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I. Roster of Evaluators

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II. Introduction

This report summarizes the Evaluation Committee’s Year Seven Peer Evaluation visit to Renton Technical College on October 16-18, 2013. A general narrative of the Committee’s findings is included. The report concludes with general commendations and recommendations, as determined by the evaluators.

The evaluation was conducted based on the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards, 2010 edition, published by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Committee’s charge was to verify the accuracy of the institution’s Self-Study, evaluate the institution’s compliance with each of the accreditation standards, commend this institution for outstanding accomplishments, and make recommendations where compliance with accreditation standards may be in doubt or improvement towards meeting accreditation standards may be needed.

Renton Technical College (RTC) is a technical college serving primarily south King County and north Pierce County. As a Washington State institution, RTC is a two-year public technical school that falls under the governance of the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). As articulated in RTC’s formal educational mission:

“Renton Technical College prepares a diverse population for work, fulfilling the employment needs of individuals, students, and industry.”

An informal motto found on the web site states “Education for Life”, reflecting the college’s commitment to lifelong learning.

To accomplish this mission, the College awards degrees in 36 preparatory programs, in apprenticeship, and through three general occupational degree programs. Certificates are provided in 80 programs and the college also provides customized training and services to Puget Sound area businesses. The College served 10,679 students (headcount) in 2012-2013, with a Fall, 2012 FTE of 3,594.

RTC last participated in a full-scale evaluation visit in Fall, 2003 and most recently participated in a Year One Peer Evaluation review in Fall, 2011. This year one evaluation review resulted in one recommendation:

“Recommendation 1: The evaluators recommend that the Renton Technical College develop their benchmarks and define acceptable levels of performance for each indicator of achievement in order to complete the dashboard and balanced scorecard to more clearly articulate what successful mission fulfillment looks like. (Standard 1.A.2)”

A full description of the college’s response to this recommendation is included in the report on Standard 1. Evidence was provided to fulfill this recommendation.

In 2012, RTC submitted, and the Commission approved, a minor change that included new Direct Transfer Agreements in Business, Pre-Nursing, Elementary Education, Construction Management, Electrical Engineering Technology, Computer Engineering Technology, and
Mechanical Engineering Technology. In addition, RTC has expanded its cooperative efforts with area high schools and added a formal student government.

The college has experienced extensive turnover in top administrative positions, resulting in several new executive cabinet members over the past three years. In addition to other changes, many other positions throughout the institution have experienced recent turnover. Throughout our interviews, evaluators heard people express this turnover as sometimes a challenge and, more often, an opportunity. Faculty and staff expressed a sense of hope and movement forward with the changes that have occurred in the past few years.

**III. Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials**

Renton Technical College provided evaluators with the institution’s Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, an electronic version of the 2012-2013 College Catalog, and the Summer and Fall 2013 Class Schedule for review. Some exhibits (college information, policies and procedures, and planning documents) were available through links and files provided by e-mail. The Evaluation Committee found the self-evaluation and support materials to be well-organized. Overall, there was an emphasis on describing what the college has done and what it plans to do to meet the standards. There appeared to be a lack of documentation and evidence, especially evidence of assessment and improvement, included in the self-study. Evaluators found some documentation related to the self-study by exploring the college’s website, and would have appreciated more links placed in the self-study document. In particular, documentation of published course learning outcomes and documentation of learning outcome assessment and improvement was difficult to find. The College quickly provided other supporting materials as requested once the team was on-site. The report provided information, but the depth of the analysis and synthesis in the self-evaluation was uneven. The report did not include well-developed areas for improvement resulting from a thorough analysis of current performance and critical self-evaluation.

The evaluators thank the College for the availability of faculty and administrators to answer questions and provide further documentation as needed. The Committee expresses appreciation to all those who contributed to the Self-Study, were interviewed, or in any other way facilitated the evaluation effort. Faculty, staff, and administrators were accessible and forthright. The team was especially pleased to be able to confirm the representations in the Self-Study that Renton Technical College is very student-centered and extremely committed to the mission of serving the district student population. The specific and general commendations and recommendations of this report are intended to stimulate even more progress for the benefit of the students, the community, and the College.
IV. Eligibility Requirements

The College provided evidence indicating it meets the Eligibility Requirements for accreditation, with the noted exception that an external financial audit has not been conducted since 2009. (ER19) Further details and specific information about eligibility requirements can be found throughout the report.

V. Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A - Mission
RTC has a widely published mission statement that was reviewed and affirmed by the Board of Trustees in August, 2011. The statement, along with a vision statement, core values and core themes can be found on the institution’s website, in the catalog (2012-2013), and on many printed documents distributed and posted throughout the institution. This mission statement gives direction and context to the work of the college.

RTC’s has determined that its mission is fulfilled when the college meets its expectations as outlined in the college’s core themes and objectives and as measured through the collection of core theme indicator data.

Standard 1.B - Core Themes
RTC has identified five core themes through a participatory process and has refined those themes over the last three years. The five core themes were originally approved by the Board of Trustees as documented in their August, 2011 board minutes and identified as: Professional Technical Education, Basic Studies, General Education, Student Access and Diversity, and College Stewardship. The most recent change, approved by the board in December, 2012, involved changing the professional technical core theme to workforce education, to reflect a broader focus that includes apprenticeship programs. The current five core themes are: Workforce Education, Academic Education, Basic Skills, Student Access and Diversity, and College Stewardship.

RTC has articulated a clear rationale for these five core themes and subcommittees were convened to identify objectives and verifiable indicators of achievement for each core theme. Some core theme indicators do not have baseline data or targets set. (1.B.2) The college has used the identified indicators to measure and grade their performance. The college has constructed a rating scale, which includes definitions, for performance on the indicators. This scale ranges from a high of 4 (excellence achieved) to a low of 0 (does not meet expectations/no progress made). A rating of 2 (meets expectations), has been determined to be an acceptable threshold of achievement. However, evaluators did not find evidence that the grading of these measures is regularly and systemically used to implement strategies aimed at improvement of performance. (1.B.2) Specific examples are more fully addressed in the Standard 4.B. section of each core theme.
The objectives are measured and evaluated using data that is currently available from the institution’s own research or from data collection required by the State of Washington and in some cases federal sources. The subcommittees have made several changes to the indicators and measures over the last three years. In some cases, the institution appears to be “making do” with data that is currently available rather than developing ways to collect new data that might provide more meaningful feedback on some of the objectives. (1.B.2)

Concern:

Evaluators are concerned that some core theme indicators are not being measured and are not being used to implement strategies aimed at improvement of performance. (1.B.2)

VI. Resources and Capacity

Standard 2.A – Governance

RTC has a well established governance structure that includes opportunity for input from students, staff, faculty and administrators, as well as the community it serves. The five member Board of Trustees is appointed by the Governor of the State of Washington, and its primary function is to establish policy. The board receives regular updates from students, staff and faculty, as well as administrative reports informing them of changes, issues, and accomplishments of the college. Trustees appear to have a clear understanding of their policy role and could talk knowledgeably and with passion about the work of the institution. Trustees commented that their personal motivation to support the college is often inspired by the sincere commitment of faculty and staff to help students better their lives through education.

In 2012, RTC instituted new internal governance system including five councils, each chaired by a member of the executive team. Each council includes representation of faculty, students and staff, and each council is charged with specific responsibilities. The work is coordinated through the President’s executive team. Frequency of meetings and minutes documenting the work appears inconsistent across the five councils, making it difficult to determine the effectiveness of the councils. The Board of Trustees receives reports and information about the work of some of these councils.

The Board implements an annual self-evaluation process that helps them identify their own strengths and opportunities for improvement as a board. Board minutes document this process, and Trustees are currently in the process of identifying this year’s goals based on self evaluation data that was just made available to them. These goals are included on their board agenda each month. At the end of each meeting, Trustees reflect on the extent to which the meeting has helped them make progress toward their goals. This regular and systemic method of maintaining awareness and focus on board goals is to be commended.

The Board clearly defines the role of the college president and delegates authority for the administration of the college to him. The Board also oversees, reviews, and revises as
necessary policies and procedures related to academics, students, human resources, academic freedom, finance, and institutional ethics.

Compliment:

1. The evaluators compliment the Board of Trustees on their passionate commitment to the mission of the college and their knowledge of and support for the programs and services of the college.

**Standard 2.B – Human Resources**

The evaluators conducted interviews, and reviewed personnel files, current collective bargaining agreements, and college policies. The institution employs a sufficient number of qualified individuals when positions are filled. Turnover in key administrative positions has hindered the college in the pursuit of long-term planning, consistency, and goal achievement. Evaluators noted the challenges encountered by staff assuming multiple responsibilities on interim bases. Faculty positions are filled on the basis of need/perceived need with respect to student enrollment levels. Except when interim duties are accepted, a review of job descriptions appeared to accurately reflect duties and responsibilities. Duties and responsibilities are reinforced by collective bargaining agreements in place at this time.

College procedures indicate that administrators and staff are to be evaluated annually regarding job duties and responsibilities. A review of personnel records from a variety of departments and employee classifications found reviews were conducted at regular intervals for classified staff. Executive staff and administrator files did not contain evaluations within the past two years.

The college states professional development opportunities for faculty should be outlined in a professional development plan. Although plans were not contained within personnel files, participants in forums indicated professional development is offered and encouraged by the college.

Staff opportunities for professional development are provided through a Washington State Employees tuition waiver. Based on available space, all staff employed half-time or more may enroll in state-supported credit classes. Additionally, personnel files and interviews evidenced staff participation in personal development activities.

