

Renton Technical College
Regular Interim Report for Reaffirmation of Accreditation
September 2008

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Introduction

This Regular Interim Report is submitted in support of Renton Technical College's request for reaffirmation of accreditation. It documents progress that has been made in addressing the recommendations from both the Comprehensive Evaluation and the Focused Interim visits and includes organizational and programmatic changes that have occurred within the college since the 2003 visit that relate directly to the accreditation standards.

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Renton Technical College was conducted on October 13-15, 2003. Six recommendations were included in the Comprehensive Evaluation Report submitted by the evaluation team to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The Commission reaffirmed the college's accreditation status and requested that a progress report be submitted in fall 2004 addressing Recommendations 3, 4 and 6 of the Comprehensive Evaluation Report. The Commission also requested that the college prepare a focused interim visit report and host a Commission representative in fall 2006 to address Recommendations 1, 2, and 5 of the Comprehensive Evaluation Report.

In the months following receipt of the Commission's formal notification of action resulting from the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation, responsible members within the college administrative structure were tasked with identifying and implementing strategies to address the various items contained within the recommendations. A progress report documenting actions taken and progress made in regard to recommendations 3, 4, and 6 was forwarded to the Commission as requested. In January 2005, the college was notified that the report had been accepted by the Commission, which noted that sufficient progress had been made in response to those recommendations. As documented elsewhere in this report, the college continues its efforts toward improvement in each of the areas cited.

A focused interim report was submitted to the Commission in September 2006 which documented progress made in addressing the issues identified in Recommendations 1, 2, and 5 from the Comprehensive Evaluation visit of October 2003. The college hosted a Commission representative on October 16, 2006. One recommendation resulted from that visit, citing the need for the college to fully develop and implement assessment practices across campus and use the results for the improvement of teaching and learning. The college continues to work towards refinement of processes and procedures that institutionalize assessment practices while recognizing the unique needs that exist across its program offerings. As one of 58 institutions across the country and only six in Washington State that are part of the Achieving the Dream initiative, Renton Technical College has been working for the past two years to identify barriers to student success, and create and implement strategies that assist in eliminating them. Central to the goals of Achieving the Dream is the creation of a culture of evidence with decisions made based upon what is known and verifiable instead of information that is anecdotal in nature. The initiative has played a key role in reshaping planning and assessment processes as the College moves toward establishing a culture of evidence. These efforts are detailed within the body of this report.

Part A

Full Scale Evaluation General Recommendation 1: It is recommended that the institution revisit its strategic planning process to ensure a dynamic and systematic connectivity and evaluation of human, physical and instructional resources consistent with the institution's mission and goals. (Standard 1B).

As detailed in the institutional self-study prepared for the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation planning and evaluation at Renton Technical College had historically been rooted within the management of instructional programs. The activities that took place within that division then drove planning within the other divisions on campus. With the retirement of the college's long term president in 2000 and the arrival of its current president, Dr. Don Bressler, a renewed emphasis and commitment to strategic planning was introduced to the campus community. At the time of the comprehensive visit, and as documented in the Institutional Self-Study, it was noted that the college recognized the need for a more integrated, well-defined operational planning process that was tied to the strategic plan as well as to assessment and budgeting. This conclusion is consistent with the recommendation made by the evaluation team. The need for a more connected process drove the creation of a revised strategic plan for the college as well as the creation of a strategic planning procedure to guide the process. That procedure was drafted and approved in July 2003, subsequent to writing the self-study but prior to the comprehensive visit.

The Renton Technical College Strategic Plan procedure describes the mission, vision, and values of the College and identifies a timeline that consists of the following three components:

- 1) Every 5 years: Review of Vision, Mission, and Values
- 2) Every 3 years: Review and revise college priority areas and goals
- 3) Every year: Measure success of past objectives
Develop new objectives to move toward goals
Report results and strategic plan to community

In keeping with the college's strategic planning procedure and in response to Recommendation 1 of the Comprehensive Evaluation, a strategic planning retreat was convened on September 1, 2004, to review past activities, assess their current status, and identify a course for the future. Led by the college president and facilitated by an outside consultant, the retreat was a daylong event whose participants included members of the Board of Trustees, college administration, and the four unions that represent hourly employees. A total of 39 people representing a cross section of the college staff took part in the retreat.

President Bressler began the retreat with a review of the mission, vision, and values of the college and highlighted the historical focus of the institution on preparing people for the workplace:

- **Mission:** Renton Technical College prepares a diverse population for work, fulfilling the employment needs of individuals, students, and industry.

- **Vision:** Renton Technical College will be the premiere technical college in Washington State offering certificates and associate and baccalaureate technical degrees.
- **Values:** Renton Technical College is committed to the following values as we fulfill our mission and move towards our vision:
 - Student focused.....their success is our success
 - Quality.....without compromise
 - Integrity.....to say and do what is right
 - Teamwork.....together, we will accomplish more
 - Respect.....for people and feelings, ideas and resources
 - Service.....to our customers and our community

He then summarized the four goal areas that had been identified in the strategic planning sessions held in 2001 and the institutional goals that had been established within each of those categories:

- **Access to education and training**
 - Promote and support diversity throughout the College
 - Develop alternative delivery strategies and service systems
 - Respond to Basic Education needs in support of occupational training
- **Service to students from initial application to graduation and beyond**
 - Address preparedness and transition for students entering and exiting the technical college environment
- **Quality through a commitment to student success**
 - Measure and improve institutional effectiveness
 - Establish, support, and strengthen student learning outcomes throughout the College
 - Promote and support organizational and staff development
- **Economic development through partnering with the community**
 - Maintain cost effectiveness standards
 - Expand college resources
 - Expand community and economic development activities

In accordance with the college's strategic planning procedure, champions are assigned to each institutional goal and are responsible for reporting annually to the Board of Trustees the status of activity related to the attainment of those goals. Because there are ten goal areas and there are ten regularly scheduled Board meetings each year, a goal report is included in the agenda for each meeting.

The assembled team conducted an analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to each of the goal areas and used these as a foundation for subsequent activities within the retreat, each of which were designed to aid in identifying the strategic direction of the college for the next three years.

A review and analysis of the mission, vision, and values of the institution was conducted in which input from all in attendance was solicited. That work left the mission of the college

unchanged but produced changes to the vision, values, and institutional goals. The vision was revised to read as follows:

- Renton Technical College will be the premier technical college in Washington State preparing students for certificates and associate and baccalaureate degrees.

This change was in recognition of the college's desire to remain true to its mission of preparing people for work through the granting of certificates and associates degrees, while at the same time recognizing the changing nature of the workforce in which advanced degrees are required for career growth. The change was specifically targeted at dispelling the notion that offering baccalaureate degrees is a goal of the college.

The college values received one small but significant modification. The value related to respect was changed to read as follows:

- Respect.....for the diversity of people and feelings, ideas and resources

This change recognizes the tremendous diversity that exists within the college's student population and within the greater Renton community.

Two of the college's ten institutional goals were also revised and updated to reflect the consensus of the planning retreat team. Goal number two was changed to reflect the idea of continuous improvement:

- **Develop and strengthen** alternative delivery strategies and service systems.

Goal number four, which addresses operational efficiency and effectiveness, was moved from the general area of economic development to the area related to quality as it was the consensus of the group that it was more appropriately suited to maintaining and improving the level of excellence of all activities conducted by the administration, faculty, and staff of the College.

Once the planning team had completed its work related to the vision, mission, values, and goals, it was then possible to move forward based on the concepts they contain. An affinity process was used in which participants brainstormed ideas for activities and actions that would take the college toward fulfillment of its mission and service to students during the next three years. Ideas were sorted by major initiatives/directions. Through discussion participants reached agreement on the major initiatives/directions for the college for the next three years. Participants also developed an understanding of how these initiatives/directions fit into the overall strategic planning scheme (vision→mission→college goals→main issues to be addressed during the next three years→specific action plans→assessment). Out of this process, sixteen initiatives emerged for the college to pursue during the following three years:

1. Improve operational efficiency.
2. Improve internal communication systems and decision making processes.
3. Resolve compensation issues.
4. Improve staff orientation and development.

