Western Nevada College

Ad Hoc Report: Spring 2018 Year Seven Self-Study Recommendation 1

Prepared for Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Context and Recommendation 1

Following Western Nevada College's (WNC) Spring 2018 Year Seven Self-Evaluation report and site visit, NWCCU gave WNC three recommendations. Recommendations 2 and 3 are addressed as addenda to the Year One Mission and Core Themes report. Recommendation 1 is addressed in this separate ad hoc report, which accompanies a site visit in Fall 2019.

Recommendation 1: *That the College fully implement its plan to conduct comprehensive assessment of all of its programs. Progress on collecting and analyzing data that creates specific improvement actions must be a College priority (Standards 4.A.2, 4.A.3, 4.B.2).*

Full Implementation of Comprehensive Program Assessment

WNC has made significant progress both in fully executing current administrative and academic program review and assessment processes, and in developing sustainable annual planning and assessment cycles moving forward. The Program Assessment and Review Committee (PARC) established a standing Program Review Coordinator officer position in Fall 2018 to be filled by the Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) Planning and Assessment Coordinator. This committee officer position is responsible for conducting outreach and one-on-one assistance for programs completing the review process, which has increased program review progress and completion. As a committee, PARC has encouraged programs completing the review process to attend regular PARC meetings, lunch time question and answer sessions, and final program review presentations as steps to make the process more transparent and accessible. Additionally, PARC has solicited feedback from programs who have recently completed the process, and is currently revising program review guidelines in order to make the process less cumbersome and more meaningful for those undergoing review. As a result of these changes, all 10 programs scheduled to complete reviews in 2018 successfully did so, and all programs scheduled to complete reviews in 2019 are actively working with PARC to complete their reviews within the calendar year (see Exhibit A for an overview of recently completed and scheduled upcoming program reviews).

Program reviews at WNC are conducted on a five-year cycle, and have concluded with a five-year assessment plan that outlines annual assessment projects the program will execute and track for inclusion in the next five-year program review. In the past, programs have struggled with completing these annual assessments due to staff and leadership turnover, significant budget cuts, and changing institutional priorities that may make elements of these five-year plans less relevant. As a result, completing five-year program reviews without consistent annual planning and assessment documentation became overwhelming. To make program review more manageable and useful, WNC has shifted its focus to emphasize the annual planning and assessment process, with the five-year program review serving as an opportunity for meta-analysis of the past five years and an opportunity for building a more flexible framework for the five years ahead. Annual plans are created by academic programs, administrative units, and executive offices in alignment both with WNC's institutional strategic plan and with each area's supervising office. Annual assessment reports allow all areas to report on successes, challenges, application of assessment results, and how changes at the unit and institutional level have shifted priorities and plans. The result is a more dynamic and meaningful assessment and reporting process focused on the ongoing annual needs and goals of each

administrative and academic program (see Exhibit B for a full overview of planning and assessment cycles).

The development of these updated annual planning and assessment cycles has coincided with the development WNC's 2019-2025 institutional strategic plan, which was approved by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents in March 2019. As such, the 2018-19 academic year has represented a transitional time for planning, assessment, and program review. Portions of new annual planning and assessment cycle expectations have been rolled out gradually, beginning in September 2018 with initial vision, mission, and goal statements from all administrative units and executive offices. Reporting areas were asked to define goals in line with institutional priorities and with their supervising offices, and to outline how they would assess progress toward goal completion. In March 2019, those same areas were asked to review and update their goals, including whether changes within their departments had shifted their goals and assessment plans (see Exhibit C for examples of completed reports). Following this updated report, units will create a final annual assessment report in November 2019, which will allow them to document assessment results and applications, outline successes, challenges, and opportunities, and align their work over the past year with the new institutional strategic plan. This annual assessment report is shared with supervising offices, PARC, and IRE, and will help form the foundation for 2020 calendar year plans.

