

# **YEAR SEVEN PEER-EVALUATION REPORT**

**Blue Mountain Community College**  
Pendleton, Oregon

**October 8-10, 2014**

*A confidential report of findings prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

## Table of Contents

I. Evaluators .....	1
II. Introduction .....	1
III. Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and support materials .....	1
IV. Topics Addressed as an addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report .....	2
Recommendation 1: Strategic Planning.....	2
Recommendation 2: Course, Program, and Degree Learning Outcomes .....	3
Recommendation 3: Threshold of Mission Fulfillment.....	3
Recommendation 4: Objective and Indicators of Achievement .....	4
V. Eligibility Requirements .....	4
VI. Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations .....	4
Standard 1.A Mission .....	4
Standard 1.B Core Themes .....	5
VII. Resources and Capacity .....	5
Standard 2.A Governance .....	5
Standard 2.B Human Resources .....	8
Standard 2.C Education Resources.....	9
Standard 2.D Student Support Resources .....	12
Standard 2.E Library and Information Resources.....	14
Standard 2.F Financial Resources.....	15
Standard 2.G Physical and Technological Infrastructure .....	17
VIII. Planning .....	19
Standard 3.A Institutional Planning	
IX. Core Themes.....	20
Core Theme One: Transfer Education .....	20
Introduction.....	20
Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning.....	20
Standard 4.A Assessment.....	21
Standard 4.B Improvement .....	21
Core Theme Two: Workforce Development/Self-Improvement .....	22
Introduction.....	22
Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning.....	22
Standard 4.A Assessment.....	22
Standard 4.B Improvement .....	23
Core Theme Three: College Preparation .....	23
Introduction.....	23
Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning.....	23
Standard 4.A Assessment.....	23
Standard 4.B Improvement .....	24
Core Theme Four: Career/Technical Education (CTE).....	25

Introduction.....	25
Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning.....	25
Standard 4.A Assessment.....	25
Standard 4.B Improvement .....	26
X. Mission Fulfillment, Monitoring, Adaptation and Sustainability .....	26
Standard 5.A Mission Fulfillment .....	26
Standard 5.B Adaptation and Sustainability .....	27
XI. Summary.....	27
XII. Commendations and Recommendations .....	27
Addendum: List of interviewees .....	30

## **Roster of Evaluators**

Mr. Jeff Wagnitz (chair), Vice President for Academic Affairs, Highline College, Des Moines, Washington

Ms. Karen E. Johnson, Dean for Developmental Education, Edmonds Community College, Edmonds, Washington

Dr. Lance D. Bowen, Dean of Science, Truckee Meadows Community College, Reno, Nevada

Ms. Edith M. Wollin, Dean, Arts, Humanities and Adult Basic Education (retired), North Seattle College, Seattle, Washington

Ms. Suzy Ames, Director of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, Skagit Valley College, Mount Vernon, Washington

Ms. Margaret Stuart, Dean of Instruction/Library Director, Lower Columbia College, Longview, Washington

Ms. Shirley Bean, Director of Finance and Auxiliary Services, Highline College, Des Moines, Washington

Dr. Les L. Steele, Executive Vice President, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU liaison)

## **Introduction**

Established in 1962, Blue Mountain Community College is a public, comprehensive community college serving the residents of Umatilla, Morrow, and Baker counties in eastern Oregon — an area of some 18,000 square miles. BMCC established its main campus in Pendleton in 1965. In the early 1990s, the college began to acquire facilities in additional communities, beginning with Hermiston and Milton-Freewater. An ambitious distance learning initiative was launched in 1995. According to its *Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, the college's 56 full-time and 170 part-time faculty served 9,523 students (2,579 full-time equivalents) in 2013-2014.

BMCC hosted its most recent comprehensive evaluation in fall 2004. A Regular Interim Evaluation was conducted in fall 2009, followed by a Focused Interim Evaluation in fall 2010. BMCC's accreditation was most recently reaffirmed in February 2012 on the basis of the offsite fall 2011 Year One Evaluation.

The current onsite evaluation took place October 8–10, 2014. The seven-member evaluation committee spent the bulk of its time on the college's Pendleton campus. Pairs of evaluators also visited the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center at Hermiston and BMCC's site in Milton-Freewater. The committee interviewed a variety of staff, faculty, and students in individual and small-group appointments, open forums, and committee settings (see addendum).

## **Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials**

An electronic copy of the *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* was emailed to the committee

members on August 20, 2014, and delivered in hard-copy the following week — more than six weeks prior to the visit. The 172-page document included a 94-page narrative, followed by appendices that included degree and certificate checklists, program review documents, survey results, and strategic planning reports. The narrative was clear, concise, and readable. Its candor was appreciated. However, the committee members found some sections of the report more informative than others. While acknowledging that an effective self-evaluation should emphasize analysis over description, the readers sometimes wished for fuller context to assist them in tracing the development of BMCC’s current challenges and opportunities. Notably, the narrative did not include an analysis of BMCC’s compliance with Eligibility Requirements, nor did the Basic Institutional Data Form disaggregate enrollments at the college’s off-site locations.

In addition to the self-evaluation document, the evaluators received a current college catalog and course schedule. Onsite, the college provided supplementary materials, including board records, collective bargaining agreements, planning documents, and reports from prior accreditation evaluations, both regional and specialized. Additional, key documents — among them, human resources policies and technology and facility master plans — were provided upon request.

The faculty, administration, and staff of Blue Mountain Community College were uniformly welcoming, forthright, and accommodating throughout the visit. The committee sincerely appreciated the college’s hospitality and support.

### **Topics Addressed as Addenda to the Self-Evaluation Report**

The Commission’s February 13, 2012, letter to BMCC requested that the current evaluation address four recommendations from the fall 2011 Year One Evaluation. The Year One panel had initially issued five recommendations, one of which was rescinded by the Commissioners. Of the remaining four recommendations, the first two had carried forward from BMCC’s fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation. Recommendations 3 and 4, in turn, had emerged from the offsite panel’s assessment of BMCC’s *Year One Self-Evaluation Report*. The college had expected to address these matters in its fall 2012 Year Three Evaluation, which the Commission later deferred, incorporating all four recommendations into the Year Seven Comprehensive Evaluation. A current assessment of the college’s progress on each recommendation follows.

#### Recommendation 1

*The Committee recommends the College fully implement the Strategic Planning Framework integrating resources allocation and communication methodology.*

Since receiving the original 2009 recommendation to fully implement its strategic plan, BMCC took steps to further integrate resource allocation and expand communication of that plan throughout the college. However, in onsite interviews, respondents consistently indicated that the effort lacked sufficient comprehensiveness, consistency, and campus buy-in to be effective.

Since the arrival of a new president in 2013, a more collaborative and comprehensive planning process has been underway. The college began the development of its new 2015-2020 strategic plan with an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Since then, faculty,

staff, and students have been involved in revising all elements of the strategic plan, including its vision, mission and goals, and values statements. At the time of the current evaluation, the college was working to develop measurable indicators for the plan's objectives as well as benchmarks to assess the institution's current status. College-wide planning sessions and committee work were developing the plan's elements with continual communication across the college. The trustees were apprised of the changes and were providing input and suggestions.

While these efforts appeared promising, at the time of the current visit, the evaluators were able to review only draft documents. Further, those drafts had yet to align the plan's elements with BMCC's core themes. The president's proposed timeline would finalize the plan by mid-winter 2014-15. The college is strongly encouraged to meet this timeline, without further delay.

### Recommendation 2

*The Committee recommends the College fully implement and document assessable course, program, and degree learning outcomes and use the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements.*

The current evaluators found that BMCC had made significant progress in addressing this recommendation, specifically in the area of developing course- and program-level outcomes for all courses and programs and in aligning course-level outcomes with overarching programmatic learning outcomes.

Despite these signs of progress, the college-wide adoption of assessment practices and their use in institutional planning appear to be intermittent, with some gaps including:

- The assessment of general education outcomes — locally called *core competencies* — had evidently been placed on hold while departmental assessment was implemented. The current evaluators did not find evidence that the core competencies were universally assessed, nor did there appear to be a plan in place to implement such assessment.
- As noted in the 2014 *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* and confirmed by faculty and administrators onsite, the use of assessment results in improving instructional planning and practice, while occurring, remains unevenly implemented across the college.
- While full-time faculty have embraced a culture of assessment and are all participating in that work, the evaluators noted a lack of similar engagement among part-time faculty.

Additional detail appears in the Educational Assessment section (pp. 10-11) of this report.

### Recommendation 3

*The Committee recommends the College further define and refine an acceptable and specific threshold of mission fulfillment.*

The 2011 *Year One Peer Evaluation Report* noted that the seemingly arbitrary nature of the college’s indicator benchmarks “made it problematic for the evaluators to fully assess mission fulfillment and threshold” (p. 8), adding that “No rationale [was articulated] for the choice of 70% as the acceptable threshold for mission fulfillment” overall (p. 7).