5. Recruit diverse faculty, students, and staff.
6. Develop and implement Campus Master Plan.
7. Increase student involvement.
8. Improve job placement services.
9. Recruit and attract high school graduates.
10. Review and revise program offerings and delivery.
11. Expand alternative funding sources.
12. Improve legislative relationships.
13. Improve relationships with other two- and four-year institutions.
14. Improve program management.
15. Improve relations with industry.
16. Communicate clear image of RTC.

The final activity conducted during the planning retreat was to create an arachnid chart that would provide a baseline for future assessment of progress made on each of the 16 initiatives identified. Participants charted their perceptions regarding where the college is now on each issue by showing the percentage progress toward 100%.

The final step in the process was the creation of an interrelationship digraph. This tool was used to determine if there is a relationship between issues. It also assists in identifying which issues drive the institution and which exist as a result of the drivers. The relationships that became clear as the process unfolded hold the key to the strategic direction the college must take and gave the participants a sense of the true priorities for the institution based on their input. As relationships among the issues emerged, so too did relationships among the various elements of the college organization.

The enrollment crisis that occurred in fall quarter 2004 forced a delay in addressing the directions/issues identified in the retreat. Given the severity of the problem, it was necessary to focus virtually all available institutional resources on increasing the number of students attending Renton Technical College. While strategic planning and related activities did not completely stop, they were temporarily scaled back in favor of solving what was viewed as a more immediate threat to the institution. Some activities tied to or resulting from the strategic planning process did continue, however. For instance, the Student Success Center became operational in summer of 2004 and now provides a variety of services including job placement assistance, tutoring, and study skills classes. Building upon the results of the all day Strategic Planning Retreat, activities such as the annual Instruction Division Retreat and the Campus Master Planning Project were scheduled and tailored to include the direction and issues that emerged from the planning process. The Campus Master Plan process was included in the college budget for 2004-2005, has been completed, and was the basis for the college's capital budget requests for the 2007-09 and 2009-11 bienniums. (See details as listed in this report under response to Recommendation 5.) The first annual Instruction Retreat, held in August 2004, focused on near- and long-term program planning by identifying and prioritizing new programs. As part of this process, existing programs that were considered at risk were also identified. The product of the retreat was a list of planned programs to be developed, approved, and started over a period of six years. That list was reviewed at the beginning of fall quarter 2006 and timelines were adjusted as necessary to reflect changes brought about by reallocation

of available resources, variations in the local economy, and a desire to maintain a balanced mix of programs across all departments within instruction. Subsequent retreats had as their theme such topics as development of divisional goals based on the institutional strategic plan. This led to the development of a strategic plan for the instruction division which is clearly tied to that of the institution. Updating of the divisional plan was a major focus of the most recent divisional retreat which took place on July 21, 2008.

Procedures for filling vacant positions have also been modified to reflect the goal of operating more efficiently. As a vacancy occurs, the position is reviewed by the supervisor to determine if it is still required, if its associated job description should be revised, or if the duties assigned to it can be reassigned elsewhere within the department and the position eliminated. That recommendation is presented to the Executive Cabinet by the responsible Vice President and a decision is then made as to how the vacancy will be handled. If the position is reallocated, the resources attached to it are used to fund new positions that have been identified and prioritized by the Executive Cabinet.

At a special work session convened in June 2006, the Board of Trustees devoted a morning to determining their goals for the coming year. As part of that meeting, the college president reviewed the status of the strategic planning process and presented the proposed goals for the Executive Cabinet for the 2006-07 year. Each of these goals relates to one of the ten institutional goals identified previously and to one of the 16 initiatives/directions that resulted from the Strategic Planning Retreat.

Due to changes in the composition of the Board of Trustees and a yearlong vacancy in one of the positions, the college president chose to defer the scheduled steps/reviews in the strategic planning process until the vacancy could be filled and the new members sufficiently educated regarding the history of strategic planning at RTC, current status, and direction for the future. Because strategic direction is inextricably tied to Board policies, the president was insistent that the new members fully understand the college, its mission, vision, and goals, and its history prior to embarking on a more substantive direction. Strategic planning processes and their associated steps will begin again with the start of the 2008-09 academic year.

The overview of strategic planning related activities that is provided in this report and the examples of how they have been and are being used in the administration of Renton Technical College provide evidence that the institution continues to make progress in addressing the recommendation of the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation Team. While much remains to be done, college administration understands that the nature of strategic planning is such that it is never truly finished. It is therefore important to have the procedures and mechanisms in place to keep the college moving forward in an orderly way with well defined and thought out objectives. The creation of a Strategic Plan for Instruction during the past year is viewed as a first step in the development of similar plans for each division within the college's organizational structure and is evidence of the continuing evolution of strategic planning at RTC. This process needs to be formalized and brought to fruition by the creation of similar plans for Student Services and Finance and Administration. The procedures and mechanisms are in place to do so and keep the college on track toward continuous growth and improvement.

Full Scale Evaluation General Recommendation 2: It is recommended that the institution implement across campus consistent levels of educational program planning and assessment that utilize models of best practices from existing programs and provide linkages to the institutional strategic planning process. (Standard 2B).

and

Focused Interim Evaluation Recommendation: It is recommended that the college fully develop and implement assessment practices across campus and use the results of those practices to improve teaching and learning and inform the institution's planning processes.

In order to understand the implementation of educational planning and assessment processes across the Renton Technical College campus, it is important to understand the historical organization of the college and the culture that developed as a result of it. Full time programs are scheduled in six hour blocks and meet daily. Students therefore register for a program block, not for individual courses. This model in turn influences the culture of the institution and how instructors, deans, and administration have traditionally viewed themselves and the interrelationship between programs and departments within the instruction division. It has been a significant factor in determining how faculty members interact with one another on a professional level, with each department functioning very much like an independent school with the dean as principal. Interaction within departments, while it occurred, was not the norm, and collaboration between programs in different departments was virtually unheard of.

The block program model of instructional delivery that is characteristic of full time programs at Renton Technical College tends to create silos. The long held view that each program is a "one room schoolhouse," with related instruction in math, communication and writing taught by the program instructor within the context of the professional-technical field, enhances the isolation of instructors. In an effort to break down these silos, strategies such as monthly team meetings and deans meetings, where instructors in related programs can talk about issues of mutual concern, have been implemented. This idea has been expanded upon in various ways. For example, some of the departments meet each month in a different classroom so that instructors can share innovations that may be related to specific instructional or program equipment that cannot be relocated for demonstration purposes.

Renton Technical College has done much to combat this isolation by sharing best practices across the campus, to include the dissemination of information about successful instructional strategies and the presentation of information by instructors about their successes as models for others to emulate. Faculty has often presented their successful teaching and classroom management strategies at the monthly campus-wide Team Meeting. Increasingly, faculty members have been called upon to lead workshops or demonstrations in areas of expertise.

It is anticipated that this type of exchange will increase with the implementation of the Achieving the Dream grant, which is focused on the retention of at-risk students.

Two campus-wide competitions, one to collect recommended learning activities and the other to collect lesson plans for commonly taught courses, have been held and the results shared with

faculty. The Diversity Team is collecting learning activities related to teaching diversity which will be available on the Instructional Improvement website and when SharePoint is in place become an interactive source of lesson ideas. The purchase of a Quia site license and a Quia Users group allows faculty, staff and administrators to learn from each other on the use of this resource for on-line activities, surveys, quizzes, and testing. An “Application Wizards” list has been posted for faculty and staff to help each other with problems in using common Microsoft Applications and a similar list has been gathered of individuals with fluency in languages other than English so that they can be called upon for emergency translation.

An ongoing example of cross-campus sharing of best practices is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) project, where faculty are piloting teaching strategies that are intended to address the needs of students with diagnosed learning disabilities. UDL is based on the concept that strategies identified to help a specific group of learners can be used to help all learners. The pilot instructors have investigated multi-modal learning, brain-based teaching strategies and adaptive technology and applied their findings in their classrooms. Their classroom success has been shared within the pilot group and across campus through meetings, workshops, and newsletters, print publications, web resources and a CD of teaching strategies with instructions to replicate. With the implementation of the second phase of the project, they are now sharing what they have learned with partners in the state community and technical college system as well. *Faculty Focus*, an electronic newsletter published monthly by Instructional Improvement, cites outstanding instructional strategies. Back issues are available through the college intranet on the Instructional Improvement site, along with other teaching resources.

