

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

Miles Community College

Miles City, Montana

March 1 - May 10, 2011

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

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Introduction

Miles Community College (MCC), located in Miles City, Montana, was founded in 1939 as Custer County Junior College. In April of 1970, a local bond initiative created Miles Community College, and in December of 1971, the College was granted accreditation by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (Commission). The College currently operates as one of three comprehensive community colleges in Montana. The fall 2010 enrollment report indicates the College had a degree seeking student FTE of 419.53.

From March 1 to May 10, 2011, a three-person peer-evaluation team from the Commission conducted a year one comprehensive peer evaluation of Miles Community College in an off-site virtual environment. The structure of the evaluation consisted of a virtual organizational meeting and virtual evaluation meetings through audio conferencing authorized by the Commission. The peer evaluation was conducted based upon the Commission's 2010 Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements.

The College participated in a focused interim visit in October of 2008. An addendum responding to a recommendation from the October 2008 focused interim visit was included in the *Year One Report*.

Report on Recommendation 1

Miles Community College hosted a focused interim visit in October of 2008, concerning two recommendations from a focused interim visit in April of 2007. From the October 2008 focused interim visit, the Evaluation Committee issued one recommendation. The Commission requested that the College address this recommendation as an addendum to its *Year One Self-Evaluation Report*. This Peer-Evaluation Committee based its evaluation and determination of the current status of Recommendation 1 with respect to the Standards now in effect. Recommendation 1 is as follows:

While the College has made progress in designing and planning for the implementation of assessment of general education outcomes, a systematic and comprehensive general education process that results in improved teaching and learning and that demonstrates student achievement of learning outcomes needs to be fully implemented. (Standard 2.B.1, 2B.2, 2B.3; Policies 2.1, 2.2)

Miles Community College responded to Recommendation 1 by providing an addendum to its *Year One Self-Evaluation Report*. The addendum included the College's Institutional Philosophy of General Education, Overarching Outcomes of General Education, and General Education Core Areas, with each core area including a Vision Statement.

Through its Cultural Cornerstones of Assessment, the College's general education assessment plan follows a cycle of Evidence, Analysis, Reflection, and Improvement. The Evaluation Committee found this plan clearly documented in three appendices (A, B, and C)

that showed that a multi-faceted process is in place to assess student learning outcomes in which the results lead to improving teaching and learning at MCC.

In summary, the College assesses incoming freshman and exiting sophomores regarding their attitudes and aptitudes on general education at MCC, and the College conducts a focus group assessment of students graduating with an A.A. or A.S. degree regarding their attitudes and aptitudes on general education at MCC (Appendix A). General education faculty members receive copies of these reports and analyze the data in relation to the general education classes in which they teach. In addition, a Summative Case Study Portfolio is conducted annually for one class from each of the core areas on a rotating basis (Appendix A). Faculty members share, review, and reflect upon the data and feedback from the reports with respective colleagues in their core area. Then, faculty members within each general education core area meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss their analysis and reflections. Based upon this participatory process, faculty members develop an action plan in which to improve teaching and student learning within the respective general education core area (Appendix B). Recommendations from an action plan are incorporated, for example, on a respective general education core course syllabus (Appendix C), thus closing the assessment loop while continuing a cycle of improvement of teaching and student learning.

Compliment:

1. The Evaluation Committee compliments Miles Community College for implementing a systematic general education assessment plan where results lead to the enhancement of teaching and student learning. (Standards 2.C.10, 4.A.2, 4.A.3, 4.B.2)

Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report

The Peer-Evaluation Committee received an electronic and hard copy of the College's *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* and *2010-11 Catalog* in a timely manner. The report established that the mission was developed using a broad-based campus community approach.

The *Year One Report* was properly structured with an introduction and institutional context section which provided a historical review of the development of the College, with its initial charter as a junior college in 1939, leading to a comprehensive community college in 1970. The report included a statement on mission fulfillment, which is tied to the College's seven Strategic Initiatives. The report identified core themes that "were derived from the Mission Statement and Strategic Initiatives." The evaluators noted that strategic initiatives were developed in the same manner as the mission; however, it was unclear as to the participation of the campus community in the identification of the core themes. The core themes, with indicators, rationale, tools for assessment, and action plan for improvement, were provided in an easy-to-read table format.

Report on Eligibility Requirements

The Evaluation Committee understood that the Commission's request to provide an Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirements (ER) 2 and 3 was a late addition to the guidelines for writing the Year One Self-Evaluation Report. Thus, the Committee encourages MCC to follow the guidelines released in March of 2011 to ensure that its next report addresses the ERs as noted in the guidelines.