Those words are as accurate today as they were three years ago. The current *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* (pp. 17–24) continues to justify BMCC’s indicator benchmarks as “meaningful,” typically without any analytical discussion of why a particular target number was selected over any other. Further, although the narrative (pp. 13-14) responds to the 2011 panel’s feedback by clarifying that “a 70% success rate on all core theme indicators could result in success in mission fulfillment despite not meeting a success benchmark on any indicator in a core theme,” the new language fails to address the validity of the 70 percent figure itself.

As a part of its new strategic planning process, the college is considering a revision to its mission. If this plan moves forward, it offers a timely opportunity to rethink the definition of *mission fulfillment* in a manner that allows the college to make real progress in this key measure.

#### Recommendation 4

*The Committee recommends the College refine objectives and indicators of achievement to ensure that results are meaningful and measurable for evaluating the accomplishment of the core theme.*

The 2014 *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* offers no evidence of significant refinements to BMCC’s core theme objectives and indicators. While the Year One Evaluation panel was particularly concerned about the metrics for the workforce development/self-improvement core theme, the current evaluators would suggest that all core theme objectives and indicators may merit review. BMCC’s current materials continue to provide an externally-referenced rationale for only one benchmark — its target for transfer completions, which is tied to state figures. Interviews onsite reinforced the impression that the target numbers were largely matters of guesswork. Care should be taken to craft indicators that are both meaningful and assessable.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Because the college’s *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* did not include discussion of NWCCU Eligibility Requirements (ERs), the evaluators were obliged to gauge BMCC’s compliance with ERs in the absence of any self-assessment of those matters. The evaluation committee carefully considered the ERs in its assessment of the associated standards for accreditation. No compliance concerns emerged.

### **Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations**

#### Standard 1A — Mission

Adopted by the institution’s trustees in 2003, Blue Mountain Community College’s mission statement explicitly incorporates the college’s four core themes — college preparation, college

transfer, professional/technical, and workforce development/self-improvement. The statement is widely disseminated, appearing in the college's catalog, website, social media outlets, and other publications, including the *President's Annual Report* to the community.

At the time of the visit, the college community was actively considering a rewrite of the mission statement. In fact, a proposed mission was included in the draft strategic plan, which was widely available across campus. In interviews onsite, the president confirmed the college's intent to bring a new mission before the board as soon as mid-winter 2014-15.

For now, BMCC has continued to define mission fulfillment as "the achievement of 70 percent of the average of the indicator benchmark percentages within each core theme" (*Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, p. 17). While this definition might be defensible in an abstract sense, the precise rationale for the 70-percent threshold remains obscure.

### Standard 1B — Core Themes

For each of its four core themes, Blue Mountain Community College has chosen to establish a single objective. Typical of these is the objective for the college transfer core theme: "Students are prepared for college transfer." These single-item objectives are measured, in turn, against two to three indicators per core theme, with a benchmark set for each indicator. The *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* (pp. 17-24) provided little or no indicator-specific rationale for these benchmark figures. Onsite, the evaluators were unable to further substantiate the reasoning behind each target number.

*Concern:* The college's core theme indicators and metrics appear to be of questionable meaning to the college at this point, undermining the validity of BMCC's mission fulfillment definition.

## **Resources and Capacity**

### Standard 2.A — Governance

Blue Mountain Community College has a history of maintaining relatively large, often multi-constituent committees that serve as two-way information conduits around governance matters. The 24-member College Coordinating Council, 14-member Cabinet, and 21-member Curriculum Committee offer prominent examples. Onsite, participants indicated that they understood the roles and functions of these groups, despite their large, diverse, and sometimes-overlapping membership.

The current president has placed significant energy into promoting even greater inclusion of faculty and staff voices in college decision-making. While the evaluators heard many appreciative comments on this initiative, the committee also heard repeated faculty concerns around a lack of clear, predictable avenues for input into college priorities. Given BMCC's relatively flat and operationally-siloed organization, its faculty had evidently seen little opportunity for structured, cross-departmental participation in governance, including processes such as budget requests, process development, or benchmarking assessment metrics.

*Concern:* As BMCC seeks to engage faculty more meaningfully in governance, the college is encouraged to reevaluate its formal structures for collecting, processing, and acting on that input.

The college's self-evaluation report did not address BMCC's relationship with the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. Presumably, since the current president was the system's longtime chancellor, the relationship is generally positive and transparent. Even so, several onsite interviews cited the potential impact of recent changes in Oregon's higher education structures, suggesting that those interactions merit ongoing attention.

It was evident to the evaluators that Blue Mountain Community College takes seriously its compliance with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The institution has assigned qualified, experienced, and committed leadership to those tasks, with adequate staff support.

### *Governing Board*

As prescribed by Oregon law, Blue Mountain Community College is governed by a seven-member board, elected from their respective zones within the college's service area. They have no contractual, employment, or financial interest in the institution. In conversations with evaluators, board members demonstrated a remarkable depth of commitment to the college and its role as a community resource. Their enthusiasm for BMCC's future is inspiring.

The board's decision-making processes are clearly outlined in a concise, yet thorough *Board of Education Policies* document, available on the college website. Under Policy II.F, no board member or subcommittee may act on behalf of the board except by formal delegation of that authority. In interviews onsite, trustees made clear that they understood their role as policy-setting, not operational. Policy II.B(5) requires regular self-monitoring of board effectiveness. Board members readily confirmed that this requirement was carried out in a useful manner.

While Board Policy III.C defines a process for presidential evaluation, both the president and trustees noted that the process's specifics were undergoing revision as a part of onboarding a new CEO. BMCC is encouraged to move forward in finalizing and conducting that process.

### *Leadership and Management*

Blue Mountain Community College's administrative structures are in many ways traditional. Three major divisions — instruction, student affairs, and economic development — are led by vice presidents. Information technology, business office functions, human resources, and facilities and maintenance are led by associate vice presidents or, in one case, a supervisor. All of these units report to the president, whose office website houses current and appropriately-detailed organizational charts. BMCC's administrative leaders appear to have adequate training and experience for their roles. At the time of the visit, the college had recently been through a number of transitions in administrative staff members and organizational structures. In general, the evaluation committee heard few, if any, concerns about these changes. Rather than viewing them as destabilizing, most respondents characterized them as indicators of new opportunity. The president has also encouraged greater cross-divisional collaboration among administrators.

Appointed in 2013, the current president brings significant higher education leadership experience to the role of campus CEO. The president's full-time responsibility is to BMCC. The CEO's authority is clearly defined in Board Policy III.A through IV.H.

### *Policies and Procedures*

- *Academics:* The faculty's collective bargaining agreement defines matters such as faculty workload (Article 19), materials ownership (Article 8), and grading (Articles 12 and 13). Administrative Procedures 5-2003-0022 and 05-2009-0001 define BMCC's credit-hour calculation and ensure its application to alternate-schedule courses. A limited set of library policies (<http://www.bluecc.edu/academics/library/library-policies>) address patron behavior as well as matters of copyright and borrower privacy. The college's transfer-of-credit policy appears on page 23 of the *2014-15 Academic Catalog*.
- *Students:* Clearly stated policies addressing students' rights and responsibilities are readily found in college materials. The college catalog, student handbook, and web resources include guidelines for academic honesty, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities. An online administrative procedures manual provides extensive guidance on the manner in which student-related procedures are executed. Procedures are revised in line with changing student affairs structures and processes. In interviews onsite, students and staff confirmed that student-related policies and procedures are administered fairly and consistently.

A general policy regarding the college's open-door admissions is found in the *Board of Education Policies* document. Admission and placement processes are clearly articulated in the college catalog and website. Guidelines for student continuation in and termination from educational programs, including an appeals and readmission process, are included.

The Associated Student Government of BMCC constitution and by-laws address co-curricular activities and provide clear guidelines for student clubs and organizations, including roles and responsibilities of students and the college. Interviews with staff confirm the constitution and by-laws are readily used by BMCC's student leadership.

- *Human Resources:* Policies and procedures regarding human resources are regularly reviewed and updated. Exempt and technical employees utilize the college's employee handbook, while faculty and classified employees rely on their collective bargaining agreements for guidelines on conditions of employment. This information is also presented in the online administrative procedures manual. Administrative Procedure 03-2003-2004 defines parameters of confidentiality and access to personnel files. Direct observation confirmed that the college maintains the security of those records.
- *Institutional Integrity:* Institutional documents and web resources confirmed that Blue Mountain Community College represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. Updated regularly, the college's catalog, student handbook, and website accurately describe the college's programs and services. In conversations onsite, the current president stressed the

importance of improving BMCC's communications even further. Board Policy IV.B speaks specifically to the respectful treatment of students, employees, and community members. The college catalog (p. 7) accurately represents BMCC's current accreditation status, as do other publications. Both board policy (II-G and IV-B) and administrative procedure (03-2006-00002) prohibit conflict of interest. Board policy confers to the president the responsibility for contracts with BMCC.