Other examples of cross-fertilization include the use of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model of instruction in which an English as a second language (ESL) Instructor teams with a Professional Technical instructor to teach a class with a high percentage of ESL students. The instructors learn from each other and from the experiences of other teams.

Some instructors have traded classes so that their students can benefit from the expertise of other faculty members. For example, the surveying students have taken a turn in the drafting classroom improving their online CAD skills, while the drafting students have benefited from learning surveying applications from the surveying instructors. Medical Office and Ophthalmic Assistant instructors have worked together to design exercises to involve students of both classes in a simulated office setting. Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language Instructors meet regularly to share strategies.

Instructors also meet in tenure committees and the Instructional Improvement Advisory Committee where instructional strategy is discussed and best practices shared.

Program planning and curriculum revision across the campus is supported by the Competency Based Education (CBE) process and web-based software which was created by a Renton Technical College faculty member. It documents the competencies of each course, learning activities, assignments, and assessment with criteria that are tied to the competencies. The work is exemplary of the curriculum development process described in Ruth Stiehl’s Outcomes Primer, and coaching from Instructional Improvement insures that the assessments and learning activities related to a competency are on the same Bloom’s Taxonomy level. Faculty receive

financial incentives for using this system and receive support from Instructional Improvement as they develop and revise curriculum. The curriculum continues to migrate from individual faculty computers to the web so that existing courses can be a resource to other faculty in their curricular development and revision. For continuous improvement, CBE's are reviewed every three years as a part of a procedure-driven program review cycle. Curriculum is also reviewed and approved by program advisory committees to insure relevancy to the workplace.

The development of new professional technical programs at Renton Technical College is consistent with Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges processes. Program development begins with research on industry needs which leads to a DACUM or industry focus group to determine localized need. Where applicable, industry based skills standards are used to develop program outcomes and competencies. As part of the development process, program outcomes are defined, and published on the RTC website and tied to college-level outcomes. Program development utilizes the curriculum mapping process described by Ruth Stiehl in her Mapping Primer. Course development utilizes the CBE process. This process is consistent with the college's strategic planning goal area related to Economic Development because it is focused on designing curriculum that insures that program graduates will have the skills that employers need.

Renton Technical College is following the Nichols model for assessment, which was instituted at many community and technical colleges in the area following a visit by James and Karen Nichols to the Association for Community and Technical College Administrators in November, 1999. It is essentially a cycle of goal, activity, assessment, feedback, and improvement, which is very much a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) process. It is reflected in the Collaborative Operation Planning Model presented by the president to the Board of Trustees at their special planning meeting held in July 2006.

Prior to the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation visit, programs revisited the concept of program-level outcomes. The results were published at the college website and can be accessed through a link on each program description. A small group of deans and directors revised the college-level educational outcomes based on a review of the program-level outcomes, which were then reviewed by the joint student services/instruction team and by the administrative team. These college-level outcomes appear in a graphic form in the Student Handbook and the new printed catalog but still need to be added to the college website. The Syllabus Template has been revised to encourage instructors to include program and college outcomes in addition to course objectives on their course syllabi.

Utilizing a Best Practices grant from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, an Assessment Taskforce made up of faculty which represented all professional-technical areas was formed. This group received special training and readings about outcomes and summative assessment. They then conducted an exercise in a Team Meeting in which the faculty related their program outcomes to the college-level outcomes. This clarified the connection between program and institutional outcomes for faculty in existing programs and has been included in the development process for programs created since that project.

The college had several choices in determining how to document where the institutional level outcomes are assessed in programs. Evaluation of these options also took into consideration the critical need to use the results of assessment to evaluate overall institutional effectiveness and drive changes designed to improve the institution's efforts in fulfilling its mission of preparing people for work. Of the models reviewed, the one developed and used by the Wisconsin Technical Colleges was very appealing. Its primary feature is a database that shows where in the curriculum each of the college-level outcomes is assessed. The Assessment Team liked this, but quickly realized that the infrastructure required to create or maintain such a database is not in place at Renton Technical College. Another significant shortcoming is that this model is primarily a means of documenting where assessment occurs; it does not include a mechanism for using the results to improve the program or the college.

At the Washington State Board for Community and Technical College Teaching and Learning Conference held in 2005, the Assessment Team learned that Pierce College and others were writing generic rubrics for each of their college level outcomes, and would then do the following:

- have the programs rate themselves
- randomly sample programs and score the project or assessment that had been identified as related to the college outcome against the rubric
- schedule this on a three-year cycle (which fits well with Renton Technical College's three-year program review cycle)

This last option was identified by the Assessment Team (now called the Instructional Improvement Advisory Committee) as most compatible with the Renton Technical College culture. Therefore, they applied for and received a Best Practices Grant for 2006-07 to create generic "Common" rubrics for faculty to use as a basis to measure accomplishment of each of the five college-level outcomes. The Common Rubrics were polished in 2007-08 and are ready to be reviewed by the Deans and Directors in Instruction and be introduced to faculty. The group determined that a culturally-compatible method for utilizing the rubrics would be for each instructor to use the rubrics to assess the student work that relates to the outcome and publish the outcome and their reflection on that outcome as part of their CBEs. The CBE database has been modified so that the instructors will have a place to record what Common Rubric(s) they have used and any modifications they plan to make based on the result of using the rubrics. In 2008-09, with a revision of the procedure on the Program Review Process, the use of the Rubrics will be incorporated into the three year cycle.

This effort has been supported and will continue to be supported by faculty training in assessment strategies, creation of rubrics, creation of summative assessment projects and capstone courses. Workshops, in-service days, UDL grant pilot instructor exercises, *Faculty Focus* articles and instructors sharing their best practices will continue to be the strategies employed to keep all faculty connected to the institutionalization of this assessment model.

In addition to the work in progress to implement a Nichols model feedback cycle, Renton Technical College currently uses several other documented feedback methods to assure continuous improvement in the delivery of instruction:

- regularly scheduled student surveys scheduled by the Department of Research.
- tenure committee and Dean/Director annual observation of Probationary Faculty.
- Dean/Director annual observation and evaluation of full-time tenured faculty and part-time faculty.
- Small Group Instructional Diagnostics (SGIDs) and observations as requested from Instructional Improvement.
- professional improvement plans from full-time and qualifying part-time faculty.

In August 2004, the instruction division held the first of what is now an annual retreat. This meeting is an all day event that is facilitated by the Director of Instructional Improvement. The agenda is determined collaboratively by the instruction team and focuses on a particular subject area that is of concern or special interest to the division as a whole. The retreat held in August 2005 was focused on program planning. Potential new program areas were identified in advance by the cognizant deans and then evaluated in a small group session on the day of the retreat based on criteria that exists within Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and Renton Technical College procedures. The initiatives and directions identified in the Strategic Planning Retreat of 2004 served both a starting and reference point for the meeting. The outcome of the retreat was a list of potential programs and a proposed implementation schedule. That list was presented to the Executive Cabinet and the Board of Trustees. Following their concurrence, it was then presented at a Joint Student Services/Instruction Team meeting and at an Administrative Team Meeting. The president of the college also reviewed it at his monthly Faculty Staff Council meeting. While many of the programs scheduled for implementation have indeed been started, fiscal and other realities have prevented adding all of them to the college inventory. The list was therefore reviewed and revised by the Instruction Team in September 2006 and was presented to the Board of Trustees, Executive Cabinet, and the campus at large in October 2006.

Renton Technical College needs to continue its efforts to institutionalize the assessment process. While this is happening, it is doing so at a slow pace. Assessment of each program is standardized through processes such as student program evaluations, placement and retention reports, and the program review process. However, assessment also varies by program based on individual requirements. For example, virtually all programs in the allied health and automotive service specialties are accredited by outside agencies. The process of individual program accreditation drives in large part the assessment practices that are followed. Those practices may or may not be suitable to other programs offered by the college but that don't have similar external drivers influencing their processes. Thus, the assessment strategies used will have a common base across all full time programs but may vary based on individual program requirements.