A review of academic and professional credentials listed in applicant files, and the college catalog (2012-13), evidenced the college employs appropriately qualified faculty. However, few official documents attest to the attainment of educational degrees and professional certification.

Compliments:

1. The evaluators compliment the college on encouraging and providing professional development opportunities to faculty and staff.
2. The evaluators found evidence of timely evaluations by supervisors of classified staff employees.

Concerns:

1. The evaluators did not find official documents in the personnel files supporting faculty qualifications in the form of official academic transcripts, and professional certifications/licensures (2.B.1).
2. The evaluators noted annual performance evaluations of administrative members were not present in personnel files (2.B.2).

**Standard 2.C – Education Resources**

RTC provides courses and programs that are consistent with its mission to prepare a diverse student population for work, fulfilling the employment needs of individuals, business, and industry. RTC has identified five College-wide student learning outcomes: Reason, Interact, Perform, Think, & Communicate. The college-wide learning outcomes are published in the RTC catalog (2012-2013) and on the RTC web pages. Program and degree learning outcomes are published on the RTC website as a part of each program’s information page. Course learning outcomes are maintained in the CBE database. In some cases, the CBE database is incomplete for a program and course syllabi do not always match the CBE database learning outcomes. The alignment of the course outcomes to the program outcomes to the college-wide student learning outcomes is not apparent. (2.C.1)

Most course syllabi contain objectives demonstrating appropriate content and rigor. Some of the professional-technical programs participate in external accreditations and licensing, again demonstrating appropriate rigor.

A review of course syllabi demonstrated inconsistent publication of course-level outcomes. It was unclear to the evaluators whether learning outcomes were provided to students through another mechanism. The processes for documenting and providing learning outcomes should be implemented consistently throughout the college. (2.C.2)

Credits and degrees are based on documented student achievement. Grades are awarded in a consistent manner and are aligned with the individual student’s achievement.

Professional-technical degrees and certificates reflect accepted learning outcomes for respective industries and general education and Associate of Applied Science transfer degrees reflect accepted general education outcomes for higher education. Course content appears to be consistent with the requirements for similar degrees and certificates at peer institutions and is defined on the RTC web pages, and in the RTC catalog.

Program sequencing appears appropriate, with graduation requirements clearly defined. Direct transfer and applied transfer degrees include a core of general education in communications, mathematics, social science, and science recognized by four-year colleges and universities in the State of Washington. The State of Washington colleges and
universities use a common course numbering system. Associate of Applied Science and Technical Certificates meet industry standards and include the required related general education components in computation, communication, and human relations.

RTC admission requirements are clearly published on the website and in the catalog. Degree programs at RTC are appropriate in breadth and depth as described on the RTC web page and in the catalog; degree designators are consistent with program content.

Ownership for the design and approval of curriculum resides with the Dean and faculty initiate proposals for new or changed curriculum. In the case of career programs, industry advisory boards are actively involved in both designing and revising the curriculum. The process begins at the program level with final approval made by the Dean and the Vice President of Instruction. Discussions with faculty members support their authority in designing, revising, and approving curriculum and in the selection of new faculty.

Librarians provide instruction for classes when requested by faculty. In addition, twenty-eight off-the-shelf workshops are available or can be customized around class assignments. Survey data provided evidence that a variety of programs and classes take advantage of the library’s orientations and workshops. Interviews with students indicated a high-level of satisfaction with the library faculty and staff. Some faculty members document the use of information resources in the CBE thus tying it to the college-wide learning outcome: “To use multiple resources to find and organize pertinent information.” The evaluators encourage library faculty to continue to work with faculty members to develop and document classroom assignments that support information literacy.

No evidence was found acknowledging the acceptance of Credit for Prior Learning on the website, or in the course catalog(2012-2013) or student handbook. In conversations it is understood that the policy is used infrequently and in need of updating. (2.C.7)

The College accepts transfer credits from regionally accredited two and four-year institutions, Tech Prep courses as determined by the South King County Tech Prep Consortium Articulation Agreement, military coursework, and successful CLEP tests. Community Colleges in the state of Washington are part of the Inter-college Relations Commission (ICRC), a unit of the Washington Council on High School College Relations. The goal of this organization is to facilitate transfer between institutions for all students pursuing baccalaureate degrees in Washington State. The members meet twice per year for the purpose of information dissemination and education. In addition, ICRC works closely with the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Council of Presidents, Articulation & Transfer Group, Joint Access Oversight Group, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and other groups when needed to assist with projects related to transfer articulation and higher education legislation.

**Undergraduate Degree Program**

Careful review of the transfer degree programs in the catalog (2012-2013) and on the RTC website suggests that all programs contain a recognizable core of general education in
communication, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences. A review of several applied undergraduate degree and certificate programs indicated that all programs contain related instruction in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations. Several professional-technical programs contain additional general education core courses in other general education core disciplines such as the Social Sciences.

Several conversations with RTC administrators and faculty support the use of the CBE to map the college-wide, program, and course learning outcomes to course competencies and course assessments. While RTC is applauded for using the CBE as a useful mapping tool, it does not provide direct evidence of student learning. RTC has not established an institutional framework for assessing student learning outcomes and there was no evidence that assessment and the use of results are ongoing, systematic, and used for continuous improvement. (2.C.10)

Related instruction for applied degree and certificate programs are taught by program instructors. Curriculum is reviewed by master-level discipline specialists in conjunction with each Program Advisory Committee every five years. The review is a quality check to ensure related instruction is embedded, meets program and college outcomes, is approved by an advisory committee, and includes assessments that support the outcomes. Although the curriculum is reviewed according to schedule, there does not seem to be a mechanism to mediate differences between the program instructor and content specialist in the review process. For example, some related instruction review forms noted that information for the review was not available or was not checked as “yes” but, no follow up appeared to be initiated. The process and responsibility for resolving issues are not clearly articulated and are not understood by the master-level discipline specialists. (2.C.11)

Program review binders include the reviews of related instruction. Program reviews are completed on a three year cycle, and related instruction reviews are completed on a five year cycle. In some cases, the program review binders did not contain all pieces of related instruction reviews (communication, computation, and human relations). In addition, not all related instruction reviews had dates. As a result, it was difficult to determine if all programs had related instruction reviews according to the schedule and if embedded related instruction had clearly identified content taught or monitored by appropriately qualified teaching faculty.

The college needs to strengthen its related instruction review process to ensure that reviews are completed, that content and intended outcomes are aligned, and that monitoring by qualified teaching faculty is in place. (2.C.11)

**Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs**

Non-credit continuing education classes, sometimes referred to as supplemental courses, are short-term and contract courses taught in response to student interest and industry needs. These classes are under the direction of the dean in the relevant area, and fit within the mission of the college by fulfilling employment needs.
The dean and department are responsible for determining course content and hiring qualified instructors. Sometimes program faculty teach these courses.

The self-study report indicated that Renton Technical College does not offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs). However, at least one program does offer CEUs for a non-credit course, which is closely controlled by the curriculum vendor.

RTC has decentralized the Continuing Education/Non-credit instruction office. It appears that the non-credit schedule is driven by the academic deans with no specific person overseeing the development of the quarterly schedules. There is a comprehensive offering of programs covering everything from short term certificate courses, to personal enrichment courses, as well as entertaining courses.

Concerns:

1. The evaluators are concerned that the processes for identifying and publishing learning outcomes, including in written form to students, are implemented inconsistently throughout the college. (2.C.1, 2.C.2)

2. The evaluators found conflicting information regarding practices for awarding credit related to prior experiential learning. A draft policy for the acceptance of credit is under review by the college; however, current practice was unclear and not well documented for students or staff. A review of student transcripts found the college did not appropriately and consistently identify credit when the credit related to prior experiential learning. (2.C.7)

3. The evaluators are concerned that the identification and assessment of student learning outcomes in general education components are not consistent and the use of assessment results for improvement is not ongoing or systematic. (2.C.10)

4. The college has articulated a process for the review of embedded related instruction to ensure it has clearly identified content that aligns with the intended outcomes for the program. The evaluators are concerned that this process does not ensure that reviews are completed and that all components have been addressed satisfactorily. (2.C.11)

**Standard 2.D – Student Support Resources**

The evaluators found evidence that the college provides support to the majority of students utilizing multiple points of contact from student recruitment through graduation. Required advising for beginning and at-risk students, high-involvement oversight of student progress, and collaborative monitoring between advisors and faculty allow for greater oversight and communication regarding student progress.

The college provides tutoring services through a learning resource center (LRC) utilizing general student tutors, within program student tutors and e-tutoring. The majority of students using tutoring are served by the LRC. LRC tutors guide students through a series of intake forms designed to evaluate the student’s learning style, unique life challenges, and intended outcomes of tutoring sessions. A corollary goal is to identify the lack of necessary
study skills. While students self-identify personal goals of tutoring, and the data is captured on intake forms by the college, no goal achievement or outcomes have been quantified at this stage.

The campus employs full- and part-time security officers who may utilize foot, bicycle or vehicle patrols on the main campus. Full-time officers have completed training, and are certified in standard first aid, CPR/AED. Crime statistics and security policies are available online, in the student handbook and by request at the front counter of student services. Every student is given a Student Agreement and Notification of Rights under FERPA to read at the time of registration. After reading, students are required to sign indicating they have read and understand their rights and responsibilities. The college should review procedures to ensure students registered by staff have received proper notifications regarding campus safety procedures as required by federal law.

