

## **Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College Self Study Report: Executive Summary**

Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College is an institution of higher education, created by the West Virginia Legislature in 1999, to serve as an innovative model for the efficient delivery of high quality community and technical college programs in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia. This self study process provided the opportunity for organizational introspection and analysis under the lens of the HLC twelve Eligibility Requirements, and the five Criteria and Core Components. As evidenced by the documentation presented in the Self Study Report, Eastern is establishing its presence within its responsibility district. The self-study demonstrates that Eastern satisfies the twelve Eligibility Requirements and sufficiently meets the five Criteria and corresponding Core Components to seek initial accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. Most importantly, this self study process establishes that Eastern is capable of advancing its mission with integrity and serving the constituents of the Potomac Highlands. The self-study process brought to light a unique set of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement as well as the institution's level of performance in terms of the five Criteria.

Included below are selected strengths and challenges that were among those identified by the Self Study Task Forces. Complete details of strengths, challenges and recommendations are presented in chapters three through seven of the Self Study Report. To ensure that the self study will aid in Eastern's institutional growth and development, self study recommendations and HLC consultative recommendations will be included in Eastern's planning processes and documents.

## **Criterion One: Mission and Integrity**

Eastern operates with integrity to ensure fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the Board of Governors, administration, faculty, staff and students. Eastern's statements of mission are a fundamental strength of the College. The mission documents are clear thus providing the philosophical framework for all college operations. All decisions are grounded in the Mission while the supporting statements of mission provide the framework for implementation. Eastern has been true to its mission in what it espouses to do and what it delivers; and does so with integrity. In 2006 - 2007 Eastern conducted a comprehensive mission review and revision through a series of facilitated meetings including external and internal constituents. As a result of these meetings, the revised mission documents communicate with succinct clarity the intended purpose, vision, and values enabling those affiliated with the College to uniformly espouse the purpose of the institution.

Eastern meets the five core components of Criterion One. Eastern also recognizes that, as a young institution, the statements of mission and operations will need to bear the test of time to determine if these statements of mission are timeless, universal documents providing continued guidance throughout the College's evolution. We, at Eastern, believe we have a solid foundation on which to build.

### **Strengths Related to Criterion One**

- The College has a Board of Governors approved, and publicly stated mission.
- The Mission is clearly articulated defining the purposes of the College, curriculum to be provided and district to be served.
- The Mission guides institutional planning serving as the foundation of all planning documents and drives the strategic planning and budgeting processes.
- The Mission guides curriculum development and services provided to constituents in the responsibility district.

- The Board of Governors is a dedicated and effective governing body that has established policies and regulations that enable Eastern to actualize its vision strategies, act upon its values and beliefs and fulfill its mission.
- The College planning documents clearly identify goals, implementation strategies and benchmarks, and implementation timelines.
- Internal and external constituents are engaged in the Board's policy-making process.
- The WV Council for Community and Technical College Education provides state-level guidance for College operations.
- The mission documents clearly articulate a commitment to recognize and respect the individuality and dignity of each learner and to provide appropriate and relevant instruction, resources and support services to enhance development of enrolled students.
- The College has widely disseminated mission-based information. The College has increased activities and placed additional emphasis on assuring the district is informed of the purpose of the college and its services. This is now a strategic initiative, Strategic Goal 4.

#### **Challenges Related to Criterion One**

- Eastern has undergone a major administrative change with the appointment of an Interim President and reorganization of the senior administrative team. The reorganization should provide a more cost effective and efficient structure for implementing the college mission. Given the timing of the reorganization, long term impact has not been assessed.
- Eastern lacks a formal process to review and clarify mission documents. Although the College has historically engaged in mission review, it has not established a cyclical process for such review. Special events have served as the catalyst for review. A cyclical process must be identified that fosters open dialog to gather input, and allows the Board to reaffirm and validate the interpretation of the Mission.
- As a developing institution, not all operational policies and regulations have been developed.
- Eastern must address the changing demographics and needs of the region. The problem, essentially, does not lie with mission documents but rather with operationalization of mission in addressing changing nature of the region. Eastern has made definitive strides to address regional needs.

#### **Recommendations to Strengthen Criterion One**

- A cyclical process for review of mission documents will be devised and implemented. With the change in administration and continued focus on accreditation, the timing is appropriate for implementation of such processes. A cyclical process will be identified and implemented that fosters open dialog to gather input, and allows the Board to reaffirm and validate the interpretation of the Mission.