In summer of 2006, the college was chosen as one of six community and technical colleges in Washington to be part of the Achieving the Dream grant. This five year initiative is designed to improve the success rate of underserved populations and has at its core a reliance on data to drive instructional and institutional change. The grant emphasizes building a culture of evidence that supports instructional strategies designed to improve the completion rates of hard to serve populations. Achieving the Dream therefore aligns exceptionally well with the Plan-Do-Check-Act process that underlies the college's strategic planning process. It has already done much to

build upon the assessment processes already in place at the college, make us take a closer look at what we are doing and why, and establish a culture of assessment within the institution.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that the institution clarify and adhere to procedures that identify qualifications of instructors who deliver embedded related instruction in the technical programs (Policy 2.1).

As noted in the progress report submitted to the Commission in fall 2004, the college recognized the need to provide qualified instruction in each of the three component areas of related instruction: computation, communication, and human relations. The ideal way to meet the intent of Policy 2.1 would have been to hire a sufficient number of instructional staff to provide this instruction in each of our programs. However, available fiscal resources were not sufficient to allow for the implementation and ongoing support of this approach. Therefore, a solution that maintained the current practice in which technical instructors provide classroom instruction in the related area of study as applicable to the career field, but integrated with relevant theory and delivered under the oversight of a qualified instructor, i.e., one holding a masters degree in the appropriate discipline, was selected. Selection of this alternative provided the theoretical base and course oversight that is implicit in the Policy while retaining the applied portion of the current curriculum that is critical to effective technical training.

Using funds from a best practices grant awarded by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, issues related to embedded mathematics instruction were identified and addressed during academic year 2003-04. A campus committee led by the dean for general education and consisting of technical faculty members and key administrators undertook a study of mathematics courses that are contained within the career and technical courses of instruction. The purpose of this study was two-fold: 1) to determine the various “levels” of math that are integrated into program curriculum (algebra to precalculus), and 2) to study student success rates in math courses, including a comparison of COMPASS test scores to failure rate.

This effort resulted in the identification of the common math elements that exist within programs as well as those areas that have unique requirements. Developmental mathematics courses were identified to bridge the gap between the material covered in the college’s adult basic education offerings and the entry level requirements of the technical training programs. A math lab was also created on campus, and appropriate training software purchased, that allows students to take the developmental math courses that they need to insure program readiness. The format for this instruction is computer-based, facilitated by a math instructor, which allows students to proceed at their own pace.

Finally, and most importantly, the college hired a full time math instructor. His duties consist of working with technical faculty to insure that the content of their math courses and the associated teaching materials and lesson plans are consistent with the needs of the program and reflect quality math instruction. The math instructor is responsible, in conjunction with the assigned technical faculty member, for the content and quality of the math curriculum of each program offered by the college. The technical instructor delivers the content, but does so with the assistance and guidance of the math instructor. As stated previously, the mathematics instructor

also oversees the math lab and the developmental math courses, assisting students as they progress through the computer based modules.

In academic year 2004-05, the college again used a best practices grant to fund a study of the communications component of related instruction. The identification and creation of developmental language arts courses that resulted from this study helped bridge the gap between the adult basic education curriculum and that which is embedded in the technical programs. Using growth funds, the college hired a full time English/speech teacher in fiscal year 2005-06. Similarly, a portion of growth money received in academic year 2006-07 was used to add a full time psychology instructor to the faculty. Both the English instructor and the psychology instructor have as half of their assigned workload the responsibility of working with the technical program instructors to identify the communications and human relations instruction relevant to the specific career field, incorporate it into the program curriculum, and effectively deliver it to students. The success of this approach has been mixed. Relying on technical program instructors to take the initiative and work directly with the three general education instructors to improve the delivery of related instruction had limited success. Therefore, in spring quarter 2008, the decision was made by instructional administration to place all full time professional technical programs on a five year oversight cycle during which time the three areas of related instruction curriculum would be reviewed and revised as necessary and in conjunction with the general education faculty. By formalizing the process through the scheduling of a "related instruction review," better control could be gained over the content and delivery of related instruction in full time professional technical programs. The review process was piloted in spring quarter 2008. Each general education instructor was assigned to work with the instructors in preselected professional technical programs for the purpose of reviewing and revising as necessary the related instruction component of their programs. The supervising dean was included in those discussions. The dean for general education met regularly with the general education faculty and at the end of the process to assess its success, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and determine any process changes that might be necessary. Full implementation of the related instruction review procedure will begin in fall quarter 2008.

Full Scale Evaluation General Recommendation 4: It is recommended a prudent review of credit assessment for prior learning, advanced placement and transfer credit policies and procedures in order to align them with accepted practices at the institution (Policy 2.3, Policy 2.5 and Standards 2B, 2.C.4 and 3.C.4).

This recommendation resulted from two findings by the evaluation committee. The first finding involved a clause in the collective bargaining agreement with the faculty union which allows a non-degree instructor who teaches in a degree granting program to obtain an associate degree for her/his area of study provided s/he has taught all courses in the program or successfully challenged the course(s) they have not taught, and by completing the required general education classes. This is in conflict with the Commission's prescribed policies on credit for prior experiential learning (Policy 2.3), which limits the award of such credit to 25% of a program's total credits. In response to this, and as reported in the progress report submitted to the Commission in fall 2004, college administration informed the faculty union that it could no longer abide by the contract clause that provides for the award of associate degrees to faculty members as doing so was not consistent with accreditation standards. The union accepted that

position and the referenced clause was removed from the contract during the collective bargaining session that took place in 2004-05.

The second finding by the evaluation committee involved the method by which credit for prior academic experience was applied in a college program. In the instant case, the instructors in one program failed to follow published college procedures for the award of transfer credit. Specifically, they awarded the incoming student(s) the grade they received at the originating institution for the same or similar course work at Renton Technical College. This was in direct conflict with the college's published Credit for Advanced Standing procedure. Furthermore, the program instructors had been directed in writing a year prior to the visit to cease this practice when it was discovered as part of the self-study process. As a result of the evaluation committee's findings, an audit of all college full time programs was undertaken to determine if the problem existed elsewhere. No instances of improper award of transfer credit were found in other programs. However, a total of seven students were found to have had credits improperly applied in the Surveying program. As a result of this, the instructors were verbally disciplined, the Credit for Advanced Standing procedure was revised to include administrative review and approval, and the process was reviewed with all faculty at a monthly team meeting. The affected students were counseled and either took a challenge test for the affected college course(s) or elected to take the Renton Technical College course. In those cases where transfer of credit was appropriate, the student's transcript was corrected to remove the erroneous grade and indicate that transfer of course work had been approved and accepted. A transcript review committee was also established to evaluate the coursework of incoming students requesting advanced standing in general education courses. This committee consists of student services personnel who review the transcripts of all incoming students who request transfer of credit. Instructional faculty is consulted as required to evaluate the equivalency of these courses. In the case where transfer of technical courses is requested, the responsible technical faculty review the student transcript, interview the student and, in conference with their dean, approve or deny the transfer request. A transcript evaluator has recently been added to the registration staff. The responsibilities of this position are outlined in more detail in Part B of this report.

Full Scale Evaluation General Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the institution pursue to completion a comprehensive physical resource plan to include a campus master plan and space utilization plan (Standard 8C).

As reported in the Focused Interim Report submitted to the Commission in September 2006, this recommendation and the Strategic Planning Retreat of September 2004 provided the momentum for the development of a Campus Master Plan. Following completion of the Institutional Self-Study that was prepared for the 2003 Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, the college began the master planning process by forming a master plan committee consisting of key administrative and academic staff. Assisted by Schreiber, Starling and Lane Architects, the committee met over a six month period during which strategic factors impacting campus development were identified and planning goals were established.

Successful master planning projects begin with the team gaining an understanding of the functions and operations performed within the campus. To accomplish this task, the planning team held a series of fourteen planning workshops with representatives of each program and

department, student services administrators, and campus services personnel. The purpose of these workshops was to review institutional and planning goals, analyze the existing physical plant and operations, gather and analyze pertinent growth and planning data and projections, review and incorporate the goals and objectives of individual programs, and make general observations to develop an understanding of the existing campus.

Coupling the data gathered through workshops with previous planning efforts, the State Board Capital Analysis Model (CAM), the RTC Strategic Plan, and the State Space Standards Manual, the planning team identified current and projected space shortfalls. In addition to the space shortfall identified, the team recognized the need to increase functional efficiencies and the opportunity for intradepartmental interaction through renovation and reorganization of the spaces within the existing campus buildings.

Concurrent with the workshops, the planning team conducted on-site tours and visits to all campus facilities to record existing conditions and identify conditions and factors impacting current operations and those having impact on future development.