- *Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property:* Articles 4 and 8 of the faculty's collective bargaining agreement address academic freedom and ownership of intellectual property.
- *Finance:* Oregon state law governs most financial and budget activities, delegating the remainder to local boards of education. Accordingly, BMCC's board has adopted policies regarding management and oversight of all financial resources of the college, including planning, capital budgets, reserves, investments, and cash management, fundraising, debt management, and intra-fund activity.

### Standard 2.B — Human Resources

Interviews and forums with students, staff, and faculty confirmed that BMCC personnel are qualified and work well as a team. Hiring documents confirmed that the criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions accurately reflect duties, responsibilities, and authority of each position. Onsite, employees confirmed that hiring processes are fair, consistent, and collaborative. The adequacy of staff to manage college operations is tracked by human resources and the president's cabinet. Areas of inadequate staffing are raised during budget deliberations.

In staff forums and interviews, respondents confirmed that all administrators and staff had undergone an evaluation within the past year. The human resources office tracks the completion of these reviews. Typically, evaluations include an analysis of the current job description, a self-reflection by the employee, a review by the supervisor, and the creation of an annual professional development plan. The human resources office monitors these plans to assure that development opportunities are in line with the plans. An automated process is in development, which will allow supervisors to customize evaluation forms.

BMCC faculty, classified, and exempt employees have ample opportunities for professional development in line with their professional development plans. Administrative procedure 03-2006-0010 documents the college's commitment to professional development, which is supported by institutional funds. Full-time staff, exempt and technical employees, full-time faculty, part-time faculty who teach six instructional units in current or preceding terms, and their dependents are also eligible for free tuition for BMCC classes. Budgets for classified and staff professional development are typically not exhausted on any given year.

In forums, students noted that faculty are deeply committed to their roles, often serving as the only subject matter expert in BMCC's small community. At times, instructors take on significant workloads to keep their programs running with limited faculty. Students observe extremely dedicated faculty who invest significant time and effort to assure student success.

Full-time and part-time faculty evaluations are coordinated by the office of instruction. Final reports are kept on file in the human resources office. After a 2013 review, faculty evaluation procedures were made even more robust, including a portfolio and peer evaluation for full-time faculty. The current evaluators were presented with samples of draft revisions of faculty evaluation criteria and forms. Evidence showed consistent reviews of full-time faculty every four years. The college is making progress on consistent evaluations of part-time faculty, with department chairs now observing classroom activity and following up with recommendations.

### Standard 2.C — Education Resources

Blue Mountain Community College delivers associate-level transfer degrees, applied technical degrees, certificates, and college credit instruction with content and rigor appropriate for an institution of higher education. Degree and certificate programs are developed under the guidance either of industry advisory councils or transfer articulation requirements, as appropriate, to ensure that these credentials are consistent with collegiate-level content in the respective fields. Faculty exercise the major role in the development of curriculum, as evidenced by their significant participation on the Curriculum Committee. Offsite and online offerings follow departmental course outlines. The current evaluators found convincing evidence that BMCC has been especially vigilant in supporting high-quality online instruction.

Clearly-identifiable course and program offerings, admissions processes, and graduation requirements are published on the college's web page and in the academic catalog.

The *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* notes that, after a period of lapse, the college is renewing and updating its process of instructional program reviews.

#### *Integration of Library Resources*

The current evaluators found little evidence that library resources are integrated substantively into student learning. A few faculty reported that they routinely invite library staff into the classroom to provide library orientations, but the current library staffing level does not support this service at present. When asked, only a few students indicated that instructors required them to use library resources. Some faculty who assign research noted that they teach students to use online databases rather than integrating library instruction and resources in the learning process.

#### *Credit for Extra-Institutional Learning*

Blue Mountain Community College awards credit for prior learning in accordance with accreditation standards. Credit is awarded only to students enrolled in at least one BMCC course. Awards are limited to 25 percent of the credits needed to earn a certificate or degree. BMCC accepts credit from other regionally-accredited colleges and universities, following Oregon policy, where applicable. Guidelines appear in the catalog and on BMCC's website. Eastern Promise — a recent collaboration among BMCC, Eastern Oregon University, and local high schools — will allow students to earn college credit through a competency-based evaluation of coursework taught by high school teachers who are involved in Professional Learning

Communities (PLCs) with college faculty. The PLCs ensure that the courses taught in this way meet the requirements of Standards 2.C.1 through 2.C.3.

### *Educational Assessment*

BMCC faculty have primary responsibility for the educational assessment. The evaluation committee found evidence that most, if not all, full-time faculty are participating in student learning outcomes assessment, under the hands-on guidance of the vice president for instruction's office. Clearly defined course-level learning outcomes feed directly into program-level outcomes, which are compiled in the college's learning management system.

Despite aggressive efforts to ensure that all course and programs have meaningful, identifiable, and assessable learning outcomes, the current evaluation nevertheless revealed areas of concern.

First is the lack of comprehensive assessment of BMCC's college-wide learning outcomes, identified as *core competencies* in the catalog (p. 40). Although assessment of these outcomes has been discussed, the process has not been fully integrated into the college's current assessment development in a way that is helpful and clear to many faculty and most students.

Second, part-time faculty involvement in learning outcomes assessment has not been monitored. This is of concern due to the large proportion of part-time instructors in general as well as the disproportionate number of part-time instructors at BMCC's offsite centers.

Finally, the committee did not find evidence that the institution consistently uses the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic- and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. Although individual faculty apply their assessment findings to inform course improvement, these efforts are not systematic nor reported. Results of student learning assessments are made available to faculty in a timely matter, but the evaluators found no evidence that other constituencies receive this information.

*Concern:* Educational assessment at core theme, core competency, and program levels lacks full integration. Learning outcomes assessment at the course level is more likely to occur with full-time than part-time faculty, but the results are not consistently tracked, analyzed, or used for planning and improvement, particularly at the higher levels of programs and core competencies.

### *Undergraduate Programs*

Blue Mountain Community College's general education core reflects common higher education standards. Requirements for all transfer associate degree programs include a recognizable core of general education as reflected in the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) and Associate of Science (AS) requirements, which appear in the current catalog (pp. 42-43). Additionally, the Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) provides guidance in fulfilling the core requirements for transfer to four-year institutions of higher education within Oregon.

BMCC's general education components have identifiable and assessable student learning outcomes. In BMCC's applied degree and certificate programs, related instruction is delivered

through required courses, separate from the technical core. Related instruction components are reflected the intended program outcomes published in the catalog.

### *Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs*

Community and Continuing Education and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) both offer a variety of industry-specific non-credit courses as well as a more limited set of self-improvement offerings. Non-credit courses offered through Community and Continuing Education and the SBDC do not require approval of the college's Curriculum Committee. Curricula used in the college's non-credit programs include commercial products as well as courses developed by local instructors with content expertise. Although BMCC's non-credit courses do not appear in the college catalog, information about them can be found on the college website. More detailed information about courses is warehoused in the Community and Continuing Education office and the SBDC office. After a successful start-up in Community and Continuing Education, firefighting and emergency medical technician (EMT) courses have since grown into credit-bearing career and technical education programs.

Meantime, changes to state funding practices have accelerated a shift in emphasis from personal enrichment to vocational skill building. State-reimbursable offerings must meet criteria described in the Oregon Community College Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Catalog. Eligible categories include workforce (basic literacy, languages, life skills, technology, and general workforce) or health and fitness (non-competitive fitness, health, and safety). Because self-enrichment courses do not meet these criteria, they must be self-supporting. As acknowledged in the BMCC's self-evaluation narrative (p. 19), increased local competition has meant that more personal enrichment courses are cancelled due to low enrollment.

A few third-party courses, such as those offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs). However, these CEUs are conferred by the third-party organization, not by BMCC.

### *College Preparation and Basic Education Programs*

BMCC's college preparation programs are dedicated to preparing students for higher education through Adult Basic Skills Education (ABSE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and GED<sup>®</sup> preparation programs. The area's mission is to provide students with necessary skills and abilities to achieve individual goals.

BMCC operates ABSE programming at its main campus in Pendleton and in Milton-Freewater, Hermiston, Boardman, and Baker City. It also maintains contract programs with local schools, the Oregon Department of Human Services, the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. BMCC's Jobs Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program provides job search, work experience, and high school or GED<sup>®</sup> completion for low-income clients. BMCC also contracts with the Oregon Department of Corrections to provide ABSE programs at correctional facilities in Pendleton, Umatilla, and Baker City.