Miles Community College is authorized to deliver certificates and degrees by the Montana Board of Regents. (Eligibility Requirement 2)

Evaluators found evidence of compliance with Eligibility Requirement 3. The mission and core themes of the College are clearly identified within the *Year One Report*. The mission of the College was approved by the College Board of Trustees on November 21, 2005, and core themes were approved by the Board on December 20, 2010, with a slight revision to core theme #4 being approved on January 24, 2011. The *2010 Catalog* that was provided lists the mission and strategic initiatives of the College with no reference to core theme statements. It is expected that the core themes will be included in the 2011 catalog. (Eligibility Requirement 3)

Section One

Introduction:

Miles Community College articulated its mission statement in its Year One Self-Evaluation Report as "Miles Community College promotes student success and lifelong learning through accessible, quality programs, and community partnerships." The Evaluation Committee found that the mission statement provides purpose and expectations of the College with respect to fulfillment of that purpose. The College has established seven Strategic Initiatives, which are the "foundation upon which mission fulfillment is articulated and assessed." In addition, four core themes were identified along with 14 objectives with accompanying rationale and indicators.

Report on Standard 1.A Mission:

Miles Community College has a published mission statement that was approved by its Board of Trustees on November 21, 2005, and is appropriate for an institution of higher learning. The mission provides direction for the initiatives of the College, was developed from a broad-based group from the campus community, and is generally understood. (Standard 1.A.1)

The College describes mission fulfillment in terms of meeting the seven Strategic Initiatives. This strategy was further described in table format listing the initiatives tied to

core themes along with tactics for completion, person of responsibility, performance indicator, timeframe to completion, and current status. (Standard 1.A.2)

Report on Standard 1.B Core Themes

Miles Community College has identified four core themes, which manifest elements of its mission statement. These themes include Student Success, Academic Excellence, Resource Management, and Community Outreach and Partnerships. The *Year One Report* stated that “the Core Themes were derived from the Mission Statement and Strategic Initiatives.” Reference to the process of identifying the themes is in Strategic Initiative 1.3. (Standard 1.B.1)

The College has identified objectives, indicators of achievement, rationale, and tools of assessment for each of the four core themes. The Evaluation Committee found that many of the indicators of achievement for the objectives did not include a statement regarding measureable results that would demonstrate achievement of the objective. The following provides examples:

Core Theme #, 1 Objective #1, Indicators: The indicators listed do not have assessable and verifiable measurements to document achievement of the objective.

Core Theme #2, Objective #1, Indicators: The indicators listed do not have assessable and verifiable measurements to document achievement of the objective.

Core Theme #3, Objective #1, Indicators: The indicators listed do not have assessable and verifiable measurements to document achievement of the objective.

Core Theme #4, Objective #2, Indicators: The indicators listed do not have assessable and verifiable measurements to document achievement of the objective.

Concern:

1. The College has identified objectives, indicators of achievement, rationale, and tools of assessment for each of its four core themes. The Committee encourages the College to review and refine current indicators of achievement to ensure that results are measurable for evaluating the accomplishment of the objectives for each core theme. (Standard 1.B.2)

Summary

Miles Community College’s *Year One Self-Evaluation Report* guided the Evaluation Committee through the College’s conceptual framework, enabling the Committee to gain insight into and make an objective evaluation of MCC’s intentions with respects to Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 and Standard One. The addendum to the *Year One Report* enabled the Committee to make a determination of the current status of Recommendation 1 with respect to the 2010 Standards.

The College has established an appropriate mission statement for a comprehensive community college. The mission statement provides a basis for establishing the identity and focus of the College. The College has established four core themes supporting the mission. The themes have objectives, indicators of achievement, a rationale, tools for assessment, and an action plan for improvement. The Evaluation Committee found that further development is needed to establish measureable indicators for assessing the accomplishment of each core theme objective.

The College's addendum and supporting appendices with regards to Recommendation 1 enabled the Evaluation Committee to provide an objective evaluation of the recommendation. The Committee compliments the College for its efforts towards developing and implementing a well-defined general education assessment plan.

Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the College for developing and implementing a well-defined, faculty-driven general education assessment plan that leads to enhancement of student learning achievements. (Standards 2.C.10, 4.A.2, 4.A.3, 4.B.2)

Recommendations:

1. Though the College has identified indicators of achievement for each core theme, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the College provide indicators that are measurable for evaluating the accomplishment of each objective for each core theme. (Standard 1.B.2)