September 1, 2021

President Scott Ward
West Shore Community College
3000 N. Stiles Road
Scottville, MI 49454

Dear President Ward:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report addressing the following:

1. The college must clearly articulate what elements of its co-curricular programming will be or are being assessed.
2. The college must establish metrics for student retention, persistence, and completion.
3. The college must create a document that clearly explains the linkage between assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

No further reports are required.

The institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025 – 2026.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at nakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is John Marr (jmarr@hlcommission.org).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION
STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
DATE: August 1, 2021
STAFF LIAISON: John Marr
REVIEWED BY: Sherilyn W. Poole

INSTITUTION: West Shore Community College, Scottville, MI

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Scott Ward, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 6/28/2021 addressing the following:
   1. The college must clearly articulate what elements of its co-curricular programming will be or are being assessed.
   2. The college must establish metrics for student retention, persistence, and completion.
   3. The college must create a document that clearly explains the linkage between assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution’s 2020 Assurance Review

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The interim report from West Shore Community College (WSCC) was organized into sections corresponding to the areas of focus identified by the HLC Team. While each area of focus is addressed individually, there is some overlap in the sections when activities are related. Each section of the interim report includes a description of the activities and initiatives implemented to respond to the areas of focus. Each section identifies the WSCC staff participating in the responses, the specific tasks completed, the findings and results, and plans for follow-up activities. Documents in the Appendix include the Cocurricular Assessment Plan; findings, reports, and procedures; Board of Trustees meeting minutes; and Strategic Plan information.
**REPORT SUMMARY:** Area of focus one requiredWSCC to “…clearly articulate what elements of its co-curricular programming will be or are being assessed.” WSCC joined the HLC Assessment Academy in 2018 and utilized the existing Assessment Team to lead the cocurricular programming assessment. The Assessment Team membership includes faculty from arts and sciences and occupational programs. Administrators on the Assessment Team include the vice president of academics and student services, deans of arts and sciences and occupational programs, and directors of advising and retention, institutional research, learning management systems, and nursing. Defining cocurricular assessment was the first task of the Assessment Committee. The Assessment Team held discussions with campus constituents, consulted with the Assessment Academy Mentor and arrived at the definition of cocurricular learning as “that which occurs outside of the classroom and for which students receive no credit or grades.” Additionally, the Assessment Team decided “…the goals of the college’s cocurricular programming, and thus cocurricular assessment, should align with the college’s three core abilities.” The core abilities, Communicate Effectively, Think Critically and Creatively, and Act Professionally, are “institution-wide learning outcomes that prepare students for success in life, school, and work.” The next step for the Assessment Team was to identify the cocurricular programs which would be the first to be assessed. Following reviews of cocurricular programs in place and discussions and consultations with campus constituents, three criteria were identified to be considered in the selection of the first cocurricular programs to be assessed.

- Significant learning experiences outside of the classroom without credit or grades awarded,
- Programming aligned with WSCC’s core abilities, and
- Strong institutional commitment to ongoing support of the program.

Using these criteria resulted in the selection of three cocurricular programs to be the focus of the initial assessment:

- WSCC’s Student Senate – a student-led governing body representing student input and concerns at WSCC
- Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the official honors society for two-year colleges
- HumanKind is an ongoing educational initiative that examines the cultural, social, and political parallels between the United State and the world.

Members of the Student Senate and of Phi Theta Kappa participated in reflection/focus group meetings reviewing the organizations’ past year’s activities. Findings from these sessions were reviewed and analyzed by the Assessment Team Chair and faculty representatives to highlight themes, accomplishments, and ways forward. Students who attended HumanKind events completed evaluation forms to assess their experience of the event. The data from the evaluation forms were analyzed by the Assessment Team Chair and the faculty advisor to determine action items. Two additional cocurricular program areas were added to the cocurricular assessment program. Performing Arts and WSCC’s Learning Center and Writing Center will be assessed beginning in the fall 2021 semester.
Area of focus two required WSCC to “…establish metrics for student retention, persistence, and completion.” The interim report stated WSCC “frequently reviewed and used student performance numbers through the course of its planning processes, this was often an informal process.” WSCC realized the efforts to improve retention, persistence, and completion “…could be strengthened by establishing data-driven targets that informed future student success initiatives.” Before moving forward, it was necessary to include the new retention, persistence, and completion metrics in the Strategic Plan. The WSCC Institutional Effectiveness Team was given the task of developing definitions of the three terms. After discussions of possible definitions, a review of the Higher Learning Commission 2019 publication Defining Student Success Data: Recommendations for a Glossary of Terms helped the Team come to a “single, common understanding of retention, persistence, and completion.” To help establish rough draft goals for student retention, persistence, and completion, the Team reviewed five years of historical data for each area. After almost a year of work, WSCC decided on specific goals which were the stretch goal in each area. Stretch goals “…often surpass what has been achieved at WSCC in the past and/or will require significant effort to achieve in the coming year.” While including goals for retention, persistence, and completion in the Strategic Plan, the college took the opportunity to “update all of its strategic goals.” Strategic goal updates were also made resulting from the Strategic Plan review.