After repeated administrative changes in the past few years, the current leadership has stabilized. The director has done much to build community with faculty and staff, to include part-time faculty in professional development, and to make connections with the main campus. ABSE's passionate instructors and staff are committed to supporting students in developing themselves as workers, family and community members, and lifelong learners.

#### Standard 2.D — Student Support Resources

At the time of the current evaluation, Blue Mountain Community College's student affairs department was undergoing significant transition, with a renewed focus on student engagement and success. Interviews with students, staff, and faculty confirmed that department changes are welcome additions that will improve the quality of support and ultimately greater student success and retention. The new Garrett Lee Smith Wellness Center, for example, provides a resource for faculty, staff, students, and the community. Tutoring services, formerly divided amongst TRIO, online students, and on-campus students, are now unified under one umbrella. Formerly housed within college operations, student government has moved to the student affairs department, where it offers enhanced engagement opportunities.

*Compliment:* The high quality health and wellness center, coordinated tutoring, and expanded student engagement activities are significant undertakings that directly increase student support.

BMCC places a priority on compliance with federal safety and security regulations, including the new federal SaVEe Act. The student affairs department works closely with the human resources office to assure that crime statistics, campus security policies, and required federal and state disclosures are available. BMCC's Clery Act report is easily found on the college website.

The college is committed to recruiting students with an ability to benefit, including Native American, veteran, and low-income students. Support services are provided to help assure their success. Through an arrangement with local tribal authorities, a part-time employee is dedicated to recruiting Native American students and offering them on-campus support. A new student orientation, a first-time "Welcome to the Pack" event, and a mandatory college success course provide timely information related to academic success. Based on a lean process-improvement evaluation, BMCC is developing an online student orientation to facilitate access.

*Compliment:* While there is opportunity for more involvement, the college's commitment to the recruitment and retention of Native American students is significant for the region.

In the recent past, two academic programs have been cancelled. In both cases, the college followed procedures to support completions for up to five years post-elimination of the program. Where necessary, BMCC has paid the tuition differential for completion at a partner institution.

College publications, including the catalog and student handbook, include the required elements necessary to inform students of college policies, including the college mission, entrance requirements, grading policies, tuition policies, and the academic calendar. A new complaint procedure provides a transparent protocol for students and employees, triggering a response from student services or instruction, as appropriate. New software will track levels of complaints,

identify at-risk students, and refer issues to a team of college employees.

Confidential student records are kept in locked, fire-proof cabinets, with only a handful of employees possessing keys. Staff follow a records-destruction schedule with timelines and detailed instructions. The registrar assures compliance with FERPA and the release of student records, providing regular trainings and compliance checks across the district.

The financial aid department delivers an effective and accountable aid program, with the support of computer systems operated by Rogue Community College. Aid information is available on the college website and through high school financial aid nights led by college personnel. Students are connected with the contracted SALT program, which provides information on loan and money management and financial counseling. Launched last year, the new program is designed to reduce BMCC's 28.1 percent default rate. The state average is 14.3 percent.

Advising is in transition at BMCC, with a renewed focus on sustainability and student support. Mandatory check-ins with student success coaches and/or faculty advisors are required for new students and when students reach the 36- and 72-credit mark. The success coaches help students refine their career goals and serve as liaisons with faculty and other support staff. While the refined model is new, the program is focused on transiting students from success coaches to faculty advisors at the appropriate time, while assuring that faculty have manageable advising loads. The college will soon be one of the first to provide the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test to undecided students in order to help define their career paths. Efforts to formalize the new advising model and to communicate these changes to current students will need to continue to be a focus. Lean process-improvement, currently being utilized on several projects, has helped staff to identify the most efficient way to support mandatory advising.

*Compliment:* The redesign of the advising model, while still new, shows evidence of greater sustainability and success in connecting students with success coaches and faculty advisors at the right time in their educational career.

In onsite interviews with evaluators, both students and staff confirmed an enhanced student experience upon moving student government from college operations to student affairs. Co-curricular activities for student government officers and ambassadors are now steeped in student engagement, development, and leadership experience. Evidence suggests that these changes will have positive impacts across all co-curricular activities. Intercollegiate athletics, too, recently moved from operations to student affairs, triggering a reevaluation of the financial support to sustain the program. Travel funds now more accurately reflect typical expenditures. An onsite review confirmed that student-athletes receive sport-specific guidance on financial support, academic standards, and college policies consistent with those for other students. The athletic department supports four NWAACC sports — baseball, softball, basketball, and volleyball. In addition, BMCC holds a national reputation in the NIRA-sanctioned sport of rodeo.

*Compliment:* Moving student government and athletics from operations to student affairs is providing greater support and infusion of student life into the college and the athletics program.

The bookstore is elaborate for a small campus, with memorabilia and gifts, a latte stand, and

copy center. While not expansive, food service appeared adequate for Pendleton's commuter campus. Food service is not provided at off-campus sites.

To verify the identity of online learners, the college provides students with an e-companion log-in and password, which students are required to change at first log-in. When online students come to campus for testing, proctors are required to verify photo identification, and testing centers are equipped with surveillance cameras.

### Standard 2.E — Library and Information Resources

The Blue Mountain Community College library serves students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community, providing access to resources which include a print collection, online materials, electronic databases, private study rooms, and group study rooms. At the time of the current evaluation, the recent departure of two full-time library employees had left the library understaffed, with an interim part-time library director leading a staff of one full-time library technician and two part-time library technicians.

The library has worked closely with BMCC's e-learning coordinator to provide as many resources as possible through the campus website, including research databases, a large collection of e-books, and a high level of staff support to students enrolled in e-learning courses.

The library's physical environment is well-organized, well-lit, and quiet. Security measures to protect library resources include a security gate at the entrance, security cameras in the hallway, and authentication to access online databases. Students describe the library as conducive to study. They appreciate that it is accessible during the evening. Students particularly appreciate the individual and group study rooms, as well as the helpful staff members. Faculty members also expressed appreciation for service provided by the current staff.

Tools to assess the effectiveness of library services include the quarterly staff survey and occasional satisfaction surveys provided at the reference desk. Current library staff reported that they were unaware of any formalized planning practices for the library. Even so, the library is diligent about collection development and maintenance. While the library invites faculty to participate in collection development tasks, instructors have tended not to participate. Until recently, most collection development activities were managed by the library director. While library resources are adequate in some areas, faculty expressed concern that resources are insufficient to support the research needs of lower-division students. Faculty members suggest that popular education magazine titles be added to the collection.

The current staffing level does not allow for staff to provide in-class presentations or to provide other types of library instruction. The only staff member qualified to provide library instruction is the interim director, who is a part-time employee. In addition, without a professional reference librarian, the library is unable to provide in-depth, one-on-one research support. Instead, paraprofessionals and student workers assist with initial research steps, and online video tutorials provide some reference guidance. Some instructors reported that they simply bypass the library, teaching their students to conduct research through online tools instead. Despite understaffing, current library staff are making every effort to serve students to the best of their ability and to

create a more welcoming environment. Library staff and campus faculty are hopeful that the library will continue to move in positive direction once the new library director is in place.

*Concern:* Due to understaffing, BMCC's library is currently unable to provide an adequate level of instruction and support. In addition, students are not using the library consistently for research. The college is encouraged to move forward in its plans to fill vacant library positions.

#### Standard 2.F — Financial Resources

Blue Mountain Community college is financially stable, with adequate cash flow to meet current needs and adequate reserves to offset unanticipated events. Financial planning at BMCC is managed through a projection model that allows for multiple variables to anticipate obligations three to five years in advance. By utilizing a multi-year approach, the college has been able to anticipate and adjust for the effects of decreased state funding. The projection model is also used as a training tool for the board of education and other users of college financial information.

The college maintains a minimum \$1.5 million dollar cash reserve, as required by board policy, and monitors cash flow regularly in order to maximize earnings on cash balances. The business office manages financial risk, in accordance with written administrative procedures. Projection of long-term obligations is part of the projection model, the most significant of which is the requirement to meet Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) payments. The college is authorized to sell pension bonds to meet anticipated need. Payments on general obligation bonds are met using property tax assessments.

Although state support for the college's general fund has dropped since 2001-02 from 55 percent to approximately 23 percent, conservative spending, along with several years of enrollment and tuition-rate increases, has allowed the college to sustain programs and services while increasing reserves. Tuition income has approximately doubled in the same time frame. The local board of education has authority to raise tuition rates and annually assesses the need for tuition and fee increases. To provide predictability and assist in financial forecasting, tuition increases are tied to the Higher Education Price Index.

Resource planning and development at BMCC is primarily managed through the college's budget process. In the projection model, both revenue and expenditure assumptions are conservative, as BMCC takes a risk-averse attitude in managing public funds.

BMCC relies on a number of operating and non-operating revenues to support its activities. Revenue from operations includes tuition and fees, grants and contracts, and auxiliary enterprises. Grants are considered an important funding source and are expected to grow. Non-operating revenues include state appropriations, property tax revenue, and investment income.