At WNC, degree and certificate granting academic programs are housed within the Liberal Arts, Nursing and Allied Health, and Professional and Applied Technology divisions (Career and Technical Education changed its name to Professional and Applied Technology effective July 1, 2019). Although the divisions themselves are led by directors, most programs within these divisions have not had formally defined chairs or lead faculty to oversee annual and five-year program review, assessment, and planning. Within Nursing and Allied Health, this work has been done by an internal standing committee, and has conformed to Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing and Nevada State Board of Nursing Standards. Within Professional and Applied Technology and Liberal Arts, this work has largely been done by volunteer full-time faculty with assistance from division directors. While this has consistently resulted in successful five-year program review completion, annual assessment and planning between program reviews has been challenging in the past without defined faculty leadership to facilitate the process. To help fill this gap, a new Assessment and Planning Lead Faculty position was created. Filled by full-time and part-time academic faculty who receive a three-credit course release for their work, Lead Faculty work in conjunction with their division director, the Vice President of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness (VPIIE), Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE), and academic faculty to create, execute, and report on annual plans for program-level student learning outcome (SLO) assessment (see Exhibit D for full position description). Currently, four academic faculty members are in this position for Liberal Arts, and two academic faculty members are in this position for Professional and Applied Technology. Nursing and Allied Health is currently in the process of changing their external nursing accrediting body, and is exploring whether this formal position will be a useful role within the division moving forward.

Since implementing the Lead Faculty position at the start of Spring 2019, the Leads have begun their work by reviewing the most recent five-year academic program reviews within their division for progress made on final program recommendations and assessment plans. In collaboration with the faculty who worked on those recent program reviews and their division directors, the Leads have reported on program recommendation and assessment plan progress to establish a useful baseline for program planning and assessment moving forward (see Exhibit E and Exhibit F for these reports). In addition, Lead Faculty are reviewing program curriculum mapping for gaps and needed updates, and are

developing plans for curriculum mapping projects to begin in the upcoming Fall 2019 semester. While course-level SLO assessment has increased, updated curriculum mapping is necessary to better tie course-level SLO achievement to program-level SLO achievement (see Exhibit G for a summary of recent course-level SLO assessment results, as well as example reports). Lead Faculty will again report on progress at the end of the fall semester.

Collection and Analysis of Data toward Specific Improvement Actions

WNC's emphasis on annual planning and assessment has led to a marked increase in the collection and analysis of data toward specific improvement actions. Completed course-level SLO assessment reports have more than doubled in the past year, increasing from 23 completed reports in 2017 to 49 in 2018 (see Exhibit G for a summary of recent course-level SLO assessment results, as well as example reports). These reports include assessment data analysis, plans for applying assessment results, and updates on progress from past assessment reports. These reports are reviewed by Academic Division Directors, VPIIE, IRE, Assessment and Planning Lead Faculty, and shared with the WNC community in All College meetings and on WestNET, WNC's intranet which houses important college documents accessible to all college employees.

The Assessment and Planning Lead Faculty are closing the loop on recent five-year academic program reviews by following up on recommendations and plans that came out of the program review process. Comparing these recent program review recommendations with current institutional priorities and program data help determine which plans and improvement actions should continue forward, and which may no longer be needed. The Lead Faculty collaboratively review course-level SLO assessment reports with their division director to ensure that a representative sampling of courses and SLOs are being assessed within each program, and together use this and other program data (such as enrollment and completion numbers) to develop annual program-level plans for assessment and improvement.

For all programs that completed a five-year program review in 2018, PARC has renewed a focus on outlining commendations and recommendations to form meaningful and manageable action items moving forward. These range from recommending partnerships between programs, departments, and committees that may be working toward similar goals or have relevant resources to share, to recommending specific assessment projects to address gaps or questions that emerged from the program review process. Many programs have actively begun implementing these recommendations, and have used the program review process to establish meaningful, assessable annual goals for 2019 (see Exhibit H for examples of 2018 program review commendations and recommendations from PARC, as well as examples of how programs have begun implementing recommendation actions). For programs undergoing review in 2019, PARC and IRE have been actively conducting outreach and holding meetings to help collect and analyze data, develop or improve assessment processes, and demystify the review process to emphasize the use value of assessment for making worthwhile, tangible improvements.