- To measure the quality of online learning environments, “…the college will use an internally-developed rubric to evaluate the online components of 20 courses each year.”
- To assess the core abilities, “faculty will be asked to identify program learning outcomes that are related to one of these overall learning goals.”
- “The college chose to shift its focus away from developmental math and instead focus on gateway course attainment.”

Three aspects were identified as important to assessing retention, persistence, and completion.

- Use of disaggregated data
- Use of formative and summative indicators
- Plans for improving metric performance

The interim report described the ways these activities and initiatives will be utilized as the college addresses retention, persistence, and completion goals.

Area of focus three required the college to create a document that clearly explains the linkage between assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting. The HLC Review Team acknowledged that WSCC “makes resource allocation decisions based on academic or community benefit…” but the college had no documentation linking assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting functions. The Team suggested the college may benefit from “creating a document that describes its
strategic planning process.” In response to these suggestions, college administrators, faculty, and staff worked together to “…clearly articulate its existing processes, adjust them to ensure greater alignment of these functions, and document the final processes and the integration between them.” The current Strategic Plan was developed in May 2018 as part of a Presidential transition and is set to cover a five-year period. The interim report included a diagram showing the major tasks to be conducted during each year of the plan. During Year 4 of the current Strategic Plan, 2020-2021, the college conducted a mid-cycle review of all strategic objectives. The mission, vision, and values were reviewed and were “reaffirmed and used as the foundation for updates to the objectives.”

The section of the interim report focused on linkages between assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting included a diagram showing the flow between these activities and identified the activities included in each component. This diagram demonstrates how each of these activities leads to and connects with the other activities. Each academic year begins with the completion of a beginning-of-year assessment report completed by all academic programs. These reports are reviewed by faculty and administrators to evaluate the previous year’s outcomes and to provide a guide for the new year’s activities and initiatives. A mid-year assessment provides the opportunity for faculty to “…anticipate any budget or capital requests for the coming year based on their analysis of assessment results thus far.” Program reviews for all occupational programs and general education categories are conducted on a five-year rotation. The interim report included a diagram showing the time of the year assessment activities occur annually. The diagram is supplemented by a month-by-month chart describing the activities conducted annually.

**REPORT ANALYSIS:** WSCC responded to the three areas of focus identified by the Team through planning and collaborations among faculty, staff, and administrators. Assessment of the cocurricular programming began by creating a definition of cocurricular programs and identifying appropriate methods for assessing the impact of participation in cocurricular programs on student learning. The Assessment Team formed as part of WSCC’s participation in the HLC Assessment Academy was assigned responsibility for leading the cocurricular program assessment. The Team decided cocurricular program assessment should align with the WSCC three core abilities and follow the same assessment procedures as those for academic and occupational program assessments. A single WSCC Assessment Plan will be developed to combine curricular, cocurricular, and core abilities into integrated timelines, process, and forms in winter 2022.

The response to area of focus two began with creating definitions for retention, persistence, and completion. Definitions also required establishing metrics for each component to allow the college to measure progress in each area by semesters and years. This required a revision of the Strategic Plan and review and revision as appropriate of all the metrics in the Plan. After reviewing five years of historical data for retention, persistence, and completion, specific goals were set for each component. The outcome was establishing stretch goals which are higher than previous outcomes and
“…will require significant effort to achieve in the coming year.” Review of historical data and setting plans for future activities identified three additional aspects for consideration including use of data (disaggregated data, use of formative and summative data) and plans for improving metric performance.

The response to area of focus three resulted in the college reviewing and creating documents which demonstrate the process of connecting assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting. The interim report included visual depictions of the strategic planning process, the flow and connections between assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting activities, and a chart showing the annual processes by month. The activities conducted to respond to the HLC Team's findings and recommendations led to a number of clarifications of the processes in place and identified activities and initiatives needed to strengthen connections. The strategic plan is monitored closely. During the academic year, data collected from student learning outcomes may indicate changes or revisions are needed in “curriculum, pedagogy, programming and purchasing.”

**ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT:** WSCC is commended for its thoughtful, well-designed, inclusive activities and initiatives implemented to respond to the areas of focus identified by the HLC Team. Activities and initiatives included representative from the faculty, staff, and administrators. Groups working on each area of focus spent their time productively to provide useful information and clear directions to the campus constituents to implement new and/or revised efforts to strengthen the college’s efforts in its assessment, retention, planning, and persistence, and systematic and integrated planning activities. WSCC has positioned itself to meet its goals in the areas of concerns. Updates of the activities and initiatives described in the interim report should be included in the Assurance Argument for the reaffirmation of accreditation in 2025-2026.

**STAFF FINDING:**

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

_X Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

_ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

_ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

_ Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.
STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 4.C

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

_ _X Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
_ _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
_ _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
_ _ Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 5.C

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

_ _X Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
_ _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
_ _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
_ _ Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report addressing the following:

1. The college must clearly articulate what elements of its co-curricular programming will be or are being assessed.
2. The college must establish metrics for student retention, persistence, and completion.
3. The college must create a document that clearly explains the linkage between assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

No further reports are required.

The institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025 – 2026.