EC

Elgin Community College

Focused Visit Report

on

Institutional Strategic Planning, Assessment of Student Learning,

and Renovation of the Learning Resource Center

Prepared for the March 16-17, 2009 Focused Visit

of

The Higher Learning Commission of the

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

to

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EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

In June 2006, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools continued institutional accreditation of Elgin Community College (ECC). Its approval was a result of a review of self-study materials and a 10-year interval site visit to ECC conducted in March 2006. In its follow-up report (Assurance and Advancement Sections) and in a letter to the ECC President, the College was granted re-accreditation through academic year 2015-2016. The NCA evaluation team at the accompanying site visit praised ECC in the areas of financial viability, diversity and faculty professional development initiatives but raised concerns in three areas critical to ongoing institutional success:

- institutional planning and effectiveness
- assessment of student learning outcomes
- progress on renovation of the existing Learning Resources Center

As a result, a focused visit was scheduled for March 2009 to review the College's progress in these areas. This present report summarizes the current status and future directions of the College in these areas and demonstrates the exemplary progress we have made since the 2006 visit.

The report is organized into three parts corresponding to each focus area. The first section, Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, describes our progress in integrating and implementing strategic goals and objectives for the College. The second section, Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, describes our progress in formulating learning outcomes, assessing learning and using results from assessment to inform programmatic improvements. The final section, Renovation of the Library and Learning Resource Center (LRC), describes efforts made to expand and modernize our library facility to better meet the needs of students, faculty, employees and the community.

As the report demonstrates, ECC has engaged in productive and meaningful new directions during the past three years. Organizational changes made since then have resulted in a new College President and executive team, raised our visibility within the broader community we serve, paved the way for new alliances with partnering high schools and businesses, and led to new initiatives in strategic planning and rebranding the College's identity.

While progress in these areas is ongoing, the impact of change is already evident in renewed vitality in many areas of the College – increases in enrollment after three years of straight declines, the integration of strategic planning with budgeting cycles, and a general coordination and streamlining of many functional areas, such as the ECC Foundation and Corporate and Continuing Education.

In addition, the year 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of Elgin Community College. We look at this report not as a response to accreditation requirements but as a celebration of our accomplishments. Extensive documentation for information presented in this report will be available in the resource room for examination by the evaluation team members when they visit in March 2009.

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EFFECTIVENESS

In the 2006 Assurance and Advancement Sections, the NCA evaluation team members made important observations about the strategic planning process at ECC. First, they noted a clear awareness on the part of students, faculty, staff and administrators of a central institutional mission and "a confirmation that the mission statement reflects the goals and values of the College" (Assurance Section, p. 9). In addition, they praised ECC regarding its Academic Master Plan, Information Technology Plan and several additional documents related to planning. However, on a cautionary note, they observed a general lack of coordination and integration of various unit-wide plans into a single plan for the whole College and encouraged ECC to integrate various plans around common goals and directions.

In the end, they required that "at the time of the focused visit, the College should have in place a strategic plan" (Assurance Section, p. 23) and provided sound advice to advance this aim. First, they advised that the Academic Master Plan should drive the institution-wide plan. That is, ECC should begin discussions about integration by starting with the seven broad goals already well vetted among academic deans and faculty. Second, citing concerns with perceived inefficiencies in internal communications, they recommended confirmation from the entire College community. Finally, noting that "resources are not adequately following, or supporting, the strategic planning efforts" (Assurance Section, p. 14), the team urged the College to link planning to budgeting – that is, to have a plan which "serve[s] as the basis for budget planning and reflect the vision and direction of Elgin Community College." (Assurance Section, p. 23).

In response, the College has engaged in several lines of activity. Since the 2006 visit, the campus has developed and implemented an annual strategic planning process involving representative bodies on campus. In addition, the College leadership made necessary organizational changes to allow for implementation and make strategic planning a meaningful part of our operations. Next, the College drafted a four-phase model to guide the implementation of the plan itself. Following that, the College began a process of aligning strategic planning to budgeting, an action we expect to implement this semester. Finally, the College improved communication inviting feedback on the plan throughout the process, obtaining input from internal and external constituency groups. Details on each line of activity are contained in the remainder of this section.

