



# 2016-17 Summary of Annual Department Reviews (Years 1-3) Columbia Gorge Community College

November 2017

## Participating Departments

- Business Office: Bookstore
- Child Care Partners
- Facilities
- Human Resources: Payroll
- Information Technology Services
- Instructional Services, including: CTE, Science & Math; Community Education; Curriculum & Assessment; Library
- President's Office
- Student Services, including: Academic Advising & Career Services; Disabilities Resources; Mental Health & Wellness; Early Alert Pass System; Front Counter; Registrar; Financial Aid; Student Outreach & Recruitment

## Summary of Highlights and Trends

### **Progress on 2016-17 Department Goals & New Goals for 2017-18**

Reporting on the past year's goals was complicated by departments not having conducted formal reviews in recent years. Therefore, there were not lists of specific goals to which the department could refer. However, clearly departments had goals whether or not they were formally identified in an institutional document. Some department goals aligned with Core Themes and/or were linked closely to institutional strategic goals. One department aligned their goals with NWCCU Standard Two. The scope of goals varied across departments, some having broad goals which were more representative of department mission with sub-goals, others having detailed goals that were more representative of a work plan, and with still others in between.

All departments described completion of or at least progress on most all of their goals. In most instances, unrealized goals were carried over and identified in the coming year's goals. In the case of departments with broader mission-style goals which may not be completed in one year, progress on sub-goals was generally reported and new sub-goals identified for the coming year. At the same time, there were some goals or portions of goals that had to be set aside or postponed. Reported barriers included lack of resources (dollars, staff, equipment), time constraints (usually attributed to the of lack of sufficient staff), and the reliance on external resources (other college departments or individuals and agencies outside of the college). Lack of resources and time were by far the most commonly identified barriers. Difficulties arising from reliance on external resources appeared to come with the understanding that these resources may be stretched thin themselves; however, this potential barrier does point to growth in collaborative activities/actions that require collaborative goals.

## **Progress toward Institutional Strategic Goals**

Information related to institutional strategic goal progress was difficult to determine. A few reports specifically identified how department goals aligned with strategic goals and Core Themes; however, most reviews left it to the reader to interpret how the department goals may move strategic goals forward as well as address mission fulfillment outlined in Core Themes. As the college continues to develop its planning and reporting processes, research on the intersection and alignment of department review and progress toward institutional goals and mission fulfillment would be beneficial.

## **Assessment of Department Operational Functions**

Departments were to analyze, evaluate and report on the performance/adequacy of department operational function areas A-E. Some departments chose to report on all function areas A-J; however, this summary only addresses A-E. Some reviews did not address all of the required function areas.

### **A. Organizational Management & Leadership Structure**

Most departments reported that their organizational management and leadership structure were positive and understood. Generally, departments show a hierarchical structure led by a Chief. Departments vary in size (between two and 177 employees) and complexity; those departments with greater numbers of employees and complexity are generally divided into sub-departments which may function with substantial autonomy and are led by directors or coordinators. Several of these sub-departments completed their own department reviews which became either stand-alone reviews or were attached to/compiled into a larger department review.

A significant organizational and leadership restructure occurred institutionally when the Chief Academic and Student Services Officer position was divided into two positions: Chief Academic Officer and Chief Student Services Officer. This allowed for both Instructional Services and Student Services, at the leadership level, to provide greater focus on each department's issues and needs. Both departments experienced structure change in their organization, adding sub-departments and realigning personnel.

In addition, it was noted that there was growth in interdepartmental organizational structures with the start-up of the Student Success Team, the reestablishment of the Institutional Assessment Committee, and the further development of the Quality Council.

### **B. Personnel**

While all departments say that they have adequate personnel to provide essential services, without exception, all departments are wanting to increase/replace personnel. Most departments report personnel holes that result in either diminished service and/or the significant shifting of workload to others. Many of these positions were vacated in 2014-15 when the college experienced significant budget cuts. Some of the vacated positions have been refilled while others have not. Some hiring searches have failed to find

qualified applicants. Vacancies are in a variety of positions, including: faculty, classified, professional management, and executive leadership. As a result, departments are reporting the potential for inadequacies at all levels. Some departments describe how they carry out cross-training to ensure coverage. And, while there is concern that certain actions or plans may need to be placed on hold due to insufficient staffing, it is important to reemphasize that it is reported that existing personnel is stepping up and taking on greater responsibility to ensure that essential services are not interrupted.

There were some references in the reviews regarding compensation and the offering of competitive salaries. The Human Resource Department reported that it contracted to have a Compensation Survey done this past year to help align the college in a competitive job market. While there are still some positions that had insufficient comparables to complete the entire study, implementation of salary survey recommendations is an HR goal for 2017-18.

Finally, there were a few departments that noted that the hiring of more Spanish speaking personnel would be beneficial and support goals related to being a Hispanic Serving Institution.

