

## President's Message

Everett Community College begins the year 2000 with renewed optimism and energy. This optimism comes from demonstrated student performance, enrollment growth, and employee morale. Our students are successful. In 1999, 100 percent of our nursing students, 100 percent of our medical assisting students and 100 percent of our aviation students passed their licensing exams. Our transfer graduates continue to perform on or above par with both native university students and students transferring from other community colleges. Enrollments for the last six quarters have far exceeded projections, demonstrating strength across both technical and academic programs. This growth, at a time of high employment in our service area, includes students in all areas, from recent high school graduates to Workforce and Workfirst trainees.

These positive developments result from many contributions. The College offers relevant and current academic, technical, and basic education programs supported by top of the line student services. The main campus has a major new classroom building and improved grounds; technology is up to date across campus. We have productive partnerships with schools and universities, helping to make the College more and more attractive to its constituents, employees and students.

But the road to where we are today has been rocky. In the first half of the decade, partly as a result of the accreditation process, there was a strong focus on strategic planning and assessment. Though a solid foundation of future planning for student achievement was established, a cycle of falling enrollments, budget difficulties, and internally-focused controversies diverted our attention. During the mid- to late-nineties, eleven of fifteen top administrative positions changed hands. Thankfully, the planning and assessment efforts undertaken at the beginning of the decade served to focus and stabilize the College. In spite of internal turmoil, important work was completed that helped lay the foundation for today's successes and our vision for tomorrow.

A new cycle of strategic planning, accompanied with the Trustees' adoption of the policy governance model, facilities master planning and technology planning has begun. Recent strategic planning efforts have identified three key directions for our future:

First, we are becoming a learning-centered college. The changing role of faculty, new and innovative teaching methodologies, use of technology and flexible scheduling, are all evidence of this shift in focus, as are our expanding relationships with area schools, four-year institutions and businesses.

Second, we are moving from passive access to reaching out to people who have not previously had higher education in their consciousness. The College has long been committed to valuing, promoting and supporting diversity and multiculturalism, with retention and support services in place to help students succeed. We are enhancing our presence in the east and north areas of our service district, and are also renewing our efforts to attract transfer-oriented students as the first step in their college path.

Finally, we are investing in the cultural aspects of college life in the belief that the richness of that life is a direct link to a positive educational experience for our students. A longer-range vision of the College is for it to become the cultural center

for our community. Exposure to arts, issues, and cultural heritage adds depth and color to the fabric of student—and community—life.

We have gained much from the two-year self-study process, and are looking forward to the visit of the evaluation team as the next step in our growth as an educational institution.

Charles N. Earl

President

## Summary of Self Study Process

The self-study process began in the spring of 1998 with the preliminary planning and goal-setting. Five college employees (President, Vice-President of Educational Services, Dean of Students, Director of College Relations, and the chair of the accreditation self-study steering committee) attended the NASC Commission on Colleges workshop on self-study.

Shortly after this workshop, a steering committee was formed with representatives from faculty, staff, students, and administration. This group was responsible for implementing the plan used to complete this report.

In Fall 1998 the plan was presented to the campus at an all-campus meeting during the opening week activities. Major emphasis was placed on the self-study process and subcommittees were formed to work on the nine standards. Participation on these subcommittees came from administrators, staff, faculty, and students. These subcommittees worked with existing college-wide committees to gather information and write the individual reports that were then edited by the steering committee chair and the self-study editor.

In Spring 1999 three employees, including the current college president, attended the NASC workshop on self-study in order to familiarize themselves with the new standards and update the steering committee on changes.

The first draft of the self-study document was circulated to the campus in Spring 1999. Subsequent drafts were reviewed by the steering committee, and a final draft was made available for review by the campus community in January 2000.

Throughout the process, senior administrators were actively reviewing the work in progress. A comprehensive review of Standards One and Two was conducted in November during a day-long retreat. Participants at this retreat were the President, Vice-President for Educational Services, Vice-President for Students Services, all division deans, chair of the accreditation steering committee, and the self-study editor. The Vice-President for Student Services held several meetings reviewing the content of Standard Three. The President, Vice-President for Administrative Services and steering committee chair did a detailed review of Standards Seven and Eight. Standard Five was reviewed by the Dean of Library/Media/Arts/Distance Learning and the Interim Dean for Science/Math/Occupations. The President and Vice-President for Educational Services reviewed Standards Four, Six, and Nine.

Throughout the process, recommendations for improvement were forwarded to the appropriate area for consideration. In most cases, the suggestions prompted action on the part of the impacted unit; at a minimum, a plan for addressing the issue was developed. These recommendations and follow-up actions are included as appendices at the end of each chapter.

The College staff members believe that the process of self-study has produced institutional improvement, and are pleased to share with NASC the results of this effort in this report.

## Summary of Findings

Throughout this report, major accomplishments and future directions are listed. Included at the end of each chapter is an appendix titled "Recommendations and Actions Taken." The appendices detail the recommendations that were produced by the subcommittees as they engaged in comprehensive self-study guided by the NASC standards. For most of these recommendations, actions were taken; at a minimum, plans were developed to address these areas, including timelines for implementing desired improvements.

This chapter summarizes only the recommendations and actions taken in each of the standards. This section does not include every item in the appendices; instead, it provides an overview of findings. The major accomplishments and future directions of the College are not summarized here. Used in conjunction with the appendices mentioned above, it outlines the courses of actions that the College will take to improve institutional effectiveness.