- Governance groups will continue to develop operational policies and regulations to assure effective and efficient operations.
- The College administration is aware of internal constituents' need for continuous, open communication assuring cooperative, collaborative, and effective mission implementation. To this end, the President has established "all college meetings" providing a venue for open discussion of College issues and to expedite distribution of organizational information.
- Eastern must address the changing demographics and needs of the region. The problem, essentially, does not lie with mission documents but rather with operationalization of mission in addressing changing nature of the region. Planning documents will be reviewed and revised annually to identify appropriate mechanisms to address needs generated by changing demographics and regional growth.
- A publication timeline must be developed to assure Mission documents are consistently updated across all college publications. This process will be evaluated for effectiveness upon implementation.

## **Criterion II: Preparing for the Future**

Eastern's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. Eastern is committed to realistic, mission-driven strategic and operational planning, and budgeting. Planning processes are informed by cyclical, relevant data and projections. Planning is a data driven, focused process that effectively prepares the College for immediate operations and long-term goals. Eastern's Compact and strategies will continue to guide resource utilization to support the College's mission and vision. The commitment to shared governance and cross functional teams engages employees across the College in determining specific action plans to achieve institutional goals.

Eastern meets the four Core Components of Criterion Two. However, Eastern also recognizes that planning efforts must maintain flexibility to address the changing needs of its district. Given the state's history of minimal support for higher education, the College must increase efforts to secure to secure external funding to support growth initiatives.

## **Strengths Related to Criterion Two**

- Eastern has committed to using external research and forecasting networks for information on societal trends to shape its strategic planning. Historically, the College has consistently developed and used planning documents since its inception.
- From its inception, Eastern's planning goals aligned with WV State goals for higher education.
- Eastern invites and incorporates input from its constituencies in the development of planning documents.
- By 2004, the WVCCTCE goals and planning processes were identified. Eastern's planning process incorporates the formalized state Compact processes.
- Eastern has effectively designed implementation strategies to work toward WV higher education goals, but with emphasis placed on its district of responsibility.
- Eastern's ability to respond to state mandates and requirements are evidence of the ability of the College to competently plan for and assure future operations.
- Over the life of the College, Eastern has been awarded a significant amount of external funding (Approximately \$1 million in grant awards).
- Programmatically, the College has maintained flexibility to respond to current and future trends by using areas of emphasis in degree programs and by incorporating nontraditional degree programs.
- The College operates through multiple collaborative partnerships to deliver curriculum and services. The College has implemented a cyclical review process coordinated by the Executive Dean for Financial and Operations Services. Partnerships must be reviewed and revised to remain mutually beneficial for partners and to effectively serve the district.
- To date, annual audits have been without findings.
- The College has established a history of meeting its planning goals as defined in the WV State Compact.

## **Challenges Related to Criterion Two**

- The College has experienced a series of changes in the senior administrative team and employed an Interim President in July, 2007. Operational practices are under review.
- West Virginia has undergone significant and major political changes during the life of the College. These changes have significantly affected the state of higher education and in particular community and technical college education. These changes include: establishing a new state community and technical college system; appointing the first chancellor of the state community and technical college system; transitioning to a local governing board; transitioning of HEPC rules and regulations to the WVCCTCE; and establishing a systemwide state compact. As a developing institution, Eastern has been challenged to adjust planning initiatives to address the State changes.

- Eastern is a state supported institution. The level of support for higher education in West Virginia, at best, will continue to be “adequate” for implementation of the mission. However, this does not effectively allow for planned growth. The College will need to increase external revenue streams and increase tuition generating enrollment.
- As a developing institution, the College is challenged to assure optimum operations throughout the organization. The College lacks a cyclical training/development program for Board members, advisory committee members, faculty and staff. Institutional learning is critical for continued forward movement. As the College adds new members to its community, professional development opportunities become essential to assure “institutional learning” and effective use of human resources.
- State performance indicators, standard reports and other summary data are not effectively distributed throughout the institution to assure use for institutional improvement. Feedback loop is insufficient to ensure effective utilization of data.
- Although staff is engaged in the planning processes through their functional areas, planning information does not always effectively flow back to operational units impacting area planning activities.

### **Recommendations to Strengthen Criterion Two**

- Although the College obtains regional trend data on an annual basis, a comprehensive study comparable to the CLARUS Study should be completed to project trends through the next five years.
- As a developing institution, Eastern must take additional measures to assure consistent levels of institutional learning throughout all areas of the College. Development activities and additional training options will be explored.
- The College will undertake efforts to improve communication systems throughout the institution to assure employees have access to current information facilitating attainment of institutional goals.
- Eastern will continue to explore additional sources of external funding including grants and private donations and formalization of the foundation. The Special Assistant to the President now has grant researching and proposal writing responsibilities.
- The College will develop a comprehensive institutional effectiveness plan that assures an effective feedback loop for data utilization.