New student orientation exists in a transitional stage, and was offered fall 2013 in two basic formats. Both models meet the minimum criteria to 1) ensure students know the requirements specific programs, and 2) provide information related to academic requirements. The original model is used for the majority of students, and provides information to students as has been done for several years. Students are oriented on the first day of classes in large groups, organized according to programs under the dean’s oversight. This model has not been assessed for success measures in the recent past. The newer model, employed for approximately 345 students in August and September provides orientation to smaller groups of students, and attempts to be more active in the presentation of information by using students in the presentations. The goal of the model is to ensure students are comfortable with the expectations of the first days and weeks of each term. Success measures collected for fall (2013) measured students’ assessments of the event. These will be compared to New Student Orientation goals. Limited data has been collected, but not quantified at the time of this writing. Additional measures identified by the institution include term-to-term retention by program.

Academic advising begins with a required advising session for new students prior to registration. Advisors serve to both advise and counsel students regarding academic and career choices.

The evaluators were unclear regarding support for students in programs affected by program closures. Newly hired staff were not knowledgeable of programs that appeared to be offered previously and are no longer offered by the college, or are no longer offered under the same name. (2.D.4)

While RTC has not completed a 2013-14 catalog, the 2012-13 catalog is available online for students and other stakeholders. Changes in curriculum and policy not available through the catalog are provided through the college website and through staff-provided information. Current information is communicated through the student services handbook, schedule of classes, website, and other publications available to students. Students using the website for policy or program information may not be able to identify changes and
corrections since the previous year’s catalog. It is not clear how all staff would be aware of changes, or how they would have the ability to reference changes made since the previous catalog was published. Whether published on-line or in print, a 2013-2014 catalog needs to be made available. (2.D.5)

Brochures and websites provide accurate information on eligibility for licensure and entry into the occupation.

The institution maintains student records in a secure fashion. Records within the current Student Management System (SMS) are challenging for staff to access for research and assessment purposes due to the SMS design and age. Records are secure and functional for daily use in meeting student needs. Select archival student records are maintained on microfiche, and vulnerable to deterioration.

RTC and all Washington community colleges will be transitioning to a different SMS. State resources have been allocated to ensure the transition by 2015. Policies guiding the retention of student records are appropriate and follow standards established by the state of Washington.

Family Educational Rights and Policy Act information and training are provided to staff to protect the confidentiality and inform the release of student records. This information is communicated to students through the student handbook and college website.

With approximately two-thirds of all students receiving financial aid, the college relies heavily upon support of its students. Categories of financial assistance, definitions, and resources for students to apply are provided on the campus website and in student publications. New students are interviewed by an intake advisor to determine academic needs and to identify sources of potential educational funding and support.

For aid disbursement, a student enrollment verification process requires completion of an attendance verification form signed and dated by the student’s instructors. Online students must attach copies of assignments or other evidence indicating they have accessed the class.

The office accesses weekly reports to identify students who have withdrawn from classes to maintain compliance with Return of Title IV funds.

Student privacy and confidentiality are of concern due to the physical location and arrangement of the financial aid office front desk. Student discussions of a sensitive nature may take place within 48 inches of other students waiting for assistance. When more than one student is in the office, the student’s ability to discuss privately any financial matters of a personal nature would be compromised. The director of financial aid is aware of the issue, and is taking steps to remediate.

Office communications with students, verification forms, and other documents reference any repayment obligations for the students. Students are contacted approximately 30 days prior to the anticipated graduation date to participate in exit counseling in the context of
loan repayment. The institution's loan default rate is monitored as provided through annual reports to the college.

RTC's academic advising model is delivered through the student success program office. Academic advising begins with intake advisors as students are admitted. The student is transitioned to a discipline-specific advisor. As a technical college, the institutional model for advising relies on these dedicated advisors, and is supported by the faculty of specific career and technical programs. Due to the cohort model providing scripted course options, advisor and faculty communication regarding registration is simplified. A high-involvement advising approach is utilized and includes regular communication with faculty regarding student progress. The level of involvement increases for students identified as not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). These students are required to meet with their respective advisor before proceeding with registration. Advisors in each discipline also function as counselors, enabling a greater range of support for students. This is to the advantage of the student, and provides greater consistency in advisement from college staff and faculty.

Co-curricular activities are designed to increase student engagement in the campus community and support the college's vision to remain student focused. These activities are in the infancy at the college. Prior to fall 2013, the college worked to develop foundational policies and procedures for student government, clubs and related areas. This approach resulted in a program shared vision and a program design that meets the needs of students and ensures appropriate staff and policies are in place. Associated Student Government, Student Ambassadors, and the Student Leadership Resource Team all provide service and leadership opportunities for students. Student government members are appointed in the spring, attend trainings in the summer and serve in the fall term. The enthusiasm that student leaders have for shaping the future of the college and serving other students at RTC is noteworthy.

Although early in implementation, part of the success can be attributed to administrators who are willing to protect the time of program staff by allowing them to focus on their required tasks, rather than other duties unrelated to the goals of student programs and engagement. Academic standards for students participating in co-curricular programs are appropriate.

Food services (through the professional baking program and culinary program) provide effective and instructive opportunities for students to gain experience, and meet the needs of other campus constituencies.

Admission to RTC requires an in-person meeting with a counselor/advisor prior to course registration. For on-line classes, the identity verification process is consistent with students in traditional on-campus classes. Distance education students are provided a secure login and passcode for participation in online classes.

Compliment:
1. The evaluators compliment the college for the informative and timely financial aid services provided to students by supportive and friendly staff. Based on program review and feedback from students, the college informs students regarding financial aid options, makes information accessible, and assists students in a timely and professional manner.

Concerns:

1. The evaluators noted the lack of a current 2013-14 college catalog available to students. Staff referenced major revisions to the in-development catalog with respect to the organization of content (rather than the content itself). Although staff indicated any content changes would be verbally communicated to students, a catalog ensures the content is communicated in a consistent and timely nature to students, and remains accessible. (2.D.5.)

Standard 2.E – Library and Information Resources

The Renton Technical College Library holds or provides access to a wide variety of resources in support of the college’s mission, core themes, programs, and services. The library’s catalog is available online and contains records for all of the library’s holdings. It is available 24 hours a day and may be accessed from any device with a connection to the Internet. The library has a collection of 18 online databases, which are fully accessible from the Internet at all times. The online collection includes both general reference e-books and reference e-books which focus on specific academic disciplines related to the curriculum. Popular and scholarly journals are available in full text online and provide access to current information in a variety of fields which are a part of the college’s curriculum. A collection of 49,000 print books, CDs, audiocassettes and videos also supports the curriculum.

The library regularly collects feedback from its users in a variety of formats and uses the information collected in the planning process and to adjust services offered by the library. Survey instruments include the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), online surveys, direct feedback to staff, a suggestion box located in the library, and feedback collected by the library staff at faculty meetings. The library also collects data on the frequency of use of its resources and services. One recent change made as a result of feedback includes the startup of a drop-in help session called the Library Help Zone for students and faculty needing assistance with research and computer software. This came as a result of input from student and faculty who were demonstrating a need for more help in these areas. After very little use of the Library Help Zone was noted, the program was discontinued in favor of making appointments with library staff available on an as needed basis. This has proved to be a more popular option. Another example of change in response to user input is the result of a survey of faculty about their use of the library workshops. Faculty indicated that limited classroom time is the primary roadblock in taking advantage of the workshops. The college is about to move from a 12-week quarter to an 11-week quarter, which will mean that even less time is available to faculty who want to take advantage of the workshops. As a result of this information, the library reduced its one-hour
introductory workshop to 30 minutes and added a half hour to the orientation it provides in the Student Orientation Center. As a result, faculty will have to give up less class time in order to take advantage of the workshops.

The library provides appropriate instruction and support for all of its users in obtaining, evaluating, and using library and information resources. Users may come into the library for individual help from a librarian; they may make an appointment for an extended help session or call in for help. The library’s website provides assistance in the form of short instructional videos and over 50 LibGuides, all of which provide instruction on finding and using information related to the college curriculum.

The RTC Library participates in the Ask WA/Question Point service that allows users to have access to a professional reference librarian online 24 hours a day, seven days a week via online chat. The library offers 28 off-the-shelf workshops that faculty may request for their classes and librarians will also customize a workshop built around the instructor’s specific assignment. All of the library instruction courses available in the library may also be delivered by a librarian to any classroom on any campus.

The library staff regularly and systematically evaluates the quality, adequate, utilization, and security of library and information resources and services. The library director and his staff collect input from users on an ongoing basis through a variety of surveys and informal input as well as statistical data on the usage of library resources and services. That information is used collectively to make decisions about the continuation of those resources and services and whether adjustments need to be made.

Library resources are secured appropriately: online databases are password protected and accessible via proxy server and authentication, print material is security-stripped in conjunction with an alarm system, and expensive items or those that are prone to theft are shelved behind the Checkout Desk in the Reserve section. Electronic equipment is locked down to desktops or locked in storage when not in use.

Compliment:

The evaluators compliment Library faculty and staff for their use of user feedback in making improvements and changes to library services.

**Standard 2.F – Financial Resources**

With the changing financial situation for all community colleges, anticipated reductions in student enrollment and/or State of Washington funding allocations place the future adequacy of the College’s funding at risk. The College’s annual operating budget funds student learning, student success services, information resources, facilities, technology, and administration. Reductions in the state funding allocation the past few years have required greater efficiencies and the investigation of alternative funding streams. In spite of these challenges, through prudent fiscal management, RTC has kept cash reserves above 20% of the budget in cash. All of Renton Technical College’s debt was entirely paid off in 2006-07
fiscal year and the college has managed to stay debt-free since that time. Stability in the Vice President of Administration and Finance position responsible for managing the College's financial resources has remained stable over the last thirty years.