Oregon law requires the college district to present and adopt a balanced budget for each year. Statute further requires BMCC's annual budget process to include a formal budget message. Delivered by the chief budget officer (president of the college), the message explains proposed changes from the prior year and any alterations in fiscal policy. The college budget is developed in accordance with board policy and may not deviate materially from board ends priorities.

College constituencies — including staff, faculty, and community members — have multiple opportunities to participate in the budget process. In fall, the president determines the budget format for the following year, though its format and content are largely governed by statute. Beginning with 2014-15, the process follows a modified zero-based budgeting approach. Prior to 2014-15, the college used a straight modified roll-over budget approach. Local guidelines are developed and vetted through the Integrated Resources Committee, the Operations Committee, and Cabinet. The final guidelines and tentative calendar are then approved by the president and presented to the board of education at the next board meeting. From there, department managers develop initial requests, which are then organized by business office staff. Potential issues or significant changes are discussed with college administration, and final review is completed by the college president and at least one cabinet-level administrator. The initial budget is then presented to the Budget Committee, made up of board members and an equal number of qualified citizen representatives, who review the budget and solicit public input, make changes as necessary, and approve the document for submission to the board. The board then solicits additional public feedback and either adopts the budget as submitted or makes further changes. The final budget is made available to college constituencies in printed and electronic format. Revisions are made within the requirements of Oregon law.

*Compliment:* Business office staff have created a strong culture of data-driven decision-making through development and implementation of the college's financial projection model.

Blue Mountain Community College ensures timely and accurate financial information through its administrative information system (AIS), a locally-hosted system developed and managed by Rogue Community College. The AIS includes a financial management component that ensures college accounting records are kept in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Financial systems are the responsibility of the associate vice-president for business operations, who is also responsible for internal controls, including those at branch sites. The business office reviews internal controls annually. Department and college employees participate in regular training in purchasing, procurement, cash management, and other financially-related activities.

BMCC undergoes an annual financial audit performed by an independent auditor, currently a certified public accounting firm in Salem that has no other association with the college. An audit opinion is issued on the financial statements, as required by Oregon administrative rules. Prior to presentation to the board of education's audit subcommittee, the audit team meets with the president and key business office staff to discuss overall results, including findings, management letter items, and areas in which improvement may be called for. The final step in the audit cycle is a formal presentation to the entire board of education. For the past four cycles, the college has received an unqualified audit opinion with no findings. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013, the auditor's opinion confirmed that BMCC's financial statements fairly presented the college's financial position in all material respects. BMCC was determined to be a low-risk auditee.

Capital projects are planned and prioritized in accordance with the *Facilities Master Plan* and the financial projection model. In addition to state allocations, the college is authorized to obtain general obligation bonds, capital leases, or bank loans for capital project funding. Debt is undertaken only after consideration by the board of education in consultation with college

leadership. Long-term debt is limited to 1.5 percent of the Real Market Value of properties within the college district. The college's current outstanding debt is approximately 8 percent of the legal debt limit. Once secured, capital budgets are managed in a separate fund restricted to capital projects and deferred maintenance. Along with planning for future capital needs, the college maintains a minimum balance of \$500,000 in the building fund for emergency repairs. Capital funds are analyzed annually during the budget development process to assess adequacy of reserve funds and continued adherence to the *Facilities Master Plan*.

Auxiliary enterprises at BMCC include the college's bookstore, contracted training, continuing education, and student union. The college accounts for these activities in a separate fund. Board policy allows for general fund transfers to and from auxiliary enterprise accounts. However, auxiliary services are not a significant source of revenue for operations, and operating funds are not anticipated to be transferred to support enterprise activities during the next budget cycle.

Administrative procedures establish the Blue Mountain Community College Foundation as the primary fundraising entity for the college. The foundation is a separate 503(c) entity whose primary function is to support the college mission by providing scholarship funds and alumni outreach. The foundation is audited by independent auditors, with the results presented as part of the college's annual financial report. The foundation's written agreement with the college clearly defines foundation activities and establishes college support of the foundation. Any small-scale fundraising by college departments is authorized and managed through the business office, with proceeds accounted for as special revenue and usable for designated purposes only.

#### Standard 2.G — Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Despite a variety of challenges, including 40-plus year old buildings across a service district spanning nearly 18,000 square miles, Blue Mountain Community College's physical facilities offer well-maintained spaces for student learning.

The college's main campus in Pendleton is comprised of seven buildings built between the mid-1960s and the late 1980s. Facilities include classroom, administrative, and student spaces, as well as a swimming pool and theater with significant community usage. The grounds of the Pendleton campus are inviting and showcase the area's natural scenic beauty through the use of native plants and ample green spaces. The college's newest facilities, built in 2011, are located in Hermiston and include classroom, lab, and student spaces. Facilities in Milton-Freewater, Boardman, and Baker City are located in re-purposed commercial buildings, with much less space available for student study and activities.

Although much of the BMCC's physical plant (with the exception of the Hermiston campus) is between thirty and forty years old, facilities staff have done a remarkable job of ensuring the space is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Spaces are immaculate, well-lit, and free of physical barriers. The college projects a welcoming feeling throughout its campuses.

BMCC is generally considered safe, with a comprehensive emergency crisis management plan and active campus participation in emergency drills. Campus crime statistics indicate very few incidents. Several years ago, the college eliminated its contracted security service, installing over 100 video cameras at Pendleton and other campus locations. Campus emergencies are

reported to either the human resources director or the buildings and grounds supervisor.

*Concern:* The campus does not have trained security staff to respond to campus emergencies.

An online database contains material safety data sheet (MSDS) information for all hazardous and toxic materials on campus. This information is provided in hard-copy to all custodians and all labs. Procedures for handling hazardous waste are available in areas that house such materials. Academic departments and labs, in concert with facilities staff, are responsible for managing hazardous waste in their areas. Instructors are trained in handling discipline-specific hazardous materials. Science labs are outfitted with appropriate safety equipment.

Developed in 2012, BMCC's *Facilities Master Plan* is a comprehensive document, intended to guide campus planning efforts, align priorities with resources, and address future space needs throughout the district. The college contracted with an architectural and design firm to lead the planning efforts, which included broad representation from campus constituencies. The plan's principles include making improvements that enhance student success, are fiscally responsible, and prioritize renovations to address health, life safety, and the protection of capital investments. The plan also seeks to support development of signature programs that differentiate BMCC from other higher education institutions and that leverage improvements to further serve community needs. The two-phase plan recognizes that successful passage of a general obligation bond will be required for implementation. When the college's most recent bond measure failed to gain voter approval, BMCC opted to pursue a revised bond measure in the spring of 2015.

*Concern:* There is insufficient evidence that adequate funding exists for replacement of critical facilities infrastructure in the event that subsequent bond measures are unsuccessful.

Equipment at BMCC is generally sufficient in quantity and quality to support the institution's mission, core theme objectives, and programmatic goals. However, in some areas, instructional equipment is perceived to be outdated, particularly in career-technical programs. Equipment requests are managed through multiple, largely informal processes. Instructional needs are routed through either the office of instruction or the information technology department. With no formalized replacement plan in place, equipment is updated on an *ad hoc* basis.

### *Technological Infrastructure*

Technology infrastructure at BMCC is adequate to support administrative functions, academic programs, and student support services throughout the college's service area. Technology systems are supported through the college's information technology (IT) department. While priority is given to classroom technology, BMCC's information technology staff support all technology infrastructure, student computer labs, the college's administrative technology systems, and the college's website. A help desk routes inquiries to the appropriate resources.

The college has been particularly effective at delivering educational and student support services to a large geographic area, supporting multiple modes of instructional delivery at branch sites. Through the use of videoconference equipment, a college-wide e-course management system, and web conferencing, the branch sites are able to serve as few as one or two students at a given

location, combining those enrollments with those at other campuses to make the course financially viable. The IT department trains branch campus staff to provide basic troubleshooting. IT staff visit each site before the beginning of each term to evaluate and address needs.

IT works to ensure continuity of services through regular data back-up, server redundancy, and moving critical systems (such as the campuses administrative information system) to virtual server clusters. Data security is maintained by authentication processes, active directory management, and assignment of appropriate levels of system access to college staff.

Both the facilities and information technology departments employ knowledgeable staff who are committed to providing excellent customer service across BMCCC's vast district. While classroom and instructional equipment receive first priority, non-academic staff report that IT staff is responsive and that they have adequate technology support to serve students effectively.

Technology-related instruction for faculty, staff, students, and administrators is provided through professional development plans, college in-service day trainings, and on an as-needed basis by IT staff. Technical support staff each have a current professional development plan that addresses ongoing training in current and emergent technologies.

