theme in order to evaluate the institution as a whole. In this example, they did provide some data, but again there were no thresholds to indicate whether the data was producing positive or negative results.

The second core theme mentioned was again Student Centered. One of the objectives listed was on the Core Themes document and one had been modified. Each objective had one indicator that referred to a student satisfaction survey, but the data was not quantitative and again had no thresholds listed. Because the Core Theme document was not included in Part I of the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report, it was not possible to know if the modifications to objectives were at an institutional level or program level.

Looking at the three questions again, they listed different kinds of data being collected and analyzed from what the indicators listed. Again, the indicators were specific to the program, not common college-wide indicators that fit under a specific Core Theme. Responses to the questions were similar to those given in the first example, but specific to the second example program.

The college’s institutional assessment plan focuses on their strategic plan goals and objectives, which are separate from the core themes. It does not deal with student learning outcomes. They have produced a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan as a draft. It does lay out a process for collecting student learning outcomes assessment data at the course, program, and general education or

institution level, but it has not been implemented. The Assessment Committee was not very familiar with the plan and unsure how it would be implemented this year. The plan lays out a three-year process for fully implementing the student learning outcomes process. This will leave very little time before the Year 7 report and visit to collect enough data to show “closing of the loop” on student learning.

Part III: Moving Forward

Bates Technical College indicated they need to focus on data collection and analysis. They currently have two parallel planning processes with core themes and the college strategic plan. They can streamline their efforts by combining the processes into one that focuses on core themes.

In order to be prepared for the year 7 report, the college should focus on the following:

- Develop specific objectives and indicators under each core theme,
- Develop specific thresholds for each indicator that indicate success of each objective,
- Develop a quantifiable formula for mission fulfillment that will measure it annually, to allow adjustment to indicators as needed,
- Develop and publish program level student learning outcomes for all programs and map them to the course and institution level student learning outcomes,
- Fully implement the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report as soon as feasible to allow collection of data and related changes to courses/programs based on results over next few years.

Conclusion

After reviewing Bates Technical College’s Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report and visiting the campus, the evaluation team clearly understands that the administration and faculty care deeply about the college and their students and have a strong passion to improve student success. After reviewing all the work done on the strategic plan to measure the success of their goals and objectives, along with the development of a student learning outcomes assessment report which should provide good student learning data once implemented, the evaluation team is also confident that the college can complete the work outlined by the NWCCU to provide evidence of mission fulfillment and sustainability in its Year 7 Self-Evaluation Report, once it addresses the issues outlined above.