On the basis of the findings of the existing evaluation and workshop data, the planning team explored the overall campus character and environment evaluating the clarity of site circulation, the ability of visitors and students to clearly find their way to and through campus, the current and planned parking needs, and the capability of the service infrastructure to expand with the campus.

To define the scope of growth to be incorporated into the Campus Master Plan, the following strategies were implemented:

- **Total Need Determination:** The total growth area needed was determined through the workshops. Areas were quantified and a total area of new construction was calculated. These needs were then evaluated against the State Board's CAM analysis to verify compatibility.
- **Campus Character and Environs:** The workshop process included discussions regarding the physical presentation of the RTC campus to the community and the students it serves. A series of goals were developed as an aid to generating projects that will enhance not only the visual image of the college but also strengthen the general campus organization and service opportunities resulting in a more user-friendly environment.
- **Building Development Site Planning:** The planning team made physical assessments of all campus facilities. During the workshops the planning team and participants discussed the relationships of the spaces needed by their programs. Appropriate locations were selected based on the areas available/required and how well alternatives meet the stated planning goals.
- **Campus Infrastructure:** Along with new and replacement building developments, associated infrastructure and utility improvements were identified and incorporated into the campus site plan.

The Campus Master Plan that was produced provided for both the expansion of the campus and the reallocation of existing spaces, and reflected the results of other related strategic planning processes in place at the college and long range goals in existence at the time and provided the basis for the college's requested capital projects that was submitted for the 2007-08 and 2009-11 biennium.

The Campus Master Plan created by the college through the described process provided a well thought out and relevant document to assist in meeting the institution's long term strategic goals. The process used by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to determine capital project priorities across the community and technical college system can have an impact on the college's desired timeline for implementing the plan. Since the time of the master plan development and approval, the college has provided two submissions for capital projects to the SBCTC. Each has met with minimal or no success. While renovation of the existing automotive instruction complex was approved, a new building for the trades was not. This building is a key first step in wholesale replacement of the oldest buildings on campus. The failure of the proposals to score high enough within the system used by the SBCTC to prioritize projects caused senior administration to examine the validity of the plan and its reasonable chances for success within the system of project prioritization SBCTC. To assist in this assessment, a master plan revision committee was formed by the facilities director. The committee was tasked with reviewing the current master plan and considering if a formal revision of it was warranted. The committee met regularly for a period of about three months, for a total of five (5) times to date. Long term needs as related to those identified through institutional strategic plans, projected enrollment growth, and community needs were discussed and evaluated. Subject matter experts were called upon as needed to support the committee in its work. For example, the Dean for Basic Studies, an area which was integral to the development of a crucial phase of a potential master plan revision, was brought in to offer insight about the needs and projected growth of his programs. The Director of Child Care Center was also interviewed by a task force member to investigate the feasibility of incorporating a new Child Care Center in conjunction with one of the other proposed projects. Lastly, the Executive Cabinet was briefed on several occasions as to the status and general development of the recommendation the committee was formulating. This provided an opportunity for the Executive Cabinet to channel feedback to the committee members. The process led to a proposed revision of the plan that accounts for changes in enrollment growth patterns and projected programmatic needs that have occurred since the original plan was developed

The final product from the committee will be a written recommendation to the Executive Cabinet regarding the need to revise the current campus master plan. Included in the recommendation will be a schematic plan and timeline which will serve as the basis for the master plan revision. As of this writing, the recommendation has been drafted and is awaiting review by the full committee. A formal recommendation to the Executive Cabinet will follow shortly thereafter.

Full Scale Evaluation General Recommendation 6: It is recommended that the institution systematically implement its faculty evaluation policies to include all full time and part time faculty members. (Policy 4.1)

The faculty evaluation procedure at Renton Technical College was revised in 2002 to change the criteria upon which faculty were reviewed and to focus the process on professional improvement. Skill Standards for Professional-Technical Instructors were used to provide the basis for each

element within the evaluation instrument. While regular evaluation of full time faculty had been occurring at the College since its previous accreditation visit in 1993, the instruments used were considered cumbersome and the skills reviewed in them were of limited value in identifying areas of improvement for the faculty member. Substantial improvement in the process of evaluating full time instructors was made but the part time faculty process was not clearly defined and inconsistently implemented across program areas. As a result of the recommendation from the evaluation committee, a joint faculty-administration team was formed to revise the faculty evaluation procedure so that all part time instructors would be included in the process. The team produced an updated process which provides for evaluation of part time faculty that is consistent with that used for full time instructors. Multiple indices (student, self and immediate supervisor evaluations) are used to measure performance and provide guidance for improvement, and timelines for the administration of each are included. The new process was implemented in fall quarter 2004.

Part B

This section of the report addresses institutional changes that have occurred, as related to the accreditation standards, since the Comprehensive Evaluation of October 2003.

Standard One – Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning, and Effectiveness

The mission of Renton Technical College remains unchanged. However, the vision and goals underwent minor modifications as detailed in Part A of this report. The nature of the changes was such that they had no impact on the day to day operation of the college.

A long term goal of the college has been to establish a presence in downtown Renton. The reason for this is twofold: 1) space on the main campus is limited, with current acreage insufficient to allow for the construction of one more building, and 2) the need to have classroom space more readily accessible to our community partners. During the past year, the president of the college was approached by a group consisting of a local church and a community based organization regarding the institution's interest in having a location in downtown Renton from which classes could be delivered. The facility, to be constructed over the next 18 months, will provide space for the delivery of basic studies courses and customized training for business. The college is currently in the stages of having this arrangement approved at the appropriate state and local levels.

The institution has been hindered in the development of its strategic plan and assessment processes due to turnover and subsequent vacancies in the research director position. The college has had three researchers leave for other opportunities during the five years that have elapsed since the 2003 comprehensive evaluation. With the hiring of the current director in late 2007 and the inception of the Achieving the Dream initiative, progress is again being made in creating assessment tools for campus wide use that will support and enhance the decision making processes in place at the college. While enrollment, retention, completion, and placement remain the benchmarks by which program effectiveness is assessed, the college has been forced by its participation in the Achieving the Dream initiative to take a hard look at the processes it uses to collect data and at the integrity of the data itself. Significant progress has been made in a short

amount of time toward insuring that the data that is being collected is valid and reliable so that decisions based upon sound assessment can be made. Additionally, cohort based data is now being collected as well as the data needed for the broader analysis that has historically been completed at the program level.

Standard Two – Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Since completion of the Comprehensive Evaluation of 2003, there have been no changes made in the requirements for graduation from the programs offered by Renton Technical College. However, as of this report, the institution is putting into place plans to switch from being a clock hour based institution to being a credit based one. This change is driven by a realization that it is ultimately in the best interests of the students enrolled at the college to be a credit awarding institution. Financial aid awards, transferability of course work, and support from the statewide data management system is significantly better for credit hour colleges. The institution has had credit equivalencies for all of its academic offerings for some time. Therefore, the amount of effort needed to fit programs into a credit hour model is thought to be minimal. There will, however, be some curriculum revisions required so that courses complete and end in the same quarter. Additionally, registration and financial aid bear the brunt of the work associated with this effort as there are significant differences in processes and procedures that will have to be identified and put into place. Credit hour conversion will be implemented on July 1, 2009.

The enrollment profile of the college as determined by the actual number of students signing up for a particular program or class has changed in the five years that have elapsed since the last comprehensive evaluation. The number of FTE generated in full time occupational programs and in supplemental (continuing education) courses has decreased, while basic studies, general education, and apprenticeship have all increased. The decline in full time program enrollment can be attributed to the strong economy that the region has experienced. Continuing education courses are attracting a smaller audience due to the declining demand for business and technical training. Additionally, area employers are less inclined to reimburse employees for this type of training than they have been previously. Basic studies enrollments have increased as the immigrant population in the college's service area has grown. Apprenticeships, particularly those related to the building trades, have experienced significant growth in response to the demands of the Puget Sound construction industry.

In the time that has passed since the self-study of 2003 was completed, the following programs are no longer being offered:

Bookkeeper, Auto Parts Systems, Sales, and Handling, Electronics Technology, Industrial Electronics Technician, PC and Network Support Technician, Emergency Dispatcher, Industrial Studies, Technical Studies, Office Equipment Repair, Software Applications. Additionally, one of two sections of the Pharmacy Technician program was eliminated.