Administrative Services provides the college's business services functions. Sufficient cash is kept in the college's checking account and/or municipal investors account to meet current obligations. The College invests cash in investments approved by the State Treasurer and/or in public depositories, pursuant to state law. With the changing financial situation for community colleges, RTC continues to work hard to find ways to supplement state funding with other resources. These other financial resources are pursued and developed to fund projects, activities, and services that will help serve and develop the College's mission and core themes. The alternative revenue sources include such items as grants, contracts, donations, special programs, and specific public/private partnerships.

Beginning in fiscal year 2012-13, the College was successful in obtaining a new Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant which will provide much needed support and programming in the Student Services and retention areas of the College.

Following good business practices that requires monthly reconciliations be done within a reasonable time period, the Business Office staff perform numerous reconciliations each month monitoring revenues, bank balances and expenditures. Local cash balances remained at constant levels and have grown from $10 million in 2009 to $17 million in 2013 which will ensure the college can meet its fiscal obligations on time or any unforeseen expenditures that may occur.

Resource planning at RTC is based on analysis of prior years' strategic plan achievements, the updated strategic plan for the new academic year, on enrollment management, and new and continuing initiatives.

Financial planning is oriented to support the College's planned goals and strategic priorities. Each fiscal year, a balanced budget aligned with these strategic priorities is approved by the RTC Board of Trustee's.

RTC's budget planning considers historical averages, tuition and fee rates, state allocations, and is realistic and conservative with respect to expected revenues.

Currently, College revenue is broken down as follows: State Appropriations account for approximately 51% of the College revenue; 33% from tuition and fees, 7% from grants, 7% from sales/Services/Food & Bookstore and contracts and 2% from Federal grants. However, as state budget allocations decrease, it is increasingly important that non-tuition revenue sources, including grants and other third party-contracted revenues increase and stabilize in order to meet the College's mission and goals.

In summary, RTC's financial planning process centers on realistic projections supported by enrollment projections and tuition and fees from the prior year. Each yearly cycle, the planning also includes projections and consideration of current and future obligations of the
college. This deliberate and thoughtful planning process ensures that RTC operates within available resources on an annual yearly basis.

RTC uses accounting systems that are established and set up by the Washington State Community and Technical College system for all of its accounting processes and procedures. The Statewide Administrative and Accounting Manual also clearly defines policies, guidelines, and processes for financial planning and related budget development. Local business procedures and internal controls have been developed and are regularly reviewed for effectiveness. RTC’s budget process provides for adequate opportunity for staff input in the development process phases.

The budgeting process begins annually in February with the College soliciting input through detailed itemized budget requests to appropriate personnel. The President submits the proposed budget to the Board of Trustees for final approval. Once approved, the final budget is made available to campus constituencies and the public.

RTC ensures timely and accurate financial information through its use of the state SBCTC’s Financial Management system (FMS) used by all community colleges in the state. All Departments have access to electronic real time budget information as needed through FMS Query, a Microsoft Access database. To ensure the accuracy of the financial records and reporting, the College has implemented a system of internal controls that provides separation of duties, a system of checks and balances, internal audits, as well as annual risk assessments to identify and evaluate potential risks of loss to the College. Also, monthly financial reports are provided to and reviewed with the College Board of Trustees.

RTC follows an established statewide process for making capital budget requests that support the College’s mission and core themes. These appropriations include funds for major capital projects and for repairs and minor improvements. On a local level, decisions are made whether to pursue a capital request as identified through the College’s Master Planning process. The Master Plan represents an ongoing planning process that accurately reflects the campus facility needs as informed by the College’s mission and strategic planning process. Once a local decision is made to pursue capital funding, the College continues through a well-defined process to prepare documents for State consideration.

RTC’s auxiliary enterprises perform a critical function in support of the institution’s instructional mission. They consist of the Bookstore, Food Services, Security Fees and Student Government. College operating funds are not used to balance the budgets of any of these entities. The Bookstore and Food Services are College owned, operate profitably each year, and are self-sustaining. The Bookstore and Food Services reserves were part of the College’s contingency plan to balance the budget during the state-allocated fund reductions. The Childcare Center, which was subsidized, was closed in 2011.

Prior to 2009, RTC had undergone external annual audits by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and on a bi-annual basis by the State of Washington State Auditor’s office (SAO). The most recent audit by the SAO was conducted in March 2009 for
the period of July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2008. At that time no significant audit findings were noted. However a serious concern is that no external audits have been performed over the last five years and yearly management letters have not gone to the Board of Trustees as prudently required.

Even though it is recognized this is a State of Washington problem, evaluators find RTC to be in non-compliance with Eligibility Requirement 19 and Standard 2.F.7. Therefore, it is recommended that for each year of operation, the College undergo an external financial audit and that the results from such audits, including findings and management letter recommendations, be considered in a timely, appropriate and comprehensive manner by the Board of Trustees. (ER 19 and 2.F.7)

All institutional fundraising activities are conducted in a professional and ethical manner and comply with governmental requirements. The College’s fundraising activities are coordinated and conducted to support its mission through the Renton Technical College Foundation. The Foundation was founded and incorporated in 1993 as a 501 (C) (3) tax-exempt organization. The Renton Technical College Board of Trustees and the Renton Technical College Foundation Board have a signed “Quid Pro Quo” agreement to guide and clearly define the relationship between the Foundation and the College.

In response to diminishing state resources, the Foundation helps the College accomplish its mission of creating access to educational opportunities that otherwise might not be financially possible. Also, the Foundation provides scholarships and emergency assistance support to RTC students and contributes funds to the college for special events.

The Foundation operates under the sound guidance of an Executive Director with strong fiscal policies in place. The Foundation is encouraged to continue pursuing an annual outside audit by an independent Certified Public Account.

Concern:

1. The evaluators recommend that for each year of operation, the College undergo an external financial audit and that the results from such audits, including findings and management letter recommendations, be considered in a timely, appropriate and comprehensive manner by the Board of Trustees (Eligibility Requirement 19 and Standard 2.F.7).

Standard 2.G Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Renton Technical College creates and maintains physical facilities that are attractive accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support the institution’s mission, programs, and services.

The Facilities department works closely with the Facilities Council to review and assess its ongoing procedures, operations, and effectiveness, and to recommend means and methods of improvement.
Projects that are subsequently funded by the SBCTC are implemented by a campus team as on-site representatives for the college, the Department of Engineering and Architectural Services of the Washington State General Administration Division, and a design team consisting of professional consultants hired to implement and administer construction of the project.

As such, RTC has been creative in working with available campus space creating new student labs and a classroom in the Allied Health department. Also, several new campus projects have recently been completed with more in progress. These include various campus building roof replacements, HVAC updates, LED lighting, signage, sidewalks and landscaping. All of these improvements have further enhanced the quality of the RTC campus.

All RTC campus facilities are compliant with Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and also the related State of Washington code requirements RCW 70.92.100. The College also complies with regular audits conducted by the Office of Civil Rights to maintain access to individuals with disabilities and special needs.

Currently the College assigns the dean in each department the task of ensuring that proper procedures are implemented and followed within their respective departments regarding the safe usage and storage of hazardous or toxic materials. When disposal is needed, hazardous waste pickups are scheduled through an outside vendor who is licensed to properly dispose of hazardous materials under the direction of the Director of Plant Operations & Facilities. Therefore, the College complies with Federal, State and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations that prescribe how hazardous waste is to be handled and properly disposed.

The last formal RTC master plan was completed in 2006 however, the college has been working on developing a new campus master plan which will be aligned with the college academic plan under the direction of the Director of Plant Operations & Facilities. It is a multiple stage process which draws expertise from campus constituencies, State agencies and hired consultants. This provides RTC with both short-term and long-range educational and financial planning consistent with its mission and core themes.

As most college campuses are experiencing, having sufficient equipment is a challenge. Equipment budgets have been protected as much as possible by the college and on an annual basis carryover dollars have been allocated to support this important campus function. Program equipment demands large investments year after year and the college has done a good job in keeping up with industry standards, especially over the last few difficult years. Also of benefit and importance is that educational programs at RTC have made timely repairs and selective upgrades to program equipment, extending its life. Industry in-kind donations have been pursued, where practical.

The type of equipment purchases and replacement cycles are determined through input from the program faculty in consultation with their program’s industry Advisory
Committees. Every year in February, the faculty submit their operational budgets and equipment requests. The consolidated amounts are compiled and reviewed by the executive administration against the available funds. By mid-summer, the equipment allocations are discussed with the supervising deans. Funds are then allocated following the priority recommendations submitted by the faculty.

Mechanical systems and most of the College’s exterior lighting are controlled by a central energy Management System. Additionally, the Facilities department has in place an online work-order system to initiate, prioritize, assign, and track work-orders efficiently.

On an annual basis, all fire alarms and fire suppression systems are adequately tested. Pressurized vessels such as heating boilers and hot water heaters are tested and certified annually by a designated representative of the Department of Labor and Industries. An annual inspection by the fire department is performed on each of the college’s buildings. Likewise, each of the five college elevators are tested and certified annually as are the College’s backflow prevention devices.

The college also maintains competence with all facilities personnel through various types of on-going training which includes, blood borne pathogens, MSDS training, forklift operator training, First Aid Certifications, arc flash, confined spaces, ladder safety, man-lift safety, personal protection equipment and lock-out/tag-out procedures to name a few.