Technology planning takes place through multiple venues at BMCC. Emergent issues are addressed via the college's Information Technology Committee, whose membership includes a broad representation of campus constituencies. More formally, BMCC's *Technology Master Plan*, developed in 2012-13 alongside the *Facilities Master Plan*, includes a comprehensive, room-by-room assessment of technology at every college location, including condition reports, recommendations, an implementation timeline, and cost estimates. Although a major theme of the plan is customer viewpoints, there is little evidence that the plan reflects a broad representation of district staff. Recognizing this disconnect, the department's new associate vice president has opted to "re-vet" the plan through the campus governance process.

While technology is currently adequate at BMCC, long-range technology funding remains a challenge. Student fees comprise the bulk of revenue for current repair and replacement, with long-range funding requested through bond measures. The college's most recent bond request included approximately \$2 million in technology upgrades, and its failure has necessitated a search for alternative funding sources for needed improvements. Long-range goals include a replacement cycle and technology standard for administrative and classroom computers. Of pressing concern is the 2016 end-date of a 500-computer lease agreement. Although the lease offers purchase and renewal options, its expiration will necessitate careful decision-making.

*Concern:* While the master plans for both facilities and information technology seek to prioritize long-range investment, there is insufficient evidence that formal prioritization occurs in practice. Furthermore, neither plan's long-range funding sources are certain at present.

## **Planning**

### **Standard 3.A — Institutional Planning**

At the time of the current evaluation, Blue Mountain Community College was at a significant crossroads in its institutional planning processes. After six-plus years of maintaining a

comparatively cumbersome and administratively-focused strategic plan, the college had opted to abandon that plan in favor of a more streamlined, inclusively-developed, and aspirational document that could better reflect current priorities. While it was clear that the president and board were providing leadership on this initiative, the campus also evidenced considerable broad-based energy around the work.

The current evaluation committee saw considerable promise in the draft plan, which addresses college functions, articulates concrete objectives, and identifies potential data-point indicators. Despite its many positive qualities, however, the draft plan is just that — a draft. As a result, its effectiveness could not be determined at the time of the visit. Its potential for alignment with BMCC’s core theme indicators was especially uncertain.

### *Emergency preparedness, contingency planning, and continuity and recovery of operations*

Blue Mountain Community College’s comprehensive *Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plan* is disseminated widely in hard-copy and posted to the college website. Many departments have contingency plans to ensure continuity in the event of a catastrophic event. Student paper files are kept in fireproof cabinets, and financial aid documents are scanned and saved on a server that is backed up off-site. The college has obtained samples of continuity of operations plans (COOPs) from other colleges. With that background, BMCC’s Cabinet plans to incorporate the college’s individual department plans into a central COOP. Although formal plans remain to be developed, *ad hoc* planning has worked on at least one occasion. When a September fire at the Grant County campus resulted in significant loss of function, operations were restored by the opening of fall term, with minimal disruption to students.

## **Core Theme One: College Transfer**

### Introduction

Core Theme One, College Transfer, derives directly from Blue Mountain Community College’s mission statement: “BMCC will realize its vision by providing high-quality programs for . . . college transfer.” The core theme is fulfilled through courses, support services, and programs that lead to BMCC’s Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer and Associate of Science degrees.

### Standard 3.B — Core Theme Planning

The *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* indicates that core theme planning at BMCC is necessarily “cross-functional” because the themes themselves are, as the narrative indicates, “quite general.” Learning outcomes assessment activities in the program review process are meant to manifest the college’s core theme planning. However, because college transfer programs are only this academic year beginning to undergo systematic program review, current plans for Core Theme One are at best speculative. In addition, the current evaluators were unable precisely to determine what information the college is receiving related to the achievement of Core Theme One, who exactly is receiving that information, or how systematically the information is used by instruction, student services, facilities, and financial planning.

Transfer-related course outlines and syllabi largely incorporate learning outcomes. However, the

entries occasionally describe activities — “students will read short story and novella fiction,” “students will attend lecture and peer discussion,” or “students will participate in study groups” — rather than learning goals. BMCC’s materials indicate that its general education outcomes, called *core competencies* locally, are taught in the requirements for the college’s transfer degrees. Assessment comes through a voluntary assessment of one of the core competencies by faculty in their courses, reported on the college’s e-course shell. The college assumes that, in the aggregate, students will meet the core competencies through the required degree courses. Onsite interviews suggested that most part-time faculty are not conducting even this level of assessment.

#### Standard 4.A — Core Theme Assessment

The Core Theme One has one objective: Students are prepared for college transfer. For assessment of its success in meeting this theme, the college relies on several indicators. In the different sections of the *Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, the number of indicators varied from three (p. 18) to four (pp. 71-72). Benchmarks are set for all three indicators, with success achieved when the average of the indicators is within 70 percent of the benchmark.

Typical is Indicator 1’s retention metric, which measures the percent of new-to-BMCC transfer degree-seeking students who rerolled the year after their first. The 50-percent benchmark for this indicator was exceeded (115 percent of target) in 2008-09 and nearly met (90 percent of target) in 2012-13, the last year for which information was available. Though promising, the metric is far from perfect. For example, because it counts only full-time students, the majority of BMCC’s students are not captured in the data. Though new full-time students from offsite are included, BMCC is unable to disaggregate the results by location. Finally, if a student begins attending part-time and moves to full-time, he or she is not counted in the data.

A second indicator measures completions, tracking the percent of full-time, new-to-BMCC, transfer degree-seeking students who earn their degree within 150 percent of the minimum time required. The benchmark for this indicator is 35 percent, with the college’s success in reaching the benchmark dropping from 84 percent in 2008-09 to 39 percent in 2012-13. As with the first indicator, the limitations of focusing solely on new, full-time students apply here.

The final indicator of post-transfer success is based on the grade-point average of BMCC transfers to Oregon University System (OUS) as compared to students beginning there. The 90-percent benchmark here has consistently been exceeded. However, the OUS Chancellor’s Office has discontinued the reporting of transfer grades. At the time of the current evaluation, BMCC had not determined what data source might replace this indicator.

In short, although the proposed indicators show promise, their analysis is hampered by gaps in data sources. BMCC’s materials do not provide raw numbers for any of these indicators, nor is there mention of what portion of enrollment transfer students represent. As it seeks to update its mission and strategic plan, BMCC may want to rethink its indicators to better support planning.

#### Standard 4.B — Core Theme Improvement

The *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* does not make clear how the college’s planning processes

work to bring about core theme improvement. For example, although student services areas have made many positive changes of late, the reasons for the changes are not tied convincingly to core theme assessments. Advising is a good example. Although the self-evaluation narrative (p. 78) suggests that improvements in advising resulted from core theme assessment, staff interviews did not corroborate that claim. Other proposed changes — such as academic early-warning systems — seem to be under discussion at the board and executive team level, again without a clear connection to core theme assessment.

Furthermore, according to BMCC’s self-evaluation materials, program review has been seen as a valuable component of improvement for years, but only recently has adequate capacity been added to make systematic program review possible. Under the newly-proposed six-year cycle, it will not be until 2018-19 that all transfer departments will have undergone program review.

## **Core Theme Two: Workforce Development/Self-Improvement (WD/SI)**

### Introduction

Like Core Theme One, the Workforce Development/Self-Improvement core theme echoes the language of the college’s mission. It encompasses non-credit courses offered by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Community and Continuing Education units. Both support the college’s goal of “facilitating access to college programs and activities” and “growing community partnerships.” While both entities have proven successful in meeting industry needs, funding challenges and competition have led to declines in enrichment offerings.

### Standard 3.B — Core Theme Planning

In both Community and Continuing Education and the SBDC, program planning and evaluation activities are primarily the responsibility of program administrators. The SBDC’s plans are aligned with the college’s strategic plan as well as extra-institutional plans developed by both the Small Business Development Center Network and the regional Economic Development District. Local employer input is taken into careful consideration. Community and Continuing Education has developed an extended learning plan aligned with the college mission, but college officials acknowledge that it is due for revision. Although planning activities occur in both areas, both indicate that they must remain flexible to respond rapidly to the needs of local employers.

### Standard 4.A — Core Theme Assessment

Since courses offered by the SBDC and Community and Continuing Education largely focus on occupational skill building, the lone objective of this core theme — that “community members take advantage of lifelong learning” — is inherently difficult to measure. Although both units collect a variety of data, neither the SBDC or Community and Continuation Education has established structured assessment practices at the core theme level. In the *Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, two metrics are presented as measures of Core Theme Two attainment. Both are essentially enrollment counts — the first of repeat enrollments, and the second of non-credit enrollments as a proportion of BMCC enrollments overall. No clear rationale is provided for either metric’s benchmark. The self-evaluation narrative notes that both measures have declined

in recent years, with an especially precipitous drop in Indicator 1, but the text provides no analysis beyond acknowledging that the trends merit further monitoring and investigation. Going forward, care should be taken to craft indicators that are both meaningful and assessable. Arguably, the objective for this core theme could be revised to focus on skills training to meet local industry needs, rather than the broader goal of lifelong learning.