In addition, this section also addresses how strategic planning has had a positive impact on technology, resource allocation, advisory committees, and many other areas noted in the Advancement Section. We begin by briefly describing the history of planning at ECC and then, in more detail, four processes used to redesign a new college-wide planning process drafted in Spring 2008 and adopted in January 2009.

Mission and Vision

Mission
The Mission of Elgin Community College is to improve people's lives through learning.

Elgin Community College is one of Illinois' oldest community colleges, founded in 1949. Our top promise then was the same as it is now: to provide for the learning needs of the residents of Illinois Community College District 509. Learning is the main reason why the College exists, and the core driver behind all goals and objectives in the ECC Strategic Plan and behind all activities of every unit and department throughout the institution.

Vision
We will pursue our Core Value of encouraging learning by focusing all our efforts on making Elgin Community College one of the best centers of learning in the United States. In recognition of our role as a comprehensive community college, we will strive to create high quality learning opportunities that respond to the needs of the residents of our district. As we work toward this Vision, our efforts will be guided by Shared Values of Excellence, Freedom of Inquiry, Equity, Ethical Practices, Accountability, Respect for Diversity and Community Engagement.

The current ECC Vision statement is a recent addition to the ECC Strategic Plan drafted in 2008 after the 2004-2008 Strategic Initiatives and Targets Executive Summary had expired. The Vision places a renewed focus on learning and, in this sense, is closely aligned to our Mission. The Vision emphasizes ECC's role in being responsive to the entire community (with the phrase "that respond to the needs of the residents of our district") and challenges us to carefully monitor and understand public needs in a wide variety of disciplines and skill areas (with the word "comprehensive").

One small but significant change we made in the 2008 Vision was to commit to the phrase "one of the best centers of learning in the United States." While the phrase "the best" has long been part of our Vision and while it is obviously important for us to strive to be the best we can be, we acknowledge that there are many ways an institution can consider itself best. Through this Vision, we have set for ourselves a long-range goal to be recognized and respected as a *center of learning* and thereby commit ourselves to measuring accomplishments along the lines of how effectively we help to strengthen the knowledge and skills of students. We believe it to be important – particularly in an era of transparency and accountability – to clarify the special emphasis we intend to assume in *our* unique pursuit to be the best: to measure greatness as it pertains to learning.

Shared Values and Strategic Goals

To clarify the behaviors we value in fulfilling our Mission and Vision, we have articulated seven Shared Values to undergird our work. The values are shared widely and displayed prominently on posters, banners, catalogs and numerous college documents:

1. Excellence
2. Freedom of Inquiry
3. Equity
4. Ethical Practices

5. Accountability
6. Respect for Diversity
7. Community Engagement

The values were first crafted in 1998 and are the most critical grounding components of the ECC Strategic Plan. They form a foundation from which all goals and objectives follow and are recited by the Board of Trustees at the start of each monthly Board meeting. Most recently, the values were updated in 2008 when the Strategic Planning Committee rephrased them to better align to the goals and objectives. In this process, we changed the former value of Fairness to Equity (#3), the former value of Integrity to Ethical Practices (#4) and the former value of Caring to Respect for Diversity (#6). Further, we added a value on Community Engagement (#7).

To lend practicality to the theoretical elements, the Mission and Vision, 12 strategic goals, aligned to the 7 shared values, provide concrete direction for all employees, define what we are to do and, through 26 annual objectives, specify how we must contribute to the success of students, the integrity of our services, and the vitality of our communities. Drafted in 2008, the current goals, listed below, are designed to last three to five years, and, as is our tradition, they will be renewed annually by the Strategic Planning Committee and adopted annually by the President and the Board of Trustees:

1. Ensuring curriculum currency and relevance based on critical reflection of outcomes
2. Promoting student engagement and intentional learning
3. Improving success milestones among key focus populations: first-year, developmental, Black and Latino students
4. Supporting the continuing growth of faculty in learning theory, teaching methodology, technology and individual disciplines
5. Fostering a spirit of inquiry to increase understanding of racial, ethnic and global diversity, and of domestic and world cultures
6. Ensuring key populations (Black, Latino and first-generation students) have equal access to learning opportunities
7. Creating and offering programs and services that meet the emerging learning needs of our students
8. Ensuring integrity in our relations with others
9. Conserving spending while increasing quality and effectiveness
10. Facilitating quality decision making
11. Developing a collegial environment that supports employees' sense of purpose and self-worth to grow personally and professionally
12. Strengthening relations with businesses, educational and service organizations vital to our community