The vision, mission, and goal reports that administrative units created in September 2018 and updated in March 2019 include plans for tracking and assessing progress toward goal achievement, with units reporting assessment results in November 2019 (see Exhibit C for examples of these vision, mission, and goal reports). To support these assessment projects, IRE has regularly met with reporting areas to develop assessment plans, help develop assessment instruments such as rubrics and surveys, and share relevant institutional data.

Institutional Prioritization of Assessment

WNC has made assessment a significant institutional priority. Within IRE, the creation of a permanent, full-time Planning and Assessment Coordinator position has established a consistent, central facilitator to support and track ongoing assessment activities across campus (see Exhibit I for position description). IRE's Director and Programmer/Analyst positions have also recently moved from part-time shared services with Great Basin College to full-time positions dedicated to WNC. This greatly increases IRE's ability to support assessment data collection and analysis.

The creation of Assessment and Planning Lead Faculty positions clarifies and establishes faculty leadership within academic program assessment, and support for these positions in the form of a three-credit course release each semester demonstrates WNC's commitment to making this assessment work a priority (see Exhibit D for position description). Dedicated time in support of Lead Faculty work is additionally provided by Academic Division Directors, VPIIE, and IRE.

Increased professional development funding has also been made available to faculty and staff across the college in support of assessment. Academic faculty, Assessment and Planning Lead Faculty, Academic Division Directors, Strategic Planning for Institutional Excellence (SPFIE), PARC, and Accreditation Committee members, IRE staff, and other interested members of the WNC community have participated in off-site conferences and on-campus trainings and webinars hosted by NWCCU, Association of American College and Universities, Association for Institutional Research, Chronicle of Higher Education, Innovative Educators, and others. Liberal Arts Director and Accreditation Liaison Officer Scott Morrison and Planning and Assessment Coordinator Mandy Billings are additionally participating in the 2019-20 NWCCU Mission Fulfillment Fellowship, with a focus on researching successful assessment and program review processes at peer and aspirational institutions.

Changes have also been made to committees involved with assessment and program review in order to better facilitate meaningful and efficient assessment reporting and application. PARC has rewritten its mission and bylaws, expanded its committee membership representation to be more reflective of the WNC community, created the new standing Program Review Coordinator position, and is in the process of updating its program review guidelines in order to more actively support annual and five-year program assessment and review processes. SPFIE has adopted an institutional effectiveness rubric to conduct holistic annual evaluation of institutional planning and assessment activities (see Exhibit J for SPFIE's Institutional Effectiveness Rubric for Annual Assessment). In addition, SPFIE has formed an academic planning and assessment cycles workgroup in response to questions about when planning and assessment should occur in order to have the most meaningful application and impact on curriculum changes, budgetary requests, and related course and program management.

Conclusion

Western Nevada College has made significant strides forward in its assessment and planning processes. Institutional prioritization of assessment has led to increased support and momentum to successfully complete academic and administrative program assessment and review during the 2018-19 academic year. The creation of new positions and improved committee structures ensure that this momentum can be sustained moving forward, and the shifted focus onto annual cycles of planning and assessment makes the process more meaningful and manageable for academic programs and administrative units.

Assessment and program review are active, dynamic processes that must be driven by the academic faculty, student support professionals, and WNC staff who make our programs and departments succeed. With dedicated support and facilitation, WNC will continue to enhance service to our students and the wider community through comprehensive assessment data analysis, implementation of defined improvement actions, and collaborative, holistic review of the success of these processes.