The Director of Plant Operations and Facilities is able to keep abreast of best practices and procedures within the state framework of community and technical colleges through quarterly attendance at the Washington State Board for Community and Technical College’s Organization of Facilities Managers. In addition, the Director of Plant Operation and Facilities attends a workshop every other year put on by the SBCTC, which addresses management of the capital projects.

RTC’s technological infrastructure is dependent on a state-provided system which comprises the primary administrative tools that run the College and support student-facing processes. That system is comprised entirely of flat-file databases. As such, there is little workflow, integrated processes, or reporting functionality build in at this time.

Currently, the Washington State Board is working on a new project called ctcLink. This system will encompass the implementation of “a single, centralized system of online functions to give students, faculty and staff anytime, anywhere access to a modern, efficient way of doing their college business”. After a vetting process, Oracle was selected as the new state software system. Then in March 2013 it was announced that Renton Technical College will be in the second wave of implementation, with full rollout/completion of the new ERP system targeted for February 2016.

In 2011 the entire college CTC system migrated to a Unix-based platform on blade servers residing in Washington State’s primary data center in Olympia, Washington. Access to that system is now provided via VPN connections from each college to its respective system. All
system maintenance and backup administration is now managed by the SBCTC. RTC-IT staff manages the line printer and report-distribution software process.

A second major SaaS solution is student email which RTC introduced for the first time in fall 2012 on the Microsoft Office 365 platform. RTC-IT staff is responsible for the provisioning and support functions, while Microsoft maintains server and backup administration. Student Email is a new service the IT Department now provides and supports. RTC’s IT department is also planning to migrate employee email to 0365 as well by the end of 2013. This move will relieve a significant storage/backup burden, as well as introduce a proper e-discovery tool which provides a viable solution for the college.

RTC offers and supports campus constituencies’ technological literacy through various methods and practices. The RTC Library staff offer workshops on technology topics which include; e-book readers, finding eBooks at RTC Library, introduction to flip cameras and flip camera editing. Classroom tools for instructors include Tegrity Lecture-capture software to record their lectures for students to view at a later time. Training is provided to faculty on RA routines and document camera usage.

The IT Strategic Plan and the Technology Council charters both include the necessity of gaining input from constituents. Input has also been sought from the Technology Council, employee surveys, and instructional advisory committees.

The College has established internal policies for technology replacements based on industry standards, and committed appropriate funding to ensure that the College follows established guidelines. Ensuring technology replacements are current and managed on regular cycles demonstrates appropriate monitoring of instructional technological resources to help with teaching and student learning. Currently, RTC follows the following replacement cycle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Replacement Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High End Work Stations</td>
<td>3yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Computers</td>
<td>4yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Faculty Computers</td>
<td>5yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCD Projectors</td>
<td>8yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software used for instruction</td>
<td>1yr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VII. Planning and Implementation**

**3.A Institutional Planning**

The institutional planning process at RTC is currently in a state of transition as the college moves toward implementing intentional and structured alignments between past practices and the college’s new core themes. In 2012-2013, RTC developed a comprehensive plan that integrates the core themes, existing strategic priorities, annual operational plans and the college governance structure. The 2012-13 Comprehensive Plan details desired outcomes, responsible person/unit, collaborations, year-end progress and assessment of
progress. This "cross walk" between the core themes, strategic priorities and the comprehensive plan provides alignment of core themes to the operational plan.

When the planning process is fully implemented, it will include a review of core theme assessment results, and will tie those results to the revision of the next year’s Comprehensive Plan, including action plans for the functional areas of the college. The campus planning process suggests that the Comprehensive Plan, and the embedded action plans, will be aligned with several aspects of each core theme and demonstrate commitment to accomplishing the core theme objectives. (3.A.3) This process has started, but is not completely implemented, as recognized in the self-evaluation report. Evaluators did not find evidence that this process has been broadly communicated, nor does it appear to be broadly understood. However, through use of some of the governance councils, some employees are involved and committed to moving forward. (3.A.2)

The self-study indicated the 2013-14 Comprehensive Plan would incorporate budget allocations and timelines for completion of each strategy. However, at this date, there is not a comprehensive plan for 2013-14. Instead, an operational plan has been developed. The current operational plan continues much of the work of the previous comprehensive plan and could be considered a transition plan to keep the college moving forward. The operational plan is not tied to core themes. However, many of the strategies included relate to core theme assessments. The college has recently filled the vacant key positions, which should allow the process of planning based on core theme indicators (including budget allocations) to move forward. (3.A.4)

RTC defines mission fulfillment as achievement of an acceptable level of performance on key performance indicators. The level of performance for each indicator is reviewed and graded on a 0 to 4 scale. The College determined that an acceptable threshold of achievement at this time would be 2.0 - Meets Expectations. In summer, 2013, the college reviewed its indicators and performance on core themes, and used this scale to “grade” its performance. Evaluators compared the results of this process to the draft Operational Plan for 2013-14, since a Comprehensive Plan is not available. Some connections to planned operational actions do align with the results of the core theme assessment. In other words, some of the indicators that were graded less than 2.0 did have related action strategies on the 2013-2014 Operational Plan. The college’s planning processes and structures need more work so that they are broadly understood across the college and the collection and analysis of appropriate data is directly and consistently tied to organizational planning. (3.A.2, 3.A.3)

The college has a written emergency preparedness plan and contingency plan for continuity of operations in the event of a catastrophe.

VII. Core Theme Planning, Assessment and Improvement

Since NWCCU implemented the new standards in 2010, RTC has moved quickly to develop and implement its core themes. Over this short, three-year cycle, RTC developed its five
core themes, submitted its year one report, revised the core theme measures, and completed its year seven self-study. Additionally, amidst upper-level administration turnover, RTC staff rallied to align its core themes with its strategic priorities and operational planning, resulting in a comprehensive plan. This work, completed on an accelerated time line, has resulted in strong core themes that clearly align with RTC’s mission. The collection of data, however, has not been refined causing uneven implementation of core theme planning, assessment and improvement. The elements of strong, effective planning are “on paper”, but not fully implemented.

Core Theme One: Workforce Education

As a technical college, the Workforce Education core theme is appropriate to the college mission of preparing a diverse population for work, fulfilling the employment needs of individuals, students, and industry. This core theme includes four objectives, and each objective has three to five indicators for a total of fourteen indicators. Collected data sources include: DLOA (Data linking for Outcomes Assessment), National Student Clearinghouse, SMS (Student Management System), and internal compilation of initiatives related to the core theme.

3.B Core Theme One Planning

The Workforce Education core theme is led by the Director of Workforce Development with a committee that includes representation from areas throughout the campus. Indicators were developed through campus wide input in 2010-11 and as a result of the year one report from NWCCU.

Some examples of the 2012-13 comprehensive plan strategies that are tied to Workforce Education core theme indicators follow:

Objective A (Students Complete Workforce programs) includes a strategy to establish a learning resource center. The learning resource center ties into the strategic priority of strengthening engagement, and it may contribute to the indicators of students who attain a certificate (either professional/technical or apprenticeship) or an AAS, AA, or AS degree. In addition, several initiatives are underway related to improving the student learning process such as Quality Matters and others for online and hybrid courses.

Objective B (Workforce programs are viable based on continued student enrollment) includes operational strategies related to ABE/ESL and high school transitions programs as well as developing relationships with area high schools.

Objective D (Workforce completers obtain jobs in appropriate industries at a competitive salary) includes the establishment of a career center, which hosted a career fair as well as activities related to preparing students for the interview process.

However, strategies related to Objective C (Workforce programs are viable based on industry demands), do not seem to include the direct relationship between the school and
potential employers, but rather seem tied to continued enrollment. In an indirect way, continued enrollment does support the ability to provide future employees. Maintaining specialized accreditation fits in with developing competent individuals for work, and provides a method for the institution and instructors to focus resources on the program.

The college has measured the indicators related to its workforce education core theme objectives and created a rubric to interpret overall results on a scale of 0-4. Data is presented as baseline, target, and 10-11.

Because of the compressed cycle, data from the Workforce Education Core Theme has only recently been compiled and available for analysis at the institutional level. As a result, institutional planning informed by the results of the indicators has not been completed. Nevertheless, the college has developed an operational plan for the current year that includes strategies addressing areas that the data indicates needs to be addressed. Future planning should have a clear connection to the data and be tied to resources to achieve the outcome. (3.B.3)

4.A. Core Theme One Assessment

This standard points to four areas of assessment:

1. Assessment for evaluating the accomplishment of core theme objectives
2. Assessment for evaluating educational programs and services
3. Assessment of student achievement through identified student learning outcomes
4. Assessment of one’s assessment process to endure meaningful results that lead to improvement

In addition, assessment results are to be integrated into planning of core theme objectives. Faculty has a primary role in assessing learning outcomes and evaluation of educational programs and services.

The college has measured the indicators related to its Workforce Education core theme objectives and distributed results through the year-seven self-study. Several administrators and faculty indicated that planning based on results of core theme indicators has been delayed until after this accreditation evaluation. The operational plan for the current year was created outside of core-theme planning, but reflects many of the areas that the data suggests needs improvement.

The Workforce Education core theme has a number of indicators that were measured in the current, compressed cycle. Much of the data is collected through State databases. Indicators appear robust and seem to measure the objectives effectively. Specialized accreditation for programs effectively aligns RTC’s programs with industry standards. However, other programs not involved with specialized accreditation are reliant on advisory committee perceptions and feedback from completer’s employers. Data was not available to assess the indicators related to programs not informed by specialized accreditation, and should be addressed. (4.A.1) Wage data is evaluated by its relationship to the system average.
However, not having information on the benchmarks for the system average may not make this indicator as clear as was hoped when it was developed.