The following programs have been added to the college's inventory: Civil Computer Aided Drafting and Design, Dispatcher, Stationary Engineering, Basic Welding, Certified Medical Laboratory Technician, Associate Degree Registered Nursing, Certified Ophthalmic Assistant, Veterinary Assistant, and Freight Dispatching and Management.

The institution also opened and closed three programs in the past five years: Art of Professional Cooking, Hospital Custodian, and Automotive General Service Technician. For each program, the decision to close was based on poor enrollment. While advance research done by the responsible program deans and recommendations from industry partners indicated that there was demand for these programs, they failed to attract an audience.

Several programs have undergone significant changes in their content and/or delivery. The accounting program has been redesigned to make the courses that comprise it more transferable. While the ability of students to receive transfer credit for coursework completed at a technical college is always problematic due to long standing perceptions regarding its quality, Renton Technical College strives to insure that the content and rigor of its coursework is consistent with that found in similar programs at community colleges and four year colleges and universities. Revising the accounting program curriculum so that it aligns more closely with what is taught at other institutions will provide more opportunities for its graduates.

An additional entry point was added to the Computer Science program two years ago. Prior to that, new students could only enter the program in fall quarter. Students who came to the college in winter and spring quarter found their options limited, especially if they needed to enter a program as soon as possible. The additional entry point in Computer Science was added to address this issue.

An additional section was added to the Band Instrument Repair program in response to student demand and upon the recommendation of the program advisory committee. As one of only three programs of its type in the country, the college has been able to address the needs of a both a unique student recruitment pool and employer base. The college also reduced the Pharmacy Technician program from two sections to one due to declining enrollment. This decision was arrived at in consultation with the program advisory committee, which also cited decreasing employer demand as an additional reason for limiting the size of the program.

In most cases involving program reduction, the faculty position that became available was used to start or expand other programs. The lone exception was the position vacated by the reduction to the Pharmacy Technician program. The resources allocated to that position were used to support the addition of a second outreach coordinator in student services. The decision was made to direct institutional efforts toward filling vacant seats in existing programs rather than creating additional seats in a new one.

The number and diversity of general education courses offered by the college have increased significantly since the last comprehensive visit. The number of courses offered was increased in response to student demand, while the diversity of offerings was increased in response to program curriculum needs. Additionally, developmental education courses were created and offered in recognition of the large gap that existed between where the Basic Studies curriculum ended and where individual program needs began. Developmental education courses were created in math and English to address this shortcoming.

Standard Three – Students

Many changes have occurred over the last five years that have had major implications for student services as a department and for the students that enroll at RTC. These changes are listed chronologically.

During academic year 2003 – 04, several changes were implemented and new services begun in an effort to improve the level and quality of services to our students. The “new student” orientation was restructured from a volunteer orientation held prior to school starting to the first day of classes each quarter. This approach is based on the belief that the more connected students feel to the staff and instructors the greater their chances are of persisting and completing programs. The sessions are structured so that they are inclusive and engaging of all new students. Students are surveyed at the end of the orientation to gather their feedback on the session and the results are used to improve subsequent events.

A second WorkFirst counseling position was added to assist with recruiting and retaining TANF and welfare recipients as they enter programs. This allowed for the redistribution of workloads among the other counselors.

Working with the college’s underserved and underprepared student populations led to the conclusion that learning disabilities affect many of this group. In order to better address their needs a counselor was sent to training to become a certified Learning Disabilities Specialist. Through testing and screening she has helped determine the type of disability that these students have and has worked with instructional staff to develop strategies and educational plans designed to enhance their chances for success.

During academic year 2004 - 05, a Student Success Center was established on campus. The purpose of the Center is to make readily available to students services that will enhance their chances for success both academically and in the working world. Among the services provided is access to the latest assistive and adaptive computer technology with qualified professionals available to assist them in its use. Peer tutor services are coordinated through the Center. An Employment Security Department counselor and the college placement director are available to assist students and faculty in finding full time employment for program graduates. They also help current students find part-time employment as needed. The Special Needs Counselor and Certified Learning Disabilities Specialist are also housed in this area. The Director of the Success Center supervises the Testing Center, which is located adjacent to the Student Success Center. Her office opens to both spaces creating an excellent synergy. The creation of the Student Success Center has proven to be one of the most positive student initiatives we have ever implemented.

In concert with the instruction department an evaluation of compass test scores was completed for the purpose of realigning them to meet the level of math, reading, and writing proficiency required by the various programs offered by the institution. This was an especially appropriate time to begin this process as developmental education curriculum was in the early stages of being created.

In an effort to create student involvement and to celebrate the wonderful diversity of the campus the first International Student Fair was held. A committee of students and staff met for several months to plan an event that would involve the entire campus. The event had student cultural displays, demonstrations, craft booths, a variety talent show and fashion show. The Culinary Arts students prepared food for the students and their families. Building on its success, we held our fourth annual event this past year. The fair has grown from one evening to an entire week of festivities. It has also expanded from the campus to include the entire city.

An Outreach Coordinator was hired in 2005 – 06 as the newest member of the Student Services team. This position was created to strengthen the college's partnerships with area high schools. Among its primary responsibilities is attendance at career fairs, student/parent nights, and working closely with counseling and career centers to assist students with career decision making plans. Counselors at RTC wear many hats and this position has helped them recapture precious time to devote to their other professional responsibilities.

The Executive Cabinet began looking at upper management reorganization as the management team prepared for retirements that are anticipated in the near future. It was decided to realign responsibilities among the vice presidents to be more like a traditional college structure. The Vice President of Student Services assumed responsibility for all admissions and registration functions and relinquished his responsibilities for plant operations. The Executive Vice President of Finance assumed responsibility for Plant Operations and gave up oversight of Admissions and Registration.

In July 2006 a new Director of Admissions and Registration joined the college, replacing the long time registrar who retired. She has a MA in College Student Affairs and a strong background in Community College Admissions. This experience will be very valuable in the transition toward becoming a credit hour institution.

Counselors at RTC have multiple responsibilities. Each counselor is assigned to a specialty area such as worker retraining, student rights & responsibilities, special needs students, running start, International students and so on. These assignments are in addition to their duties to a specific department, such as Allied Health, Trade and Industry, Business Technology, or Technical programs. These duties are added to their recruitment and retention responsibilities. Consequently, it is easy to reduce their overall effectiveness. Recognizing that this situation exists, the institution is always looking for opportunities to hire additional counselors. During fiscal year 2006 - 07 the counseling staff was increased by one full-time tenure track position and two soft money WorkFirst funded positions. Because of the student persistence initiatives that were implemented a second Certified Learning Disability Specialist counselor was added to the staff. Although the two WorkFirst counselors spend their time primarily with the low income and TANF populations their presence frees up time for the other counselors to redistribute their workloads.

Electronic functions in student services that increase our efficiency and offer better services to our students have also been implemented. The college began sending and receiving electronic transcripts within the state's community and technical college system. The translations are done electronically so students know immediately which courses are transferred and transcript. The

college also designed an electronic attendance system to replace the manual process that was in place. This significantly reduced the amount of time required for instructors to input monthly attendance for their students.

With the start of the 2007-08 academic year, the college received \$250,000 to implement the Opportunity Grant Program, another financial aid program intended to assist low income students in career pathways that have specific stopping in and stopping out opportunities where they could leave school to go to work and later return to their career training pathway. This program also has flexibility to help students with emergency funding as life issues happen to them, (i.e., they get sick and cannot afford medical care, their car breaks down, or they have other emergency issues). As part of starting this program the college was able to hire a case manager to work directly with this population and manage the attendance program for all of its financial aid recipients.

Student use of the Student Success Center grew so dramatically that a Learning Support Coordinator was hired to oversee its peer tutor program, assist students with the assistive and adaptive technology, and offer mini-classes on time management, study skills, resume writing, and career search skills.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, a second outreach coordinator was hired to free up counseling time and assist teaching faculty with recruiting for their specific programs. This has allowed the institution to devote more time to partner with neighboring high schools and develop realistic career pathways for these students.

The student registration area was remodeled, separating the registration functions from the cashiering functions. This was the final step in separating business office functions from registration functions. This project has had the added benefit of eliminating lengthy registration lines thereby creating a more customer oriented and friendly facility.