### **Criterion III: Student Learning and Effective Teaching**

The College provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission. The mission documents clearly define educational programming to be offered within the responsibility district. These seminal

documents have guided all academic planning and program implementation. Priority has been given to career-technical education, developmental education, workforce education, continuing and community education, and baccalaureate transfer. This prioritization is evidence of the College's commitment to prepare students to meet the educational needs of business, industry and service organizations within the service district. The College is committed to student learning, assuring quality of academic programming, and that learning, in fact, does occur. The academic assessment plan was revised according to HLC Visiting team recommendations to assure more immediate benefits of assessment processes. Curriculum development processes are designed to incorporate effective assessment planning and use of assessment data to assure student learning, academic achievement and effective teaching.

### **Strengths Related to Criterion Three**

- Student learning is emphasized as a core value in Eastern's statements of mission.
- Assessment is embedded in the Eastern's statements of mission and operationalized in the Strategic Plan (Goal 6).
- *Continuous Improvement, and Quality Teaching and Lifelong Learning* are two Eastern values which illustrate its commitment to learners, assessment and meeting its mission.
- Curriculum is mission driven and supported through the strategic planning process.
- Learner outcomes have been established for all associate degree and certificate programs making assessment of student learning possible. Identification of skill set outcomes is in process.
- Course syllabi include identification of learning outcomes in addition to course descriptions and expanded course descriptions. The Master Course Record Form is provided to faculty to assure consistency in stated course learning outcomes.
- Eastern has revised its assessment plan to address concerns noted by the HLC Visiting Team. Changes are currently being implemented facilitating curriculum revision.
- Eastern is building the foundation for a culture of assessment: statement of required participation and purpose are provided in the college catalog; an assessment article is now incorporated into the student newsletter; an assessment week has been built into the spring term with an addition of a fall term under exploration; all curriculum proposals must include learning outcomes and assessment processes; and the Learner Outcomes Team (LOT), a cross-functional institutional team has oversight of assessment processes.

- Eastern strives to recruit and retain qualified faculty. Faculty credentials are in keeping with or exceed the minimum educational credentials and professional expertise essential to award degrees at the associate level as defined by the WV Council for Community and Technical College Education, Eastern's Board of Governors, West Virginia Higher Educational Policy Commission, and accrediting agency guidelines.
- Eastern effectively uses partnerships to expand course offerings and access to academic support resources.
- Students may choose from a variety of courses offered in multiple formats (traditional and non-traditional delivery formats).
- Comprehensive transitional studies programming is offered to assist new students not academically prepared for college-level coursework.
- The College is in the initial building phase of its new facility. Target date for occupancy is summer 2008.
- A virtual library provides student and faculty access to extensive instructional resources through two providers.
- A virtual bookstore has improved student access to required textbooks and instructional materials. Eastern shifted to Barnes and Noble in spring 2007 through a partnership with WV Northern Community College. Problems with timely access to required textbooks and student complaints have significantly been reduced as a result of this change in vendors.
- Effective learner support services are in-place and available to students at all Eastern facilities. Learner support services including admission and registration, academic advising, tutoring, counseling, career planning assistance and financial aid counseling. Eastern provides support services for students enrolled in web based courses.
- Eastern maintains a Mobile Computer Training Center (MCTC) to provide anywhere, anytime training opportunities for business and industry.
- Eastern has a comprehensive academic advising system that is reviewed and evaluated annually to assure effective support of student learners.
- Eastern promotes employee and organizational learning through tuition waivers, structured institution-wide training, and staff meetings (Eastern Leadership Team Meetings, departmental meetings). Employees have attended local, state, regional and national conferences.
- The assessment plan incorporates a feedback loop including multiple cross-functional teams in the College. An assessment web link was launched in late fall 2007 semester. This link provides access to all reports, meeting minutes, assessment handbook and assessment resources. Faculty development sessions addressing assessment have been incorporated in to the start of the semester orientation sessions. A virtual faculty lounge was also launched in fall 2007. This virtual tool provides a link to assessment materials and a discussion board to facilitate dialog among faculty.