### **C. Professional Development**

All departments place value on professional development and recognize it as a means for ensuring that college activities and services are professional and up-to-date. It is broadly considered to be essential in keeping up with current trends, emerging tools, and required skills. Departments provide opportunities for employees to participate in professional development that is specific to the individual, the department, or the institution. For the most part, departments budget a specific amount of dollars for professional development from which they deduct as opportunities arise. Faculty and staff submit requests to their supervisor explaining the value of the activity; the supervisor approves or declines based on the described importance, the cost, and budget availability. No department described having an annual professional development plan or cost break down analysis that would help guide them in determining where the dollars were best spent. Two departments expressed intentions to develop a plan for the coming year, aligning professional development to department goals as well as institutional strategic goals. Some departments expressed concern over insufficient and/or declining funds for professional development.

### **D. Timeliness of Service**

Though difficult to capture, most departments were able to provide anecdotal assessment or general impressions of their timeliness of service. A common theme in describing how timeliness may be observed in a department revolved around accessibility: service hours, available personnel, web resources. Many departments refer to their positive records for meeting external and internal deadlines. Impressions around positive response times to

internal and external inquiries were also mentioned in several reports. Overall, it appears that departments believe that they are providing service to their customers in a timely manner. Several departments did say that they would like to develop some tracking methods in order to have quantitative data to support their qualitative assessment.

#### **E. Customer Satisfaction**

Similar to “timeliness of service,” customer satisfaction is a tricky assessment to conduct, and departments had limited time to develop a means to assess prior to the completion of this year’s department review. The obvious first go-to is to survey customers, asking them how they feel; however, surveys require significant care in their creation and dissemination. The college as a whole has expressed a concern regarding “survey fatigue” and a need for a coordinated effort to ensure that college “customers” are not overburdened and that information gathered is meaningful. Currently, departments identified a variety of actions that have been taken to assess customer satisfaction: limited activity surveys, participation in department activities/events, suggestion box, lack of any negative response, verbal feedback/comments. Most of these assessments focus on a specific activity within the department rather than the department as a whole. It was also noted that satisfaction or lack of satisfaction may bleed from one department to another. In general, the departments were able to report anecdotally that customer satisfaction was positive; however, most would like to develop a method for assessing this metric more concretely.

#### **Big Dreams**

College departments expressed a breadth of dreams, dreams specific to the department, dreams for the college as a whole, and dreams that address visions for community building and growth. As may be expected, the potential of many of the dreams is contingent on funding with departments dreaming of having a specific amount of dollars to follow through on concrete actions (replacement of obsolete fire monitoring system; replacement of classroom podiums; provide iPads to ELT and Board, replace obsolete marketing materials, and many more.) Another common dollar-dependent dream expressed across many departments is additional hiring including specific new positions (Compliance Officer, HR/Payroll Specialist, Curriculum Designer) as well as replacing previously eliminated or unfilled positions. Then there seems to be a jump in the price tag as departments start dreaming about building facilities: a skill center; a state-of-the-art theatre/lecture facility; a built-out 4<sup>th</sup> floor with Board Room and additional office space; an on-campus childcare center; and on-campus student housing.

While it is unlikely that a “Big Dream” does not have some or even significant budget implications, there were some dreams that focused more on process, culture, and image (redesign general education to incorporate service learning, portfolio development, and capstone activity; achieve a culture based on collaboration, innovation and a “can-do” attitude; aspire to be an Aspen award

winning college; easier communication with students; improve the college's reputation in the communities it serves.)

## Thoughts on Assessment Methodology and Potential Improvements

This was the first year that departments were required to conduct and submit a written Department Review since the 2011-12 academic year. Modifications were made to the Department Review Template and Guidelines in the winter/spring of 2017. The revised template was presented and training provided regarding its completion to the executive leadership team and department leads at the July 11, 2017 Quality Council meeting. Additional trainings were requested by some departments, and the director of curriculum and assessment obliged. In order to align to the seven year NWCCU review cycle, departments were requested to address all template items for years 1-3. This was essentially a Year 3 report with the addition of a description of personnel in Section One. Reviews were due by September 1, 2017, a less than 2 month turn around. It was recognized that because of limited lead time, departments may not have in place assessment methodologies for some of the areas included on the template, particularly under Section Three: Assessment of Department Operational Functions (D. Timeliness of Service and E. Customer Satisfaction.)

There were some inconsistencies in the completion of the review. Not all pieces of the template are required to be reported on every year; however, some departments completed all sections. Then in other reviews, departments failed to complete all the required sections. A review of the template directions and Department Review training should be done to determine how to best avoid these inconsistencies.

Section Two: Action on Annual Goals & Analysis is the heart of the program review, and in several reviews, this section was incomplete with departments not addressing the bullets listed in the template for this section. Actions toward goal achievement were listed but little analysis nor conclusion regarding overall achievement or status of goal was included. In some cases, data was provided, however, subsequent analysis was lacking. In other instances, judgements/decisions/recommendations would be drawn without substantive data to support them. Data without analysis implies that the department review may be conducted more as an accountability exercise than a process that is meaningful and useful in the decision making process of the department. On the other hand, a lack of substantive data may result in decisions being based on incorrect assumptions which may lead to misallocated resources. Rather than assuming that department personnel understands the inclusion and purpose of data and analysis, it is recommended that some professional development be offered.