Results from the workforce education core theme indicators are disaggregated by program and provided to program managers and deans for program review. This process informs program managers and deans to the program's contribution to the overall college and should provide a basis for future planning.

Programs are reviewed on a rotating three year basis. Program review documents include a report from institutional research with indicators similar to those in Core Theme 1, student evaluations, expected competencies, a program outline including program learning outcomes, and reviews of related instruction. The program review binders that the evaluator reviewed contain references to advisory committee meetings, but no minutes from the meetings. Advisory committee minutes were reviewed in a separate folder. This review revealed that program planning is often initiated at the advisory committee level. Program reviews appear to be formative with the opportunity for the program faculty to make necessary changes in the program to be responsive to changing industry standards.

Although program learning outcomes are documented on the RTC website and are included in program outlines and program reviews, no specific evidence was available to the evaluator that the learning outcomes are assessed at the course or program level, or that future program planning or changes in how curriculum is taught was informed by those assessments. The data does inform the success of program completers in obtaining jobs at wages commensurate with their occupation, which implies that the students are learning sufficient skills to obtain employment. However, no specific assessment of the level of competency exists for each learning outcome in the program or course, nor is there documentation to connect program planning with results of program level outcomes. (4.A.3)

Members of the workforce education core theme committee were pleased with the indicators developed for that core theme. They felt it was a good start on a confusing process. Now that indicators are assessed, they see the value of closing the planning-assessment-improvement loop through informed strategic planning.

Strengthening the connection between functional area planning by connecting it to the results of measuring and analyzing core theme indicators will more clearly ensure that programs and services are aligned with and contribute to the achievement of core theme objectives.

Of the 14 indicators for the Workforce Education core theme, 12 achieved a score of at least 2.0 (meets expectations). Two did not. Both were from objective C: Workforce training programs are viable based on industry demand and standards.

Inasmuch as specialized accreditation and formal approval of programs reflects the needs of industry standards, the College has made progress on the standards portion of the objective. Work needs to be completed on the remaining portion of the objective related to advisory
committees and employer perception, which complete the objective of viability in RTC’s service area. Advisory committee minutes and internship evaluations could be helpful in developing these assessments.

The workforce education core theme committee has not met since the indicators have been compiled. Due to a number of key positions being vacant, as well as turnover at the executive level, the college has been in “survival mode,” as expressed in some interviews. Now that the key positions have been filled, work needs to be done to evaluate the assessments to ensure they lead to meaningful planning. (4.A.6)

4.B. Core Theme One Improvement

This standard points to the importance of using core theme, program, and student learning assessment results in improvement planning, decision making, resource allocation, and, in the case of learning assessments, to enhance student achievement.

RTC has a Competency Based Education (CBE) database to store course, program, and degree learning outcomes. The college recognized in the self-study that the database is not complete at this time. Although the completed portions of CBE indicate how the learning outcomes are assessed, there is no information available on the assessment results, or how the results are used in future planning. Instructors indicate that, at the course level, adjustments are made on a daily basis to ensure student learning. Professional teaching adjustments in a day to day, undocumented pattern is normal for any teaching professional and may be especially effective in the technical college model at RTC, which creates strong relationships between students and instructors due to the large blocks of time spent together in the instructional process.

Planning should be informed by the assessment of core theme indicators and assessment of student learning, and tied to the allocation of resources. (4.B.1)

Program learning outcomes are not assessed and therefore not included in the program planning process. One instructor noted that she knows students are meeting the program learning outcomes because students get jobs. Overall documented adjustments based on assessed learning outcomes are required in the accreditation standards. (4.B.2)

Concern:

1. The evaluators are concerned that identification and implementation of improvement plans based on core theme assessment results have not been implemented, and thus are not used in planning, resource allocation, and the improvement of programs and services. (4.B.1, 4.B.2)

Core Theme Two: Academic Education

Core Theme 2 aligns with the mission of the college to prepare a diverse student population for work. This goal is evident in the objectives of the core theme which support successful
transition and clear pathways into degree programs. Interviews with administrators, faculty and students conducted by the evaluators support RTC’s description of its General Education program to “prepare students for a productive life of work, citizenship and personal fulfillment.” It was apparent from these interviews that program administrators are dedicated and hardworking, that faculty members are passionate about their work, and that students are enthusiastic about their educational experiences at RTC.

The Academic Education core theme includes four objectives and each objective has two to four indicators, for a total of twelve indicators. Sources of indicator data include, tracking college processes related to learning outcomes, completion and success rates for all general education courses, tracking transition rates into degree program pathways, and faculty participation levels in professional development.

3.B. Core Theme Two Planning

Institutional planning processes at RTC include review of core theme results that then tie those results to the development of operational plans in the college departments. As evidenced in the alignment of the core theme objectives to the operational plan initiatives and outcomes, the college is engaged in a continuous process of reviewing the indicators related to Core Theme 2. Additionally, based on interviews, RTC intends to review its operational plan, tie its planning to resource allocation, and review its indicators and targets to include additional objectives and indicators as necessary. However, the evaluators did not find evidence that this level of planning is presently occurring. (3.B.3) Although the comprehensive plan illustrates alignment of the core themes with strategic themes, the absence of long-range instructional program goals makes it difficult for RTC to demonstrate that Academic Core Theme planning consistently and evenly guides the planning for and selection of programs and services, or contributes to the intended goals of programs and services. (3.A.1; 3.A.2) There are some examples of well-aligned planning strategies with the core theme objectives and indicators; for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Operational Plan</th>
<th>Operational Outcome</th>
<th>Core Theme Objective:</th>
<th>Core Theme Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Success – enhance student engagement and quality of services to all stakeholders</td>
<td>Establish orientation, pre-college class</td>
<td>Improve student persistence</td>
<td>Establish course curriculum and educational pathway alignments that support successful academic transitions</td>
<td>Indicator 2.C2: Success rates of students that transition directly from ABE to computation and communication General Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is evident that there is strong and sincere interest at RTC in developing a robust plan for reviewing its core themes. In the future, the operational plans and budget planning process should use the results of the core theme assessment process to make improvements.

(3.B.3) The evaluation team emphasizes that care should be taken to insure data is appropriate to the core theme and leads to the documentation of core theme progress and improvements to programs and services.

### 4.A. Core Theme Two Assessment

Although some of the indicators for Core Theme Two seem to be well-established and include baseline data, it was not apparent that the administrators and faculty associated with this core theme fully understood why these indicators and baselines were developed. Additionally, the administrators and faculty should review the Core Theme Two indicators to ensure they are meaningful measures for the Core Theme Two objectives. The college has begun planning processes in relation to the core themes; however, evidence that the evaluation of core theme indicators and the resulting data are used to influence resource allocation and improvements was absent. The evaluators encourage RTC to continue to develop the indicators for Core Theme Two, and to align the achievement of these indicators to planning for the core theme and for its supporting programs and services.

(4.A.1)

The evaluator did not find sufficient evidence that a comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement exists, or that students who complete general education courses, whether embedded or stand alone, have consistently achieved course learning outcomes.

(4.A.6) Additionally, although RTC demonstrates excellent completion and placement rates for its general education courses, there was no evidence that student learning outcomes assessment results are widely published and available to the college community. While student comments overwhelmingly support a strong, student-focused classroom experience, the data to support claims of student success in achieving learning outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability – Implement a professional development program that provides opportunities for personal growth and increased productivity</th>
<th>Identify and provide more professional development opportunities for faculty and staff</th>
<th>Enhance quality of programs through improvement in teaching and learning and course content.</th>
<th>Instructors participate in a variety of discipline-specific and pedagogical professional development opportunities</th>
<th>Indicator 2.D1: Professional development participation rates for academic instructors who have been with the college for more than one year.</th>
<th>courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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(3.B.3) The evaluation team emphasizes that care should be taken to insure data is appropriate to the core theme and leads to the documentation of core theme progress and improvements to programs and services.

### 4.A. Core Theme Two Assessment

Although some of the indicators for Core Theme Two seem to be well-established and include baseline data, it was not apparent that the administrators and faculty associated with this core theme fully understood why these indicators and baselines were developed. Additionally, the administrators and faculty should review the Core Theme Two indicators to ensure they are meaningful measures for the Core Theme Two objectives. The college has begun planning processes in relation to the core themes; however, evidence that the evaluation of core theme indicators and the resulting data are used to influence resource allocation and improvements was absent. The evaluators encourage RTC to continue to develop the indicators for Core Theme Two, and to align the achievement of these indicators to planning for the core theme and for its supporting programs and services.

(4.A.1)

The evaluator did not find sufficient evidence that a comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement exists, or that students who complete general education courses, whether embedded or stand alone, have consistently achieved course learning outcomes.

(4.A.6) Additionally, although RTC demonstrates excellent completion and placement rates for its general education courses, there was no evidence that student learning outcomes assessment results are widely published and available to the college community. While student comments overwhelmingly support a strong, student-focused classroom experience, the data to support claims of student success in achieving learning outcomes
were not apparent to the reviewers. (4.A.3) Without such data, it is not possible for the institution to use results of student learning assessments to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices. (4.B.2)

4.B. Core Theme Two Improvement

This standard points to the importance of using core theme, program, and student learning assessment results in improvement planning, decision making, resource allocation, and, in the case of learning assessment, to enhance student achievement. Program review processes have been implemented in RTC’s professional-technical and general education programs but data was not available to indicate how RTC evaluates its related support programs and services. While recognizing that the indicators and benchmarks were developed within the context of a short time frame between the Year One and Year Seven reports, it is unclear to the evaluator how the objectives and measures identified for Core Theme 2 systematically inform planning and decision making for improvement. (4.B.1; 4.B.2)

Compliment:

1. As a result of site interviews, the evaluator found that students are highly enthusiastic about RTC faculty and staff and feel supported in their efforts to achieve both educational and personal goals.