At the time of the 2006 NCA visit, the College had in place nine institution-wide planning goals (2006 NCA Self-Study Report) and seven academic goals (Academic Master Plan). The current ECC Strategic Plan (set for fiscal year 2010) replaces those previous sets, and from now on, the College will commit to a single institution-wide plan to be formulated each year – with goals replaced every three to five years and annual objectives replaced each year. Thus, the current set

of 7 values and 12 goals reflect a single set for all College units – with shared values set to last for several years, strategic goals set to last at least three years, and 26 objectives set to last until the end of fiscal year 2010 (June 30, 2010).

Decentralized Monitoring and Reporting

Historically, planning occurred in a decentralized manner at ECC, with various units, programs and departments creating unit-wide plans according to various timelines, purposes and audiences. Examples included the Human Resource Plan, Marketing Plan, the Information Technology Plan, and a number of auxiliary unit plans such as the Bookstore Business Plan, Visual and Performing Arts Center Plan and Food Services Business Plan. Like the plans themselves, the aims and timelines of these reports varied widely. The Marketing and Strategic Enrollment Management Plans were set annually and used to inform academic units about community expectations and anticipated enrollments. The Information Technology Plans were set every three years and used by the Budget and Finance office to guide capital spending, while the Master Plan, the broadest and most strategic of all plans, was set every two years and provided a landscape from which smaller unit-wide plans would follow.

To demonstrate progress with planning, vice presidents and departmental directors ensured that committees and cross-functional teams were in place to gather evidence and report progress. As plans were created and prepared, the Planning and Marketing office gathered evidence from units and ensured that the evidence collected could account for the goals and objectives of the Master Plan itself and its nine institutional goals. While unit-wide reports or updates could contain any number of indices of progress, the Planning and Marketing office recognized a common set of institution-wide performance indicators for reporting. Many of these measures – institutional effectiveness indicators – are still used today and reported both internally and externally. Results are monitored annually, and in some cases, quarterly, monthly or even weekly (in the case of enrollment). All are well-defined and largely quantitative.

As an example, consider indicators for Goal 3 (Improving success milestones among key focus populations). A number of indicators are in place to monitor progress with this goal. For instance, we routinely track the success of ECC graduates who transition to Illinois public universities, and we take particular pride in knowing that the success rates of these students (as measured by grade point averages) routinely exceed those of other two-year transfer students among Illinois community colleges. We interpret this as evidence for strong and solid academic programs and our ability to provide students with requisite skills and knowledge for later success. All other institutional goals are similarly supported by well-defined and measurable performance-based indicators.

The Institutional Effectiveness Indicators Report is the summative report of all indicators and has traditionally been published at the end of the spring semester by the Planning and Marketing office.[1] For the newest ECC Strategic Plan, many indicators are the same as or slightly modified

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[1] In 2008, as we prepared the ECC Strategic Plan, we held discussions about updating many indicators and thus did not release the Institutional Effectiveness Indicators Report for that year. Instead, for 2008, the ECC Performance Report, an external report we prepare annually for the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), served as the formal report of effectiveness for the College. In the future, we plan to release a single report that serves both the

from those that were in place at the time of the 2006 visit, and we still tally and report those to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) or other audiences. For the other indicators, we have made attempts to become more systematic with standard definitions and criteria to better align performance measures to strategic objectives. For example, the Datatel reports used to report student progress have become better defined by standard definitions of within-term retention versus semester-to-semester persistence.