Most recently, a credentials evaluator position has been created in registration. This position will help develop procedures and standards to accomplish a higher level of consistency in student record keeping. The position will certify that all applicants to graduate will have met all course requirements (required course grades, overall GPA) and are eligible to receive certificates and/or degrees. Included in the position responsibilities is the evaluation and award of credits accepted for transfer purposes.

Since 2003 the institution has been very diligent in addressing the recommendations of our accreditation report. Some very positive steps forward have been made. However, the institution remains challenged in finding ways to involve students in college committees so that their voice can be better heard. The college continues to seek this involvement, but the burden of a six hour contact day, working, and raising a family leaves little time for other activities.

Standard Four – Faculty

During faculty negotiations held in spring 2008, a major concern of the instructional staff was the lack of a formal process for dealing with instructor issues that are disciplinary in nature. As a

result of the collaborative bargaining process, faculty and administration agreed to a process that includes the formation of a standing dismissal review committee. Having this group in place will help expedite the disciplinary process in those cases that involve the potential termination of a faculty member.

Salaries have been improved during the five years since the comprehensive evaluation, but not to the level that administration and faculty would have liked. Because percentage increases are determined by the state legislature, the amount of increase that faculty can receive annually is outside the control of the institution. During the most recent collective bargaining process, faculty and administration agreed to a new salary schedule for full time and part time faculty. Prior to July 1, 2008, faculty could submit paperwork annually requesting the equivalent of 104 hours of pay for program related work that was completed outside the scope of the normal teaching assignment. No documentation of what was actually completed was necessary. As part of renegotiating the salary schedule for full time faculty, it was agreed to take the cumulative amount of dollars budgeted for this benefit and add it to the overall salary pool. Additionally, the bottom two steps were taken off the schedule, a top step was added, and what had been listed as step 16 – 20 was broken out into individual steps, each with its own increment. Furthermore, the process by which new hires are placed on the salary schedule was renegotiated so that new instructors would not be earning more than long time faculty with similar qualifications and experience. This had been a problem with the prior schedule and the procedure for determining initial placement. The institution can, if necessary, place a newly hired faculty member at a higher step on the scale if needed and warranted, but only with presidential approval.

The makeup of the faculty continues to be essentially the same as reported in the 2003 self-study. While there has been turnover, it has been primarily due to retirements. Faculty at RTC tends to stay with the institution for a long period of time. The positive side of this is that programs have well developed curriculum that is taught by instructors who are thoroughly familiar with its content. The downside is that the institution is challenged to keep faculty current in their field of expertise. One significant change in the composition of the faculty since the last comprehensive evaluation is the addition of three full time general education instructors. This was done in response to a recommendation from that visit and is documented in greater detail in Part A of this report.

Faculty representatives identified issues with the full time faculty evaluation process during collective bargaining meetings held in spring 2008. These concerns involved the frequency of in class observations and the need for conducting evaluations of tenured faculty every three years. At the same time, instructional administrators voiced concern regarding their ability to meet the requirements of the faculty contract and college procedures. As a result of mutually shared concerns and a desire to have in place a process that was manageable while still providing the feedback faculty and administration want and need, the evaluation processes were modified to reduce the number of in class observations to one per year and the frequency of formal evaluations to every five years or when necessary as determined by the immediate supervisor.

Standard Five – Library and Information Resources

Library Resources

The library has shown significant gains in its budget, the size of its book and media collections, its role in instructional effort (both in number of offerings and in number of participants) and in the number of patron visits to the facility. The number of computing resources available to students in the library has also been increased. There has been a slight reduction in the size of the library staff leading to a reconfiguration in hours of operation.

At the time of the last comprehensive evaluation, the library collection numbered approximately 21,000 volumes. There were also several small program libraries scattered across campus whose inventory was included in the total library collection. Use of additional online resources as well as the addition of more non-print formats was identified as potential areas for improvement. All program libraries have now been incorporated into the central library collection which consists of more than 35,000 items supporting the curricular needs of the college. The library now subscribes to more than a dozen online bibliographic and full-text resources and has more than 150 full-text online reference sources. The online resources are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to students and staff through the library website. Media resources have increased to more than 2,750 items.

At the time of the 2003 full scale evaluation, the new library had only recently opened. There were 24 computer stations in place, each of which had Internet, database, and/or online catalog searching capabilities. The library now has 38 wired internet access terminals, two stand-alone terminals, and five laptop computers that can be checked-out for use within the library. The laptops can also connect to the free wireless network which is also available to all patrons of the library.

In 2003, library staffing was at six full time employees with plans in place to add a media librarian. As of this report, library staff consists of five full time employees and one part time employee. The media librarian has been in place for nearly five years, which has led to a significant increase in the size of the media collection. However, a reduction in library staff was needed due to reductions in state and federal funding.

Usage of the library has grown slowly but steadily since the opening of the new facility. In the self-study of 2003, the college reported approximately 20,000 visits annually and expressed the opinion that the facility was likely underutilized given the size of the campus. 8,213 items were checked out during 2001-02. For academic year 2007-08, there were 63,300 visits to the library, with 11,000 checkouts and renewals of library materials for home use.

The library and its staff have become an important resource to instructional programs as well. In 2003, there were 44 presentations delivered to 934 people. In 2007-08, the RTC librarians conducted 268 workshops and orientations for 4,632 people.

Library hours of operation have been adjusted to account for patron usage needs and patterns, and have also been adversely affected by budget driven reductions in staff. As reported in the

2003 self-study, the library was open from 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM Monday through Thursday, 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM on Fridays and 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturdays during weeks when classes are in session. Currently, library hours are from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Thursday, and 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM on Fridays when classes are in session.

Financial support for the library has increased as well, both in total dollars allocated to it and as a percentage of the overall college budget. For academic year 2002-03, the library was provided funds totaling \$235,129 which was equivalent to 0.9 percent of the total institutional budget. For the current academic year, the library budget totals \$492,434, or 1.4 percent of the total college budget.

Information Services

Information Services is now made up of 11 full-time staff members, which includes the addition of a full-time webmaster position that occurred since the time the self-study was prepared in 2003. A complete redesign of the RTC website was completed with great success. A project has recently gotten underway to develop an internal portal for the faculty, staff and students that will enhance their ability to communicate, collaborate and bring a stronger sense of connectedness to the information and people they rely on to be successful at RTC. Information Services has also introduced a wireless network in the library and in designated shared spaces in various buildings across campus. This was a limited project due to funding and staffing and does not presently extend to support classroom/instructional use.

The college now has in excess of 1700 computers on campus (instructional and administrative combined) which are supported by four full time desktop technicians. Over 1500 computers are for student use and are located in 42 computer labs on campus and eight off-campus locations. There is one open lab in the Technology Resource Center building which is available to students five days a week in the afternoon and early evening. It is supervised by our work-study students with oversight provided by internal staff. The technician-to-PC ratio is approximately 1:400, which significantly exceeds industry standards. However, their ability to address client needs in a timely manner has been clearly evidenced.

Significant build out of the server environment has occurred since 2003. Information Services relocated existing servers to a newly constructed area to provide a more appropriate space for both security and climate control. The physical server count has increased from 14 to 27, and these additions, in part, constitute a faster and more fault-tolerant server farm. The department also achieved redundancy for the college's e-mail cluster, while expanding backup capabilities.

The community and technical college system rehosting project was cancelled in May of 2008, with financial aid and degree audit the only portions of the effort that are moving forward. The lack of deliverables from this significant effort and the subsequent work stoppage has negatively impacted RTC, both in opportunity costs to its business units and the additional support burden it has placed on information services in the client and network services teams. Supporting a legacy system that is nearing the end of its lifecycle has been a manually-intensive effort. Due to these inherent limitations and the lack of advanced level knowledge/support where these enterprise systems are concerned, a decision was made to employ a process of data warehousing, whereby

data is first extracted to a SQL Server, so that clients and the research office can run reports that they were having difficulty extracting directly from the student management system. This is consistent with what many other colleges in the Washington State community and technical college system have done in an effort to mitigate these issues.

A help desk tracking system was implemented shortly after the help desk coordinator position was established. This has allowed the department to monitor and respond more consistently to client requests. An upgrade to the system is currently in progress that will take advantage of lifecycle management of computer assets (from purchase to surplus) and more sophisticated reporting/dashboard tools to allow for greater trend analysis and proactive response. This upgrade should allow for the identification and prevention of potential issues.