Concerns:

1. Although there are examples of planning strategies aligned with the Academic Core Theme objectives and indicators, core theme planning is inconsistent and lacks documentation to show results are used to inform selection of programs and services, and to make improvements to core theme programs and services. (3.B.1, 3.B.2, 3.B.3)

2. Core theme, program, and student learning outcomes assessment capacity is not systematized or well-developed in the general education or embedded general studies curriculum. The college is encouraged to incorporate more evidence of student learning outcomes data from throughout the educational experience and from within academic programs into the evaluation of the Academic Core Theme and learning support programs and services. (4.A.3, 4.A.6, 4.B.1, 4.B.2)

Core Theme Three: Basic Skills

The Basic Skills/Basic Education core theme encompasses the Basic Studies department which includes ABE/GED, ESL, and the IBEST courses where basic skills are embedded in some of the career technical programs. The ABE and ESL programs are offered on the main campus in Renton along with eight other sites in the surrounding area.

Three objectives guide the institution’s assessment of this core theme:
Objective A: Students make progress toward achieving their educational goals.
Objective B: Students make progress toward achieving their employment and career goals.
Objective C: Students transition into college classes and programs.

Each of these objectives are followed with at least three “Indicators of Achievement.” Baseline data has been recorded and targets have been established.

3.B. Core Theme Three Planning

In reviewing the 2012-2013 Comprehensive Plan and the 2013-2014 Operational Plan Draft it is apparent that Core Theme 3 – Basic Skills/Education is addressed in both of these institutional planning documents. The Basic Studies department is identified by multiple names and it might be helpful if there was consistency amongst the various documents. There was a Program Review conducted in 2010 which addresses, even more specifically, the Basic Studies program. The most recent Program Review identified a very purposeful and well thought-out action plan. Each of these documents referenced the desire for increased completion, and retention.

As identified in the 2013-2014 Operational Draft, Core Theme 3 is preparing to incorporate a collaborative system design that will provide greater access for Basic Studies students; implement an advising model that will support the transition of Basic Studies students into the college level programs; further support the program review process with clear schedules, and rubrics; seek resources to develop and maintain innovations such as the Reading Apprenticeship program and IBEST instruction; and provide “Quality Matters” to all faculty wishing to teach online.

Three of the “Indicators of Achievement” for Objective A & B were the same. The 2010/2011 data showed a 3% increase in the number of students who became eligible to take the CASAS post-test, there was no change in the number of students achieving a significant gain on the CASAS post-test, and there was a 16% increase in the number of students who received their GED. There was no data for Indicator 3.A.4; and Indicator 3.B.4 declined by 6.5%, addressing the percentage of students who failed to gain or retain employment. Based on the RTC scoring and definition of Mission Fulfillment, the objectives were met.

Two of the three Objective C indicators dropped below the targets. Indicator 3.C.3, the completion rate of students in college classes or workforce programs with embedded Basic Skills instruction improved by 4%. The target for this indicator was 15% below the baseline which was reflective of the 2010/2011 year.

The College has adopted the statewide Washington Adult Learning Standards for ABE which have been translated into course outcomes. Faculty identified objectives and methods of completion that align with the Standards. All centers are using the same standards and
working toward the state identified outcomes. There appears to be an opportunity for review of the faculty interpretations of the different levels to assure consistency across all sites.

4.A. Core Theme Three Assessment

Tracking the Indicators of Achievement is facilitated by the program’s participation in the statewide WABERS student database. The Washington Adult Basic Education Reporting System (WABERS) is an on-line application used to facilitate the data collection and reporting of students in Adult Basic Education Programs. Community Based Organizations and community and technical colleges in the State of Washington that provide adult education services are required to report data at least quarterly using WABERS. RTC makes good use of the state data and tracking system.

RTC has at least eight different sites in which they deliver some form of their Basic Studies program. The Dean and Associate Dean do a commendable job communicating with faculty at the different sites; however oversight of the identified program goals and outcomes across the multiple sites might be better tracked. There does not seem to be a clear assessment plan documenting consistency of program or course outcomes across the multiple locations.

RTC uses the Washington Adult Learning Standards state assessment measures at all of their sites. They also use an oral assessment and writing rubric, developed by the Tacoma Community House, to align with the state Standards. The state Student Achievement Initiative measures are used to assess and compare all the community colleges across the state. The core theme objectives and Indicators of Achievement have been developed using the Standards Based Education template with the goal of moving students to their educational and employment goals as quickly as possible. Faculty use all of these measures to accurately place and move the students along. Evidence was found tracking student progress or lack of, but follow-up could be improved and documented.

RTC holistically considers alignment and integration of their programs and services. The CASAS exams measure the persistence and retention, but RTC has also chosen to address other areas such as tutoring and partnering with agencies such as WorkSource. Students spoke highly of the tutoring services available to them. Students spoke highly of their IBEST courses and instructors. Students had no idea that their curriculum was being delivered any differently than any other RTC student.

The institution is discussing the possibility of developing an Academic Master Plan. It will be important for the institution to align its core themes to any future planning efforts. It would also be beneficial for the campus to see and understand how the results of the Core Theme research can help the campus align the possible need for additional resources.

There is little in the Self-Study report that suggests that the results of the Core Theme 3 assessment measures are contributing to the improvement of the program by informing planning or decision making. Data is limited due to changes in the National Reporting
System. The state data being collected provides for good comparisons with similar institutions in the state.

4.B. Core Theme Three Improvement

Core Theme 3 indicators are adequate, but the Core Theme lacks institutional and departmental assessment followed by identified concerns for improvement. Staff, faculty, and student interviews reflect that discussions and professional development opportunities are happening, but documentation is lacking as to how this information ties back to the concerns for improvement. (4.B.1 & 4.B.2)

The department has appropriately assessed that the previous use of "Grammar Points" was not sufficiently measuring the students writing ability in an effective manner and have ceased to use the tool. The state assessment tools are well established and currently in use.

Multiple measures are used to evaluate Basic Studies faculty on a regular basis. What is not being tracked consistently is the follow-up from the formative evaluations. Professional development is offered at the quarterly meetings.

There is evidence that good data is being collected. What is lacking is the ongoing and systematic use of the data to help improve the department. (4.B.1) An example of this can be found upon review of the 2012-2013 Comprehensive Plan. The plan identified the need for an orientation, pre-college class which has been developed and implemented. The evaluator found no evidence that would help the college determine if that class is fulfilling the original needs or concerns. The 2010 Program Review offered another opportunity for both assessment and improvement. Prior to the writing of another program review it is the evaluators' hope that the assessment of the previous plan be reflected upon prior to the outlining of current or new strategies. Yearly assessments and improvement reports might help to identify next steps and the possible need for resource allocation. (4.B.1; 4.B.2)

Compliment:

1. The Basic Skills administrators, faculty, and students speak highly of this department. The students feel like the faculty truly care about their success and often go above and beyond to help the students achieve their goals.

Core Theme Four: Student Access and Diversity

The Student Access and Diversity core theme contains four main objectives with each objective having one to three indicators for a total of eight indicators. Collected data sources include 2009-10 enrollment data related to demographic information and course registration levels.

The theme was developed from the naturally diverse composition of the community served by the college and RTCs stated commitment to a mission of preparing a diverse population for work. The core theme has changed as a result of RTC’s participation in Achieving the
Dream. The recent change in focus has resulted in baseline data that is lacking in depth beyond basic enrollment data for three of the indicators, and no data for five of the indicators. Planning for programs and services might be better informed through assessment of metrics beyond enrollment. The exit survey for new student orientation provides an example of data collection that goes beyond participation numbers.

Interviews and supporting documentation indicate that these measures were established recently and not available for analysis before the development of the 2012-2013 comprehensive plan. The development of improvements identified in the operational plans appears to be based on specific events rather than an overall review of theme.

There were several typos and inconsistencies in the self evaluation report that made the review of this core theme difficult. Core theme objectives in the core theme planning, assessment and improvement section did not match the objectives as outlined in the Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report, Standard 1. It appears that some of the data and information for this core theme is missing.

3.B. Core Theme Four Planning

The proposed institutional planning process at RTC includes a review of core theme assessment results, and ties those results to the development of operational plans in the functional areas of the college. The planning process suggests that operational plans, and the embedded action plans, will be aligned with several aspects of each core theme and demonstrate commitment to accomplishing the core theme objectives. Although there are currently some action plans that tie to core theme objectives, they were developed before core theme assessment results were in place. Although the compressed time frame of this cycle prevented it, in the future, the operational plans and budget planning process should use the results of the core theme assessment process. (3.B.3)

Even with this compressed cycle, there are some examples of alignment between 2013-2014 planning and core theme objectives, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Action Plan</th>
<th>Related Core Theme Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further develop and refine ABE/ESL transition pathway</td>
<td>Maintain a diverse student population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch student organization and club programs</td>
<td>Retain RTC students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand Learning Resource Center to serve a wider student population</td>
<td>Students complete courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand tutoring and career services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement week by week advising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35
However, without measures and clear connections in place, it will be difficult to tell if these action plans actually lead to improved performance on the core theme indicators.