### **Challenges Related to Criterion Three**

- Access to data is challenging for the academic management team. Accessibility to data can facilitate instructional planning and assessment initiatives. The current administration is exploring alternatives to resolve this problem.
- Additional mentoring and professional development opportunities need to be structured for content and practitioner faculty. Although the College has made significant changes in this area over the last 3 semesters, development resources need to be available in more flexible formats to increase access and participation.
- Limited funds restrict opportunities for comprehensive professional development activities for content and practitioner faculty.
- The access centers are underutilized. Limited course selections have been made available through the centers. The College is placing focused efforts on rectifying this situation through strategic plan Goal 3.
- Virtual library resources are challenging for some students. Not all students are proficient with computer and internet use. The TLTC is exploring alternatives to expand library resources and support services.
- An online student support system for students enrolled in web based courses would enable “just in time” support and improve retention of online students.

### **Recommendations to Strengthen Criterion Three**

- Continue with full implementation of the revised Academic Assessment Plan. Members of the academic management team are actively engaged in steps to fully implement the approved assessment plan.
- Explore and implement automated processes for survey administration and data analysis to expedite availability of results.
- Expand professional development opportunities for content and practitioner faculty. Use expertise of current staff to provide sessions in assessment, professional portfolio development, online instruction and retention. Explore funding sources to sponsor participation in national and regional conferences. Strengthen existing mentoring activities for practitioner faculty.
- Explore expansion of course offerings at access centers and Mobile Computer Training Center (MCTC). Current plans include identification of cohorts for program offerings in various localities in the service district.
- The College will continue to seek external funding sources to supplement state allocations to higher education. Grants, foundations, private donations, and support from business and industry will be explored. The special assistant to the president has been charged with identifying grant options.
- The college has established the Teaching, Learning, Technology Committee (TLTC) to serve as an advisory and recommending body to the Dean for Academics and Student Services regarding “teaching with technology” issues. The TLTC reviews and provides recommendations for all instructional matters related to instruction and technology. The

library services as well as faculty development and online student services are within the scope of this committee.

#### **Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge**

Eastern essentially meets the four core components of Criterion Four. Curriculum development that supports district needs is a particular strength. Eastern has developed a comprehensive system to ensure that timely, relevant education is learner centered, community based and mission driven. Community assessments and planning documents have historically guided the identification of appropriate educational programs. Use of the DACUM processes and industry standards when available assure effective identification of learner outcomes and use of content experts to translate DACUM results into curriculum. Interdisciplinary review assures appropriate balance of general studies and technical training. A comprehensive assessment plan has been defined to assure the quality and integrity of the educational services provided. As a young institution, Eastern has a sound framework and guidelines in place. However, time will test of the model's efficacy. As enrollments increase, more extensive data will be available to assess need for program modifications.

Eastern also recognizes that as a young institution, there is still much work to be done in relation to Criterion Four. However, the College has developed a solid foundation on which to build.

#### **Strengths Related to Criterion Four**

- Board of Governors approved mission documents support a life of learning
- Mission documents have been reviewed and revised with input of internal and external constituents
- WVCCTCE approved Institutional Master Plan supports a life of learning
- Eastern has an approved and well published statement of General Education Goals and an institutional policy on general education

- General education is incorporated into all programs according to parameters of general education policy
- READI assessment has been added to the entry level assessment processes to identify computer literacy and online learning readiness of degree-seeking students. The College has placed emphasis on identifying at-risk students and increasing support services to support their educational endeavors.
- Course level assessment practices have been incorporated into the assessment plan to assure more immediate impact
- Practitioner faculty have been oriented to the assessment process and engage in course assessment activities
- The College has established a Phi Theta Kappa Chapter with growing membership
- Student Government Association has been formed, has an approved constitution and by-laws and is an active college organization
- The College has approved and widely disseminated codes of ethical behavior
- The College maintains a Student Record system that adheres to AACRAO standards

#### **Challenges Related to Criterion Four**

- Budgetary limitations and time restraints affect staff development opportunities
- Assessment has a short history given the age of the institution. The impact on curriculum has been minimal. The implementation of course assessment activities is likely to yield more readily usable results. Efficacy of these processes will be tested over time.
- Co-curricular activities are not fully developed

#### **Recommendations to Strengthen Criterion 4**

- Continue to increase professional development activities for content and practitioner faculty. The professional development plan will be developed based on input from content and practitioner faculty, academic program directors and learner support staff. Incentives for participation will be explored as part of the professional development plan. Additional funds need to be secured to implement comprehensive training programs. However, expertise of existing College professionals can be tapped to expand training and mentoring options beyond faculty orientation.
- Complete the course mapping for the general education curriculum and implement the proposed standardized testing. Determine need for programmatic changes and incorporate into program review process.
- Contract with content faculty to review and revise learning outcomes for all certificate and associate degree programs to assure appropriate inclusion of general education outcomes. This effort is intended to be completed by spring 2008. All newly developed programs will have general education review completed prior to submission to LOT for review and recommendation. A timeline will be developed to assure current programs are in compliance with general education core requirements.