The IT Advisory Committee has not been meeting but is resuming regular meetings at the time of this report. Establishing an effective governance structure is one of the keys to managing technology initiatives and addressing the operations and best practices that will support the policies and legal compliance issues the college must fulfill. In addition, an IT Strategic Plan needs to be defined and updated regularly in order to align our focus with the college's strategic planning goals.

In addition to the procedures listed in the 2003 report, technology usage policies were adopted in 2005 to provide direction for faculty, staff, and students regarding best practices and what constitutes appropriate use of RTC technology resources. External regulations place a significant burden on the organization to adopt a more comprehensive approach to ensure adherence to the stipulations of certain laws and vendor agreements. This will involve a combination of policies, procedures, additional enterprise software tools, and a consistent stream of education and awareness in order to insure that the campus community is adequately informed.

Standard Six – Governance and Administration

During the five years that have elapsed since the Comprehensive Evaluation of 2003, there has been significant change in the composition of the Board of Trustees. Two of the five members who were in their first term of membership are now in their second five year term. The remaining three members have fulfilled their obligation to the college and are no longer on the Board. New Board members were appointed to all of the positions as the vacancies occurred. However, one position has been vacant for approximately 18 months due to the resignation of the incumbent. The position remains open awaiting action by the Governor's office to fill it. While not having a "full" Board is inconvenient, it has not presented a significant challenge in keeping the college on course regarding the fulfillment of its mission, but as discussed elsewhere in this report the vacancy, coupled with the lack of a research director, has had a detrimental impact on long term strategic planning.

An outcome of the collective bargaining session held in spring 2008 was the agreement by faculty and administration to form a labor management team. The purpose of this team is to investigate, analyze, and make recommendations regarding issues referred to them by the Executive Cabinet. The committee's purpose is not to supplant the Cabinet but rather to assist it

by creating a means by which senior administration can address issues of concern to the campus community that require more time and manpower to respond to. Formation of this committee will provide faculty and mid-level management increased opportunity to participate in the decision making processes of the college.

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement resigned his position in February 2008. The college president elected to leave the position open and assess the needs of the institution in order to determine if the position was satisfactory as defined or if a revised or completely new position was needed. While this evaluation was occurring, a statewide budget reduction mandate issued by the governor resulted in the position being placed on hold. Its areas of responsibility were reassigned among the other three vice presidents. Research and development has been reassigned to instruction, public information has been placed under student services, and the college foundation is now part of finance and administration.

As stated elsewhere in this report, the challenges of filling the research director position have had a detrimental effect on both assessment and strategic planning at the college. Much of the information needed to progress in each of these areas must come from the research department, and while the research assistant was able to provide basic information to assist in routine assessment of programs, the lack of a full time director to provide oversight and direction to the department adversely affected the ability of the college to gather the data needed to inform the planning and assessment processes. Additionally, the demands of the Achieving the Dream initiative put additional strain on the research assistant. Administration recognized the long term benefits that the initiative would have for the institution through the establishment of a culture of evidence. Consequently, a decision was made to focus the research assistant's efforts on Achieving the Dream activities while continuing to provide basic services to the campus, e.g., student program evaluations, program enrollment data, and program completion data, as needed. With the hiring of a full time researcher in December 2007 and the addition of a part time research assistant shortly thereafter, the department is now able to provide a full range of services that address the diverse needs of Renton Technical College.

Standard Seven – Finance

From the time of publication of the 2003 self-study through academic year 2004 - 05 the college continued to increase its percent of reserves from 9.83 percent to 11.33 percent. During academic year 2004 - 05 the college used part of its reserves to purchase a building one-half mile from campus which is now used to meet an ever increasing need for Basic Studies offerings. The percent of reserves the college maintained after that point has ranged from 8.11 percent to 8.67 percent. The college is committed to increasing its reserves until it is back to the ten percent level. The college has completed its payments toward eliminating its debt and is now debt free.

At the time of the 2003 full scale evaluation visit, cashiering was a function assigned to registration department personnel. During the past year, cashiering has been reassigned to the business office in order to properly maintain internal controls and is performed by personnel assigned to that department.

Standard Eight – Physical Facilities

The institution has completed its facilities master plan and has used it to justify the need for additional space on campus. The college was not successful in its request for funds during the last biennium and has now begun the process of revising the original master plan to better describe the needs of the campus as they exist today. Detailed information is contained in Part A of this report.

Since the comprehensive evaluation of 2003, the college has completed the Technology Resource Center which houses the library, the open computer lab, a suite of administrative offices, instructional space for the Paraeducator Program, a conference room, and additional classroom space. Also completed was a building on the north end of the campus which houses the facilities department on the first floor and the early childhood education program on the second floor. An old courthouse located approximately one-half mile from campus was purchased and remodeled to house some of the institution's adult basic education classes. One maintenance position and two custodial positions were added to ensure that the new square footage is adequately maintained.

The institution is currently entering into a long term lease arrangement with a local Lutheran church to rent classroom space in a building to be constructed in downtown Renton. When completed, this space will be used to offer adult basic education and English as a second language classes, as well as short term training for local businesses. Having a presence in downtown Renton has been a goal of the college for some time and is consistent with the strategic plan.

At the time of the 2003 self-study the Vice President for Student Services was also the supervisor of Plant Operations. Since that time, the responsibilities for plant operations was transferred to the Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance. In return the supervision of the registration department was transferred from the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration to the Vice President for Student Services. This was done in order to align administrative responsibilities at the executive cabinet level with those typically found at other institutions in the Washington State system. Additionally, the Facilities Manager position was upgraded to the Director of Plant Operations and a new Custodial Manager position was created.

Standard Nine – Institutional Integrity

As reported in the self-study prepared in advance of the 2003 comprehensive evaluation, the institution maintains a written set of policies and procedures designed to insure consistently fair and ethical treatment of students and employees alike. Also addressed are the expectations that the college has regarding the conduct and ethical behavior of those employed by the institution.

The self-study identified the challenges of keeping these policies up to date on a regular and consistent basis. Progress has been made in updating and revising procedures, but doing so remains a challenge, especially given the large number of procedures in existence, many of which overlap. Putting the procedures online to make them more accessible has not been accomplished but remains a goal of the institution.

Concluding Statement

Renton Technical College continues to make progress toward fully developing and implementing assessment practices across campus, but at a pace that is slower than desired. Efforts to move more quickly have been hindered by vacancies in the research director position. Since filling that position in December 2007, work has resumed in earnest to identify assessment practices already in place that should be extended to campus wide use, that should be eliminated, or that should be created. A major part of this effort is gaining a complete understanding of the data management system used by all schools in the Washington State community and technical college system and how to extract the information needed from it. While this sounds relatively simple, it is apparent from what has been said elsewhere in this report that the limitations imposed by having to use an outdated system make doing so problematic. The implementation of the Achieving the Dream Initiative and ongoing work in support of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) project are providing the solid foundation for assessment best practices that has been lacking at the college. Most significant is the establishment of a culture of evidence in which decision making is based on reliable data and information gathered in a thoughtful and logical manner. Through the implementation and nurturing of a culture of evidence, assessment results can be more effectively used in the improvement of teaching and learning. This is already happening in the UDL project where the application of teaching strategies and the use of technology to assist the learning disabled are improving the performance of all students. Initial data taken from pilot programs involved in this project supports this conclusion.

Informal assessment occurs on a routine basis at the institution. For example, when the capital projects submitted to the state met with limited or no success, the facilities director reviewed the Campus Master Plan and the project proposals submitted by the college that did not score well, and compared them to the selection process and criteria used in determining rank order for the entire system. This internal and informal assessment of what the college had created in the form of a master plan and what had been submitted toward its fulfillment has now lead to the formation of a team tasked with a formal revision of the Campus Master Plan.

The college needs to work in a more organized manner to identify these types of activities and formalize their use. The challenge is to do so without limiting the effectiveness of the more informative processes while eliminating ones that are not useful. With the focus that is being placed on establishing a culture of evidence, Renton Technical College is at a unique and opportune place in its history to make assessment and the results derived from it a routine yet vital part of the way the institution conducts its business.