4.A. Core Theme Four Assessment

Of the four objectives related to core theme four, data for three of them was presented in the college self-evaluation report. Objective 4A has one indicator, and baseline and target data for this indicator was presented in the self-evaluation report. The college scored this objective as 2 (meets expectations). Objective 4B has two indicators, and it appears that no indicators related to 4.B were measured or assessed. It appeared that data was missing for some of the indicators related to Objectives 4.C and 4.D. When compared to the information provided earlier in the self study (Standard 1 section), the indicators and objectives did not match. This may be a result of some of the recent changes to this core theme, but this was not made clear to the evaluators. Even when data was missing, the college scored the objectives as 2 (meets expectations). (4.A.1)

4.B Core Theme Four Improvement

Evaluators did not find evidence that the results of the assessment and analysis of core theme indicators for this core theme were used for decision making and improvements. (4.B.1) Although the compressed timeline and recent departure of institutional research staff may have contributed to this lack of connection between results and improvements, it will be important for the college to correct this timing and use the assessment results in the future.

Concerns:

The evaluators are concerned that the college did not systematically collect and analyze meaningful data for this core theme. It appears that in one case, an objective was assessed without data. (4.A.1)

The evaluators are concerned that the institution did not use results of core theme assessment to inform planning, decision making and the allocation of resources. (4.B.1)

Core Theme Five: College Stewardship

Renton Technical College has established College Stewardship as a theme that is core to its mission. Fostering effective stewardship for the citizens of Washington means that the College is managing its resources – human, financial, and physical – in ways that maximize the potential for funds and facilities to support student learning. Three separate objectives have been identified within this core theme and each objective has three or four measurable outcome indicators for a total of ten.
3.B. Core Theme Five Planning

Planning around the College Stewardship core theme began with campus sub-committees of “Champions”. College Stewardship is embedded into three campus planning documents: the College’s strategic plan for 2012-2017, the Operational Plan and the overall Comprehensive Plan which all help to guide the college in planning and to ensure mission fulfillment.

In thoroughly examining these three documents, there is evidence and documentation that planning for the core theme is being considered throughout the institution’s comprehensive planning efforts as it is a consistent theme in all documents.

In both data review and interviews during the site visit, evidence was discovered that shows the links between planning for the core themes and their alignment with the achievement of stated goals and outcomes within the theme. However, this evidence is stronger in some indicator areas than in others.

Examples of weaker links between planning and alignment with intended outcomes include: indicator 5.A.2 (Diversity of RTC faculty/staff as measured by % of people of color), indicator 5.B.2 (Enrollment is aligned with FTE projections and state allocations), and indicator 5.C.1 (Availability and usage of technologies that enhance teaching and learning). In the case of indicator 5.B.2 and indicator 5.C.1, the committee found evidence of how RTC will utilize outcomes to guide the future direction of the college. However, this was not visible with indicator 5.A.2.

All other indicators under this core theme scored a 2.0 or above and met the expected college objectives. The evaluators also found evidence the college is incorporating these standards into the planning processes and is using the outcomes to change the college going forward to promote direction, growth, and student learning.

4.A. Assessment

The College Stewardship Subcommittee documented a process to measure the extent to which individual strategies achieved the desired outcome. To begin this process, each College Stewardship core theme objective contains a strategic priority, a strategy with planned outcomes, and an assessment of the outcome success. These are measured with either a “Yes – achieving the outcome, Modest Progress in achieving the outcome, or No – have not achieved the outcome”. Objective A contained seven planned outcomes all of which were measured with “Modest Progress”. Objective B contained fourteen planned outcomes with two measuring “Yes”, eight “Modest Progress” and four “No”. Objective C contained seven planned outcomes with two measuring “Yes”, four “Modest Progress” and one “No”.

The subcommittee then collected data to help define the core theme objectives and indicators of achievement. Baseline data was established using a four-year (2006-2010) average, assessed and progress was measured against this established baseline. A scale of 0
to 4 was used with 2 determined to be an acceptable threshold of achievement meeting expectations.

After scoring, Objective A received a score of 1.3 – partially meets expectations, Objective B received a score of 2.5 – meets expectations, and Objective C received a score of 2 (meets expectations). In summary, two out of three Objectives achieved the outcomes established by the college.

Although the college Comprehensive Plan appears to include actions related to this core theme, there does not appear to be clear linkages between core theme assessment results and specific actions and tasks within the Comprehensive Plan or how these will be accomplished or met going forward. (4.A.4)

4.B. Core Theme Five Improvement

The institution has developed core theme objectives and identified meaningful indicators of achievement thus providing a means for achieving the desired outcomes. These assessments are discussed and incorporated in campus planning documents and allocation of resources. However, it was not clear and the evaluators could not find evidence from interviews or provided materials, that the outcome results are currently utilized to guide future planning and decision making, or that a real commitment to resource allocation has been made. (4.B.1)

IX. Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability

5.A. Mission Fulfillment

RTC has new planning and assessment processes in place that make it difficult to determine the extent to which they are regular and systematic. They have the potential to become that, but evidence does not indicate it is occurring at the time of this visit. There are examples, in the library, in marketing, in some sections of student services, and in some instructional areas, where data from results is regularly examined and assessed. (5.A.1)

In some areas, it appears that core theme results have been analyzed and used for guiding improvement efforts. However, this is not occurring consistently across the institution. (5.A.2) Some areas in student services, basic skills, finances, and marketing are using assessment results to identify strategies for improvement. Because implementation of assessment and self-reflection is spotty, conclusions are not broadly communicated or distributed. (5.A.2)

5.B Adaptation and Sustainability

New processes and have been developed in an attempt to improve planning and assessment at RTC. With new executive personnel in place, there is a strong commitment to evaluating planning and effectiveness, and improving systems based on that evaluation. Some areas, such as financial planning, have been and continue to be consistently strong. A full seven
year cycle will give RTC the opportunity to complete the meta-level assessment that Standard 5.B requires. Currently, this level of evaluation is happening through conversation rather than the systematic collection of data to inform resources, capacity, and effectiveness. (5.B.1) Planning practices are maturing and strategic directions, based on environmental scans are emerging. In the next few years, it will be important for the college to regularly assess itself in relation to its mission. (5.B.2; 5.B.3)

Concerns:

1. The evaluators are concerned about a lack of evaluation of planning processes to ensure they are effective and systematic, allow for constituent input and broad communication, and encourage self-reflection. (5.A.1)

X. Summary

Conversations with RTC students, employees, and Trustees make it clear that students are supported and well-served by RTC. Evaluators consistently heard, in each constituency’s own words, how RTC achieves its mission through helping students get better jobs through continued education. This mission is well-known and supported throughout the college.

RTC is an institution that has experienced extensive change in executive management, and this change has meant many planning and assessment processes have started, become stalled, and started again, often with changes driven by the new leadership. This has been confusing and has caused some people to disengage. This was exacerbated by the accelerated time line between year one and seven self-evaluation reports. However, evaluators also found evidence of hope and new excitement about what RTC can be for students in the future. The college continues to focus intently on its mission, and is attempting to put feedback mechanisms and planning processes in place that can help them achieve that mission. Currently implementation is incomplete and there is much work to be done.

RTC's core themes are strongly focused on their mission. With continued efforts to measure and strengthen the objectives and indicators and with a strengthened commitment to use the results of those measurements for improvement, RTC will continue to be a strong partner to its community by providing educational opportunities that put people to work.

The evaluators express their sincere thanks to the institution for their hospitality, and we hope that this report, with our observations, commendations and opportunities for improvement will be useful as you continue to help students become effective citizens in your community.
XII. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. The evaluators commend RTC staff, faculty, administrators and Trustees for your sincere commitment to and support of students. Your students said it best: The staff provide phenomenal services; the faculty are caring, knowledgeable and talented; and the administration and Board of Trustees care about what we think and ask for our opinion. This place lifts us up!

2. The evaluators commend the college for implementing a well-planned and thoughtfully developed student leadership program, which provides multiple opportunities for student participation, resulting in a group of highly dedicated, passionate, and effective student leaders invested in the success of RTC.

3. The evaluators commend everyone involved in the implementation of the I-BEST model in designated workforce programs. This model incorporates best practices and RTC has demonstrated improved student retention and completion through this program.

4. The evaluators commend the RTC Library faculty and staff on consistent and systematic use of feedback from library constituents to make data-informed improvements to the programming and resources offered.

Recommendations

1. The evaluators recommend that for each year of operation, the College undergo an external financial audit and that the results from such audits, including findings and management letter recommendations, be considered in a timely, appropriate and comprehensive manner by the Board of Trustees (Eligibility Requirement 19 and Standard 2.F.7)

2. The evaluators found evidence of multiple planning processes that appear confusing, lack meaningful evidence, and are not broadly understood across the institution. The evaluators recommend that the College evaluate its planning cycle to ensure it is effective and systematic, allows for constituent input and broad communication, encourages self-reflection, and results in evidence-based assessment of its accomplishments. (3.A.1, 3.A.2, 3.A.3, 5.A.1)

3. The evaluators recommend the College ensure planning is informed by meaningful and verifiable indicators, which are evaluated and analyzed at the program, department, and direct service level, as well as within the context of the core themes, in order to determine areas of improvement, to inform decision making and to prioritize the allocation of resources. (1.B.2, 3.A.3, 3.B.3, 4.A.1, 4.B.1)

4. The evaluators recommend the College engage in an evidence-based evaluation of assessment processes to ensure that student learning outcomes are clearly identified, consistently provided to students and the assessment results are used to enhance teaching and learning and to inform the planning processes for academic programs and services. (2.C.10; 4.A.6, 4.B.2)