- Devise a common set of program evaluation guidelines for program advisory committees. Guidelines must retain flexibility to address unique program components. Continue active involvement of program advisory committee in curriculum development and review.

### **Criterion Five: Engagement and Service**

Established by legislative mandate, Eastern was enacted to serve as a 21st Century, innovative and relevant, learner-centered community and technical college. By all local and institutional indicators, the College has advanced its mission ardently and effectively, while remaining true to its charter and focus. Evidence presented in Criterion Five demonstrates that Eastern is committed to its responsibility district, engages its constituents and serves them in ways both value. From the perspective of Criterion Five, this Self Study Report demonstrates that the College fulfills Criterion V; has the capacity to continue its service and responsiveness to internal and external constituents; and has the capacity to raise the standards for future engagement.

### **Strengths Related to Criterion Five**

- The College has a local governing board (Board of Governors) with external and internal constituent representation.
- The College historically develops partnerships to expand educational offerings that respond to constituent needs.
- Continuing education and newly developed community education outreach programs described in Chapter VII demonstrate the college's commitment and capacity to serve communities and constituencies.
- The program advisory committee for continuing and community education programs has been reinstated. The advisory committee will provide relevant direction for Workforce Education programs.
- The College makes extensive use of technology to increase access to courses and services.
- The College has added a full-time position to improve coordination of Early Entrance programming and secondary school partnerships.
- The College employs people who are committed to community service activities despite multiple job responsibilities.
- A broad representation of organizations use college facilities.

- The new facility will be adjacent to the Robert C. Byrd Industrial Park and share some facilities and resources with other state and government organizations.

### **Challenges Related to Criterion Five**

- The CLARUS study results provided projections for a five year window. That window has passed. Although, the College has conducted targeted needs assessments, additional comprehensive environmental scanning should be conducted as the district is experiencing growth impacting long range projections.
- The College must assess the utilization problems at the access centers in order to expand programming and serve its constituencies.
- The College must more actively engage advisory committees for all technical or employment related programs. Active Program Advisory Committee participation has been incorporated in the Curriculum Design and Recommendation Regulation.
- The construction of the new facility will help to alleviate facilities utilization problems in the HARCO Complex. Increasing requests for HARCO Center facilities by external constituents impact available classroom resources for course offerings. However, until the facility is built, space utilization for the HARCO will continue to be a challenge.
- As more courses and services are offered through use of technology, training and support demands placed on the technology staff will also increase. The institution must continue to provide training to improve end user proficiency with technology.
- The College must develop the needed infrastructure for reporting and institutional effectiveness. A systematic process for survey reporting must be devised to assure incorporation of results in planning efforts. Automation of processes can help to facilitate data entry, analysis and reporting.

### **Recommendations to Strengthen Criterion Five**

- The CLARUS study results provided projections for a five year window. That window has passed. Additional comprehensive environmental scanning should be completed as the district is experiencing growth impacting long range projections. A cyclical timeline should be established to assure access to current district data.
- The College must assess the utilization problems at the access centers in order to expand programming and serve its constituencies. This issue was given particular focus in the mission review and strategic planning sessions. Strategic Goal 3 identifies strategies to address this problem.
- The construction of the new facility will help to alleviate facilities utilization problems in the HARCO Complex. Space utilization studies should be implemented to assure efficient use of all College facilities.
- The College will continue to develop program and course level articulation agreements with target baccalaureate institutions.

- The College lacks the infrastructure for reporting and institutional effectiveness processes. Data access and analysis processes are inadequate to provide timely input for operational improvements. A systematic process for survey reporting and feedback must be developed to assure incorporation of results in planning efforts. Alternatives are being explored to address this deficiency. Automation processes will be explored to facilitate data entry, analysis and reporting. In addition to supporting student academic achievement and success, assessment results (surveys, etc.) will be integrated into measures of institutional effectiveness and improvement processes.
- Strategic Goal 2 targets mechanisms to strengthen the College's ability to serve its constituencies giving particular emphasis to professional development and evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College satisfies the twelve Eligibility Requirements and sufficiently meets the five Criteria for accreditation.

Therefore, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College formally requests a review for initial accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.