#### Standard 4.B — Core Theme Improvement

Despite the lack of meaningful, core theme-driven assessment processes in either the SBDC or Community and Continuing Education, both entities evaluate a variety of information sources — including feedback from local employers, student evaluation of faculty, and enrollment data — to assess program effectiveness. The programs have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to make improvements in response to feedback and to environmental changes. The next step is to shape the area’s Core Theme Two objective(s) and indicators to inform that work intentionally.

### **Core Theme Three: College Preparation**

#### Introduction

College preparation is a strand represented explicitly in Blue Mountain Community College’s mission statement. The single objective of this theme is that “underprepared students will become college-ready.” College data indicate that 22 percent of total BMCC enrollments are in college-preparatory courses, underscoring the significance of this core theme. The *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* declares that “the successful progression to credit coursework and on to college level courses and programs drives mission fulfillment.”

#### Standard 3.B — Core Theme Planning

Within Core Theme Three’s instructional areas, planning activities are undertaken, first, among the administrators and staff who lead the local programs. For the non-credit Adult Basic Secondary Education (ABSE) and GED<sup>®</sup> programs, significant guidance also comes from outside the institution, through Oregon’s Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD), federal Workforce Investment Act grant requirements, the Oregon State Adult Learning Standards, direction from the Oregon Department of Corrections, and special grant and contract requirements from community partners. Programs in this area must be nimble to respond as state and federal mandates — not to mention student goals — constantly shift. ABSE, ESL, and GED<sup>®</sup> preparation programs follow a common set of measures and definitions to track progression and completion goals, including whether students earn a GED<sup>®</sup>, progress through a U.S. Department of Education-defined skill level, secure a job, remain employed, or enter postsecondary education. The ABSE program is responsible to the state for increasing local rates of ABSE level gains and transitions to the GED<sup>®</sup>.

#### Standard 4.A — Core Theme Assessment

BMCC measures Core Theme Three against a single metric in each of three college-preparatory areas — ABSE, GED<sup>®</sup>, and a third named “Developmental Education Success.” Although the

language of the core theme's indicator speaks explicitly to students becoming "college-ready," the individual measures better reflect learning that occurs in the pre-college level rather than demonstrating that a student is prepared to be successful in college. Indicator 1, for example, measures level-by-level progress within ABSE, rather than gathering evidence that students are gaining college-readiness. Similarly, Indicator 2 emphasizes GED<sup>®</sup> completion, a data-point that is not readily available to the college. Indicator 3, "Developmental Education Success," reports the percent of students who passed a developmental education class, without identifying the specific course(s) or tracking student performance in the subsequent college-level class. As an additional concern, the reliance on percentages, without citing numbers of students, may decrease the metric's value, especially since some pilot programs serve very few students from which to make decisions. The indicators, in short, are insufficient to measure college-readiness.

BMCC's performance on these measures is mixed. For Indicator 1, the college has consistently exceeded its 50-percent target, while Indicator 2's results have dropped from 24 percent to a mere 6 percent of that same target (*Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, p.81). The text candidly acknowledges that Indicator 2's data may be unreliable due to environmental and data-collection variables. No data from 2013-14 is shared in the self-evaluation narrative, nor is a convincing rationale provided for the chosen benchmarks. If Core Theme Three's intent is to document the success of students transitioning from college-preparatory programs into college courses, its metrics should focus on evidence of those transitions. As a related concern, many college preparation faculty indicated to the evaluators that they were not directly involved in the development of the indicators, nor were they available to them in a timely manner. Greater faculty engagement may strengthen the validity and relevance of the core theme's metrics.

#### Standard 4.B — Core Theme Improvement

Despite challenges in aligning Core Theme Three's metrics with its objective(s), BMCC's college preparation programs have initiated a variety of data-informed improvements. For example, noting poor completion rates in developmental-level classes, the Math Department developed a "jumpstart" program to assist students who placed into a low-level math course. Students complete a two-week intensive review, then re-test to advance to an intensive, higher-level class that begins in week three. Similarly, based on national research demonstrating that long developmental sequences block students from completing their degrees, the college eliminated some low-level developmental language arts courses, establishing a single Writing 60 course that advances students to college English. Because these changes took place in spring 2014, no data is available yet to evaluate the pilots. Further, the assessments may be difficult to conduct, given that the evaluators found different Writing 60 outcomes and course descriptions across instructors, many of whom were part-time. As an additional complication, syllabi for the next level of composition, Writing 115, were found to have the same outcomes as Writing 121.

More significantly, the foregoing examples suggest a pattern of making curricular changes in College Preparation without reference to core theme data and without a clear post-pilot evaluation plan. Onsite, college personnel noted that they review national data and attempt to replicate successful models at BMCC. While this approach has value, it widens the separation between department-level innovation and local core theme metrics, assessment of those metrics, planning for improvement, and data analysis after a pilot.

## **Core Theme Four: Career/Technical Education**

### Introduction

Blue Mountain Community College's *Comprehensive Self-Study Report* (p. 22) reports that Core Theme 4 "most define[s] the college's identity." In 2013-14 BMCC awarded 245 career/technical certificates and degrees, accounting for two-thirds of all credentials conferred. BMCC maintains a broad offering of career/technical education (CTE) programs intended to meet the workforce needs of its service area. Available credentials include 20 two-year applied associate degrees (AAS), 13 one-year certificates, and 17 career pathways certificates (CPCCs) of less than one year. The certificates and CPCCs have been designed to be stackable within the two-year degrees so that a student completing an AAS will also complete a CPCC or a certificate, if applicable.

### Standard 3.B — Core Theme Planning

Planning appears to be a central concern within this core theme. Each CTE credential is designed in consultation of related occupational advisory boards that guide curriculum and provide feedback on workforce demands in a given field. This input is both mandatory and welcomed within all of the college's CTE programs. Strong industry partnerships, carefully nurtured by BMCC faculty and staff, help keep the college connected to its community.

### Standard 4.A — Core Theme Assessment

Assessment is part of the culture in the CTE programs. Many are subject to external accreditation or accreditation based upon state requirements. CTE programs were some of the first to participate in the initial program reviews at BMCC. The evaluation of the programs appears to be meaningful, effective, and well documented. Course assessments are designed to feed into program-level assessments. Currently, CTE programs are actively involved in both course- and program-level assessment and are now faced with the challenge of determining how to use the assessment results to improve their educational offerings.

Core Theme Four's sole objective, "Students are prepared for successful entry into the job market," incorporates three indicators of achievement. The first monitors retention — specifically, the percentage of new CTE degree- or certificate-seeking students who either received short-term credentials by the end of their first year or who reenroll for at least one credit any time in the following year. The second indicator, completion, is calculated as the percentage of new fall-term, full-time CTE degree or certificate-seeking students who completed a degree or certificate program within 150 percent of the time required for their program of study.

Data for these measures are provided by the institutional research office and are made available to the appropriate constituencies in a timely manner. However, the college's performance against its benchmarks suggests that they may be aspirational or even unattainable. For example, after exceeding Indicator 2's 40-percent benchmark once, in 2008-09, BMCC's completion rate has since averaged approximately 16 percent — less than half the benchmark goal. Meantime, a third indicator, job placement, is benchmarked based on graduate survey responses. Though this

measure appears in BMCC's Standard One narrative, a later chapter indicates that "the college has not fashioned an annual graduate survey" (*Comprehensive Self-Study Report*, pp. 23 and 83). In short, in their current form, these assessments may not be effective in initiating academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to improved student achievement.

#### Standard 4.B — Core Theme Improvement

At the individual course level, assessment results are made available by the vice president of instruction's office in a spreadsheet format. Despite the data's availability, it was unclear to the evaluators how the feedback is currently being used to improve student achievement, despite the CTE area's recent, significant strides toward more effective use of assessment results.

Meantime, at an institutional level, BMCC has made a significant commitment to student success. In the CTE areas, this commitment is demonstrated in student success coaches that were recently assigned to support students in CTE programs. These coaches work with faculty, advisors, and the students to ensure that students identify a suitable career path and are on track academically to reach their educational goals. Additionally, a Career Pathways program has been developed to guide students into one of several career clusters, including the arts, communication and information, business and management, food and natural resources, health services, human resources, and industrial and engineering systems. Though these improvements are clearly tied to broad institutional priorities, the evaluation committee found little evidence of a direct connection to core theme-centered assessments.

Of related concern is the apparent lack of life-cycle replacement funds for equipment in certain high-cost CTE programs such as agriculture and diesel technology. The evaluators heard repeated concerns around the process of requesting new faculty positions and new equipment, suggesting an opportunity to better align program investments with core theme assessment.

