



RESPONSES TO NCA TEAM 2000 FINDINGS

The 2000 NCA Team listed five concerns regarding Carl Sandburg College:

1. *Although both classroom and outcome assessments are taking place in many of the academic areas, a cohesive system of documentation, reporting, communication of, and use of assessment results do not exist.*

The College was required to submit a Progress Report in June 2004 outlining the system put into place following the last accreditation visit. The Higher Learning Commission accepted the [report on evaluation and planning, and assessment of student academic achievement](#).

Some of the major highlights of the 2004 Progress Report:

- [General Education objectives were developed](#) by the Student Assessment committee and submitted at Faculty Assembly September 2001 for approval. These goals were based on suggestions from four-year institutions and a committee consensus about necessary student skills.
- Based upon the General Education Goals developed and approved, a system was designed to ensure evaluation of the goals on a required rotation.

Additional Improvements since the 2004 report:

- A coordinator of student assessment position was implemented in the fall of 2008 to provide effective leadership of the assessment process. Prior to this the Student Assessment Committee co-chairs were responsible for overseeing this area. It became evident a more stable and consistent approach to the assessment process was needed. In addition, the position needed to be staffed by a faculty member who knew and understood the importance of assessment. The assessment coordinator works with the academic vice president as well as the research office to make certain accurate and timely assessment functions are occurring.
 - The academic deans and associate deans provide the assessment committee with a [summary of changes](#) made to instructional methods based on individual classroom assessment activities.
 - The coordinator of student assessment gives an [annual report](#) to the faculty assembly highlighting assessment activities across the campus.
2. *CSC must monitor efficiency and productivity, such as class sizes and facility utilization, to assure that it can continue to afford to serve its constituents.*



With the sheer geographical size of the district and dispersal of population, class size is a challenge; however, the College has moved from having the smallest class sizes in the state to third smallest. Since the last visit, the College has used the guideline of minimum class sizes of eight for occupational and developmental classes, and ten for the transfer/university studies curricula in determining whether a class will make.

Other factors are also taken into consideration when deciding if a class should be cancelled but low enrollment is the first factor examined.

The College has also developed a [Revenue/Cost report](#) for all the Occupational and Allied Health Programs as well as a revenue/cost report for transfer/university studies courses. This has allowed the College to use data to evaluate a program's performance based upon its financial bottom line. In some cases, it is in the College's mission to continue with programs, such as the Associate Degree in Nursing, that might be financially underperforming because they serve a significant community need due to high demand in the area; however, in other instances, it has allowed the College to understand where enrollment has declined and caused the institution to analyze each program very carefully to determine its viability. In 2008, the College chose to reduce its occupational full-time faculty by two members based upon this data. The value of this data in making effective and accurate decisions cannot be overstated.

Aside from the financial aspect of small class sizes, there is definitely a positive side for students. The small class sizes have been used in marketing and recruitment efforts to encourage enrollment. This is a selling point for the institution. Students are not numbers at CSC. Faculty know if a student is missing from class, and it is the personal interaction that helps make CSC unique. While the College understands the financial implications of small classes, it does believe size is a key feature of the service a student will receive here. [ACT Student Surveys](#) (2003-2007) have



consistently revealed that class size is the number one area of satisfaction of academic aspects for students.

- 3. CSC must move toward becoming a data-driven organization, through improvements in data collection, management, reporting, and integrated software that supports institutional needs.*

Based upon the last accreditation visit, the College knew it needed a new administrative software program to allow the institution to become more data-driven. In 2002, the College began researching other administrative software. Over the course of two years, the College, along with the ACCES consortium, conducted research and decided on *Datatel* as its partner. In 2003, the College began a migration process to *Datatel's* administrative software program called "Colleague." "Colleague" is a relational database and allows all departments to function cohesively. Data can be queried and cross-referenced for research purposes. Prior to "Colleague," there was not a unified system in place.

In addition, there has been a concerted effort to centralize data within the institution. Data are compiled and organized in a centrally located area. The office of institutional research was formed in 1996. It reports to the vice president of academic services with the primary responsibility of researching specific projects and of grant writing; however data was still largely decentralized within the institution, and accessing data from the database was difficult. The advent of "Colleague", when added to the creation of the office of institutional research, has encouraged a more centralized approach to data collection and analysis.

- 4. CSC must continue to seek alternative sources of revenue and/or growth to solidify the College's financial position.*

The College's main sources of revenue include local revenue (property taxes), state revenue, and tuition and fees. Carl Sandburg College has always been challenged financially and would expect it will continue to be so in the future. With declining state funding and a declining tax base, the financial burden shifts to the student. In 2009, CSC had the highest tuition rate in the state. At the same time, CSC has suffered the greatest loss of assessed valuation in the state as well.