### Standard One -- Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

During the early stages of the self-study process, the College identified a need to improve existing planning efforts. The 1995-2000 strategic plan had established benchmarks and goals in eight areas, yet no formal assessment of progress toward that plan had been conducted in over one year. In addition, the College found that improvements were necessary in technology planning and in facilities planning. In all three of these areas, improvements began soon after identification of the problem. Major work on providing a concluding analysis of the 1995-2000 strategic plan was accompanied by the rekindling of strategic planning for 2000-2003. The facilities master planning process was begun, and the new Vice-President for Information Resources will conduct technology planning.

As part of the strategic planning process, increase attention will be paid to integrating existing planning efforts. The budget process needs to be more fully integrated into educational and technology planning. Additionally, the College needs to continue to improve its ability to assess the effectiveness of the activities that are designed to improve institutional effectiveness.

### Standard Two -- Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Course outcomes need to be identified, published, and assessed in a more public manner. Significant progress toward this goal has taken place with the revision of course outcomes for each course on campus. The College needs to show how students in the Cosmetology and Welding programs are passing licensure exams and/or show how they are getting jobs in a formal, non-anecdotal fashion. Instruction and Student Services policies should be updated on an established schedule, and an overall assessment of policies in the areas of external credit, short-term courses, and non-credit courses would be beneficial. The Instructional Council has heard proposals in the areas of external credit and non-credit courses, and will continue to be the forum for further discussions on these issues.

Program assessment continues to be strength; however, the completion of the first cycle of program review should result in improvements in the process. The College has considered the move to a three-year cycle (rather than the current five-year cycle) in order to have more current assessments and will continue to make improvements in the program profile and program review process in order to ensure timely feedback on recommendations outlined in these assessments.

Another goal is to increase the number of faculty members who are actively engaged in classroom assessment techniques in order to show improved student learning in a public, measurable fashion.

### **Standard Three -- Students**

Continued planning for this area needs to be done, including long range and short term planning for facilities, entry/advising center, and student services for distance learners. Student satisfaction feedback needs to be gathered and utilized, and a plan to increase the involvement of faculty advisors for student organizations needs to be developed. Refinements in program assessment and program review need to continue. Review of academic regulations in several areas needs to be done, as does identification of activities that will enhance students' experiences at the College. Student Services personnel have done a commendable job of using the program review process to keep these improvements as priorities. The use of the Student Services Goals and Targeted Areas of Effort document will ensure implementation of the recommendations listed here.

### **Standard Four -- Faculty**

Collective bargaining issues such as mode/load, part-time pay, full-time/part-time ratio, and advising responsibilities need to be addressed. The faculty and administration are making progress on each of these areas. More faculty involvement on campus committees and as student activities advisors is desirable; Student Services has listed this as a priority for 2000-2001. Another recommendation is that more College faculty members become involved in formal classroom assessment to show evidence of improved student learning. The level of public services activities of the faculty is a strength, and the College should continue to promote such activity.

### **Standard Five -- Library and Information Services**

The College needs more books, more financial and electronic resources, additional staff in the library and in Computer Services, and improved connectivity. Technology planning needs to improve, as does response by administrators to program review data. Enhanced communication between Computer Services and instructors at the time of program/course development would make for improved classroom support. For each of these areas, the College has outlined a plan for obtaining necessary resources and strategies for improving communication among departments.

### **Standard Six -- Governance and Administration**

The move to Policy Governance and its impact on the existing planning procedures needs to be communicated to the campus effectively. This is taking shape as the Board moves to formal adoption of this model. Administrative policy manuals need to be published, accurate, and periodically reviewed, and the draft version of the Operations Manual is evidence of progress toward that goal. The College needs to identify where institutional decision-making is not timely, and improve in that area. Overall, there is evidence that the governance of the College is conducted in a collegial manner.

### **Standard Seven -- Finance**

The College's financial planning needs to take place in conjunction with other planning activities of the College. The strategic plan for 2000-2003 has made this a

priority. In addition, the College needs to assess whether the financial planning that is done short term and long term is done in a satisfactory manner.

#### Standard Eight -- Facilities

A facilities master plan is under development; this needs to flow from the program planning process. Inventory and control of equipment (including computer labs) needs to remain a priority. Improvements in signage, directories, parking, and traffic congestion are necessary, along with improvements in capital project administration and control of building systems. Attention should be paid to environmental safety issues, preventative maintenance, and disposal of hazardous waste.

#### Standard Nine -- Institutional Integrity

The ethics policy needs to be correctly implemented and enforced, with the President held responsible for such enforcement. An operations manual needs to be completed and updated annually. Ethics training should continue, and areas where the College is not functioning as well as it could need to be addressed (non-functioning committees and updated WEB information are two such areas). The subcommittee on Standard Nine conducted a thorough assessment of both the internal and external ethical standards of the College, and is confident that the policies and procedures that exist do not impede the institution's progress toward ethical goals.

Overall, the College is proud of the accomplishments listed in the responses to the standards, and is committed to making progress on the recommendations outlined above. Self-study was conducted at a time of transition for the College. New leadership, increasing enrollments, and high faculty turnover characterize the College in 2000. Self-study was viewed as an opportunity for the institution to place emphasis on improvement in preparation for peer review, and, more importantly, in preparation for the future of the College.