### **Mission Fulfillment, Monitoring, Adaptation and Sustainability**

#### Standard 5.A — Mission Fulfillment

The evaluation committee could find little evidence that Blue Mountain Community College engages in regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based assessment of its accomplishments as envisioned by Standard 5.A.2. To the extent that the college has engaged in such efforts in the past, that work was tied to the prior strategic plan's annual reporting process — an exercise that few respondents onsite described as particularly useful. No one argued that the prior plan was meaningfully integrated with BMCC's core themes.

Elsewhere in this report, the evaluation committee has articulated its concerns around the college's very definition of mission fulfillment, which appears to rest on a hierarchy of fundamentally arbitrary metrics, none of them meaningfully connected to the college's plans.

Given that the college is simultaneously restructuring its strategic plan and revisiting its mission, it is an opportune time to redefine *mission fulfillment* in a more meaningful, integrated form.

## Standard 5.B — Adaptation and Sustainability

The evaluation committee found considerable evidence that Blue Mountain Community College effectively monitors its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of operations. Its finances are transparent, seemingly adequate, and well-guarded. Adequate personnel, facilities, technology, and materials are currently in place to sustain the institution's educational mission. Despite widespread agreement that BMCC's planning processes can be improved, the existing protocols have succeeded in setting basic goals, monitoring progress, and identifying resource needs.

The institution appears to be well aware of its environment. It maintains close ties to the local business community, relevant government entities, and national direction-setting bodies. The current evaluators saw ample evidence of BMCC's ability to adapt to external forces.

If there are suggestions to note, they lie, first, in the opportunity for greater integration of planning activities with the college's mission, core themes, and key indicators. Second, while making every effort to secure passage of its future levies, the college may also benefit from a rigorous evaluation of financial contingency plans, particularly where facility maintenance, technology upgrades, and equipment investments are concerned. Finally, BMCC is encouraged to engage its governance system more systematically to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its goals.

### **Summary**

The current evaluation took place during a period of extraordinary transition at Blue Mountain Community College. In recent months, the college had appointed a new president, initiated a new strategic planning process, started to regroup from a recent bond levy failure, launched a variety of new student success initiatives, and navigated a number of administrative changes. Obviously, periods of this kind present both opportunities and challenges. On the optimistic side, the evaluation committee found BMCC poised to capitalize on its assets and to set a new, upward course. On the cautionary side, the evaluators sensed that BMCC's recent transitions may have sidelined its efforts to address some unfinished business, including its shortcomings in educational assessment, core theme alignment, and mission fulfillment measures. In the evaluators' view, the upcoming months will prove critical in the college's attempts to maintain its forward-looking momentum while finding energy to resolve its older challenges.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

#### Commendations

1. The evaluation committee commends Blue Mountain Community College for its heightened commitment to student success, such as collaboratively redesigning mandatory advising, building a new health and wellness center, integrating student government and athletics into the student affairs department, coordinating tutoring services, and leading innovative student-focused strategies through Achieving the Dream.
2. The evaluation committee commends Blue Mountain Community College for its

commitment to meeting the educational needs of its extraordinarily widespread, diverse service area through initiatives such as its off-campus sites, well-designed online offerings, corrections programming, partnerships with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and collaboration with local schools.

3. The evaluation committee commends Blue Mountain Community College for its responsiveness to the needs of area employers through the collective efforts of faculty and staff in establishing and maintaining strong industry partnerships, expanding existing programs to meet demand, and developing appropriate degree and certificate pathways in response to identified workforce needs.

4. The evaluation committee commends the college's senior leadership for its visible, heartfelt commitment to promoting greater inclusiveness, a deeper sense of shared purpose, and wider opportunities for collaborative efforts across the college community.

5. The evaluation committee commends the college facilities personnel for their exemplary work in maintaining consistently attractive and functional teaching and learning spaces despite the challenges of aging infrastructure and an exceptionally large service area.

### Recommendations

As part of its charge, the current evaluation committee assessed BMCC's progress in responding to four prior recommendations, two of which traced back to 2009. In the evaluators' view, while progress had been made, none of these earlier recommendations had been fully resolved by the time of the fall 2014 visit. For the sake of clarity and accuracy, the committee has opted to craft new language for each of the earlier recommendations, with the twin goals of acknowledging progress to date and refocusing attention on the remaining work.

1. While recognizing that Blue Mountain Community College is embarking energetically on producing a new comprehensive strategic plan, the evaluation committee recommends the plan be completed as soon as possible in order to provide a meaningful, mission-driven guide for resource allocation, initiative prioritization, and assessment of college progress (Standards 3.A.1, 3.A.3, 3.A.4, 4.A.5, 5.B.2)

2. While recognizing that BMCC has made significant progress in addressing Recommendation 2 from its 2010 report, the evaluation committee recommends that the college redouble its efforts to fully implement and document assessment of course, program, and degree learning outcomes, paying specific attention to assessment of college-wide core competencies, greater part-time faculty engagement, and using the results of assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices (Standards 2.C.1, 2.C.10, 2.C.11, 4.A.4, 4.B.2).

3. The evaluation committee recommends that the college continue its efforts to define a specific threshold of mission fulfillment, taking care to articulate a meaningful, useful, and defensible rationale for that threshold and its underlying metrics (Standard 1.A.2).

4. The evaluation committee recommends that the college continue to refine the objectives and indicators of all core themes to ensure that they are meaningful, assessable, and verifiable and form the basis for evaluating accomplishments of core theme objectives (Standard 1.B.2).

In addition to these four updates of earlier recommendations, the evaluation committee offers a fifth recommendation of its own.

5. While acknowledging the college's recent, positive efforts to expand collaboration opportunities across employee groups, the evaluation committee recommends that Blue Mountain Community College take steps to formalize the governance structures and processes that provide for the consideration of faculty views on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest, including instructional resource allocation, policy, and institutional effectiveness metrics (Standard 2.A.1).

## **Addendum: List of Onsite Interviewees**

### Individual Meetings and Small Groups

Debbie Amon, Office Specialist, BMCC Freewater  
Shaindel Beers, Developmental Education  
Theresa Bosworth, Director, Enrollment Services/Registrar  
Bryan Branstetter, Trustee  
Brett Bryan, Athletics  
Katrina Bretsch, Director College Prep  
Werner Buehler  
Tod Case, Finance  
Dawn Difura, ASG Advisor  
Diane Drebin, VP, Student Affairs  
Heather Estrada, Library  
Naamah Franke, BMCC Hermiston & Boardman Coordinator  
Harvey Franklin, Senior Director BMCC Hermiston  
Shannon Franklin, Executive Assistant to the President  
Margaret Gianotti, Foundation  
Yadira Gonzales, Student Financial Assistance  
Daryl Green, Job Manager  
Cheryl Haertling, ABE/GED/ESL Instructor  
Diana Hammon, Self-Improvement/OI  
Art Hill, Workforce Dev./Self Improve  
Brad Holden, Information Technology  
Peggy Hudson, Director BMCC Baker County  
Celeste Insko, Finance  
Bruce Kauss, Online Learning  
Dan Koopman, Faculty  
Dan Lange, VP Instruction  
Debbie Lee, Director BMCC Milton-Freewater  
Anne Livingston, ASG Advisor  
Lea Mathieu, Trustee  
Doreen Matteson, Basic Skills Faculty in Corrections  
Shannon Maude, ABE/GED/ESL Instructor  
Sharone McCann, ABE/GED/ESL Instructor  
Tyler Morris, TRIO  
Wade Muller, Director, Student Success Center  
Gary Parker, Developmental Education  
Tammie Parker, AVP, Human Resources  
Jayne Patterson, Assistant for Athletics  
Steve Platt, Facilities  
Cam Preus, President  
Kim Puzey  
Brilynn Reed, Basic Skills Faculty in Corrections  
Sara Reyburn, Psychology Faculty

Allison Severin, TRIO  
Kristi Sewell, Student Financial Assistance  
Stacie Stahl, Copy Center/Bookstore  
Ed Taber, Trustee  
John Thomas, AVP of Corrections  
Tony Turner, Trustee  
Doug Voyles  
Jim Whittaker, Developmental Education  
Cindy Womack, Student Success Advisor

Forums and Committee Meetings\*

Achieving the Dream (3 attendees)  
Assessment (3 attendees)  
Board of Education (4 attendees)  
Cabinet (12 attendees)  
College Coordinating Council (19 attendees)  
College Transfer (6 attendees)  
Career-Technical Education (8 attendees)  
Developmental Education (3 attendees)  
Faculty Open Forum (30 attendees)  
Foundation (3 attendees)  
Professional technical program directors (6 attendees)  
Staff Forum (60 attendees)  
Strategic Plan (3 attendees)  
Student Forum (30 attendees)

\* Attendance figures estimated in some cases