Toward Integration

While the Planning and Marketing office was recognized as an authority for creating and reporting key indicators, the office remained largely solitary at the time of the 2006 visit. Except for the Mission and Vision, the rest of the Master Plan, particularly objectives and effectiveness indicators, were not well communicated even among budget officers and department heads. Moreover, while the Master Plan itself purported to integrate operating plans from various units, in reality, there was little need for units to align their operational plans to the nine institutional goals. Unit plans remained separate and parallel and not used to set indicators or move planning toward synchrony. Further, key institutional indicators ought to have been clearly indicated in the unit-wide report of the departments producing them, but in reality most were not communicated or used to drive the unit plans themselves. What was lacking was true integration college-wide.

Nevertheless, from 1996 to 2006, two cross-functional planning groups, the College Planning Committee and Planning and Quality Improvement Committee, made attempts at integration. These committees instituted a process of creating long-term and short-term plans: Master Plans containing broad five-year targets and Systems Plans set every two years to enact the broader plans. The College Planning Committee created two Master Plans from 1998-2003 and from 2002-2007, and later created Systems Plans from 2000-2002 and 2002-2004. These were important first steps toward integration, but it remained unclear exactly how the more actionable two-year components informed the longer-range components.

In addition, between the 1996 and 2006 visits, various councils and committees were created or reinstated to monitor and report evidence to inform the planning process. Among those formed or strengthened during this period include the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee SEM), the Assessment Committee, the Faculty Development Committee, the Academic Policy Committee, the Multicultural Awareness and Global Initiatives Committee (MAGIC) and the Global/International Studies Taskforce (GIST). In addition, during this time, ECC's enterprise resource platform and team of data analysts worked with syntax in Datatel to define data elements for reporting.

To facilitate integration, then President, Dr. Shirley, re-energized college-wide planning and by the end of fiscal year 2003, he reconstituted the Planning and Quality Improvement Committee following a year-long series of discussions with input and feedback from College constituencies, students, faculty and staff. At that time we also began formal training in the principles of quality

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College's and the ICCB's needs. A revised Institutional Effectiveness Indicators Report will be released in June 2009 and at the end of each subsequent fiscal year.

improvement with the Center for Institutional Effectiveness at Datatel, and as a result, centralized the dual-system approach to planning described earlier. By 2004, we charted a process for continuous improvement and began formal application to the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). We also set new five-year goals in the 2004-2008 Strategic Initiatives and Targets Executive Summary and Integrated Planning and Self-Assessment, which was reviewed by the 2006 visiting team. In the end, organizational changes and reorganization moved us away from AQIP, although training in quality improvement practices paved the way for unification and integration.

At our 2006 site visit, the 2004-2008 Strategic Initiatives and Targets received praise. The visiting team commented how the document was in the "developmental stages" but acknowledged its "potential of working as a cross functional instrument." (Assurance Section, p.13). With this document, we re-established learning as a primary focus of the College and raised the prominence of accountability and quality principles. In addition, we created the Academic Master Plan. Though called "academic," the plan really encompassed all units of the College, academic and non-academic, to rally around the cause of educating and serving students.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the Academic Master Plan was its effort to align budgeting and planning formally via a shared relational database and reporting platform. The Academic Goals Database is used by deans and budget officers to track progress with departmental goals and dollars allocated to the Teaching, Learning and Student Development division. Since 2007, it has been used primarily to track progress in meeting the seven academic goals of the Academic Master Plan, although deans also align unit activities to the nine institutional goals on an informal and individualized basis.

While the shared database has been an important first step, it has lacked centralization throughout the College, as the Academic Master Plan goals were never fully vetted in the Budget and Finance or other non-academic units. Even larger, another issue was simultaneously occurring by the end of 2007: the Planning and Quality Improvement Committee was waning with organizational changes, and as noted by the 2006 visiting team, several key administrators retired between the years of 2004 and 2006, including the President and the Managing Director of Planning and Marketing. In its 2006 feedback reports, the visiting team recognized the need for a more substantial redesign of strategic planning at ECC and recommended this report and a focused visit for 2009.

Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

When Dr. Sam became ECC's eighth president in 2007, he took steps to centralize strategic planning. Drawing a direct reporting line to the Cabinet, the office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness was created and separated from the Planning and Marketing office to which it had been joined (a move that renamed the latter as the Marketing and Communications office). This reorganization helped to reinforce the notion that planning is central to success, not something units achieve in isolation. In addition, it underscored the singular importance of communication, an area long-cited as a challenge for ECC. Further, President Sam championed the cross-functional nature of planning. Under this leadership, planning at the college level has become

aligned to planning within the academic, business, technology and marketing units. He also emphasized the role of measurement as a means toward achieving effectiveness and supported efforts to include data and analysis more systematically in the design of objectives and initiatives.