Carl Sandburg College understands the importance of securing other means of financial growth. In the last 10 to 15 years, the College has made good use of its bonding authority as a way of leveraging its resources. CSC enlisted the

services of Harris Bank in 1998 to assist with its financial resources. To that end, CSC has continued to make use of carefully planned debt instruments. Bond levies have been a source of revenue in the past. These have allowed the College to establish a comprehensive [Risk Management Plan](#) including security coverage, increase the working cash fund to fund targeted improvements, allow SMART (Strategic Management And Resources Together) phases technology improvements and campus improvements, and address Guaranteed Energy Savings Contracts through Energy Conservation Measures. Bond revenue has been helpful in allowing the College to achieve many of its goals.

In 2007 the Higher Learning Commission did request a Financial Recovery Plan from the institution. The Commission makes use of specific ratios to determine an institution's financial position, and the College's bonded indebtedness caused those ratios to enter an area that was of concern to the Commission. The College did submit a [Financial Recovery Plan](#) to address those concerns in February 2008.



While the College has made good use of bonds, it also has realized it needs to achieve greater financial security through growth as well as through the elimination of particular programs that are no longer viable. In 2008 the College partnered with Noel-Levitz, Inc., an Enrollment Management and Retention Partner, to help the institution understand its market position and to develop key strategies in recruitment and retention of students. This has proven to be a valuable partnership and has taken the institution to a new level with data-driven decision-making with the use of the Student Satisfaction Inventory and the Institutional Priorities Survey as well as countless other data collections and focus groups that have been conducted.

5. *Because CSC anticipates a large turnover in faculty and staff over the next several years, a comprehensive strategy for replacement, orientation, and development of all new and continuing personnel must be developed.*

Strategic management of human resources is linked to the College mission statement, beliefs, strategies, focal points, and goals. In 2002 when President Schmidt took over the presidency of the institution, he knew the College needed to expand and increase its efforts in human resources. In fact, it was a key focus for him in the first year. To that end, he created a dean of human

resources and organizational development position. This position would also serve as the chief negotiator for the College during the bargaining process. In 2003 the College also created a position of employee benefits manager to allow for the direct oversight of the employee benefits program.

With the structural changes in place, the College moved on to **creating and stabilizing processes** within the Human Resources Department. In 2003, in conjunction with the College attorney, the College updated all of its hiring policies and procedures. At the same time, the College developed strict [policies on hiring](#) (replacement) and orientation of employees. All procedures are documented and standardized. Part of the employment hiring process is Cabinet (president and vice presidents of academic services, student services and administrative services) oversight in filling positions and employee selection. Interview and selection criteria are based on position description, education, skill, and experience requirements. Communication of position opportunities and employment selection, background checks, and standardized hiring forms are also in place. The **orientation process** covers the College mission statement, beliefs, strategies, focal points and goals, software (“Colleague,” *WebCT*, *WebAdvisor*, Human Resources Webpage, *DocuShare*, etc), a variety of trainings, a campus tour, policies and procedures, risk management responsibility, and the Professional Negotiation Agreement. Also included for new employees is information on preventing sexual harassment, blood-borne pathogens, and an online video on handling campus emergencies titled “*Shots Fired.*”

There is also a **reclassification process** employees may go through prior to administration of the annual budgetary process. This procedure allows positions to be re-evaluated due to any increases in education, skill requirements, added job duties, etc., and be compensated for this change through pay and/or title. These procedures are standardized in order to assure fair and equitable position and structural changes.

In 2008, the Human Resource Department created its own Web pages



and **employees have access to all information** through those pages, *DocuShare*, and/or *WebAdvisor*. The [Human Resources Web page](#) includes information about benefits, employment, policies, training, position descriptions, forms, compensation, payroll, etc. *DocuShare* contains all forms and procedures for hiring, dismissing, and reclassification, while *WebAdvisor* provides each employee with a mini personnel file. At any time employees can check on their salary, compensations, vacation days, sick days, personal days, etc. There is also a total compensation statement that itemizes all benefits along with the monetary expenditure accrued by the college and/or employee.

Professional Development is also a necessary part of higher education. Education is a dynamic field, particularly in today's technological times. CSC believes to stay within the College mission it is vital employees participate in professional growth and development opportunities. The College supports this effort by providing professional development funding, tuition reimbursement funding, and a Carl Sandburg College tuition waiver. The College has designed and held many on [campus workshops](#). In addition, The College Preparation Center (CPC) and Adult Learning Center (ALC) provide informal mentors for new faculty.

As outlined in the [Phenix Program](#) reshaping document, by combining positions, using adjunct to replace full-time faculty, retirement of employees, and reassignment of duties, the College has been able to reduce employee costs by \$556,521. This does not mean CSC is moving to a heavy reliance on adjunct faculty. This is more of a temporary solution to get through tough economic times.



Phenix Program
Saved \$556,521!

Advice and Suggestions for Institutional Improvement

The Self-Study Steering Committee wanted to respond not only to the concerns from the last Accreditation visit, but also to the [advice and suggestions for institutional improvement](#) from the last visit. At the suggestion of the College's HLC liaison, John Taylor, this section was omitted. A link has been provided for the NCA team in case they would like to review the institution's response to other suggestions made during the last accreditation visit in 2000.