In late 2007, ECC hired an Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and in January 2008 a cross-functional and representative Strategic Planning Committee was formed and charged with the following tasks:

- To advise campus administrators on the best processes for integrating planning and budgeting across all College areas
- To monitor evidence through oversight of data management and reporting
- To create and implement a process of operational, action and tactical planning within College units
- To advise individual units (Teaching, Learning and Student Development, Student Services, Budget and Finance, Information Technology, Operations and Maintenance, Human Resources, and Marketing and Communications)

Immediately after its formation, the Strategic Planning Committee began work to integrate various unit-wide planning documents and solicited advice from our long-standing partnership with Datatel's Center for Institutional Effectiveness. Starting with the seven broad goals outlined and reported in the Academic Master Plan, the committee has successfully integrated all other unit-wide plans, including the nine institutional goals, priorities handed down from the Board of Trustees' annual retreats, unit plans from the Marketing and Communications office, Information Technology and goals from the Strategic Campus Plan and auxiliary units. The committee identified gaps, areas of redundancy or confusion and synthesized a comprehensive draft college-wide plan. An integration exercise (Integration Worksheets) was helpful in this process and led to several drafts of the ECC Strategic Plan between April and December 2008.

Though centralization had been tried at various times throughout our history, two fresh directions helped us achieve success this time around. First, we solidified the importance of hierarchies and layering in the process. We purposefully separated broad goals, which are general but not actionable, from objectives, which are narrower and measurable. Having a place for hierarchical layers in the plan was a crucial step forward, as previous plans at ECC had often blurred the distinction between what were short-term and finite objectives (e.g., achieve re-accreditation) and goals for longer periods of time or ongoing (e.g., increase employee development opportunities). The new plan, the ECC Strategic Plan, is more organized and layered, defining goals as broad and spanning multiple years and objectives as narrower. In the end, we specified 12 broad goals with from 1 to 5 objectives in each.

A second direction we capitalized on was aligning college-wide planning and unit-wide planning, a process that had been outlined by the Planning and Quality Improvement Committee but never really detailed. The Strategic Planning Future Vision, released in July 2008[2], provided

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[2] Although the Strategic Planning Future Vision report is dated June 25, 2008, it was not disseminated until July 2008.

a basis for much-needed conversations to take place. In this conceptual white paper, we outlined specific procedures on how individual units, programs and departments might create activities to deploy the strategic plan through tactical or action processes. Action planning processes were also recommended by the NCA evaluation team in their 2006 report. In our operational planning system, local units and departments will manage their own work while keeping it aligned to overall college-wide goals and objectives.

Finally, we spent many months in the Spring 2008 modernizing the language of our previous plans (e.g., we changed "community service" in the Academic Master Plan to the more widely accepted "community engagement" in line with nomenclature used by organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation). More than just an exercise in wordsmithing, discussing and debating the appropriate words to use as strategic goals and themes helped us to shape our conceptual understanding.

Creating drafts on a monthly basis, the Committee crafted its first shared institutional draft in April 2008 and final draft in December 2008. In the intervening months, we shared drafts with constituencies internal and external to the College. Some of these included the Board of Trustees, the Faculty Senate, the Support Staff Association, the Cabinet, the Student Government, the Regional Economic Development Network, and community members who took part in our spring 2008 branding study. In addition, web surveys were circulated by the office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness to coincide with the introduction of the ECC Strategic Plan from May through November 2008. Feedback gathered from the surveys was incorporated into subsequent drafts of the document and tracked over time, and results are described later in the Communication subsection of this report.

ECC Strategic Plan: Four Recurring Processes (Review, Plan, Budget and Communicate)

From insights gained in Strategic Planning Committee meetings and feedback on initial drafts of the strategic plan, the Strategic Planning Future Vision was released in July 2008. This report outlines four recurring and interrelated processes underlying annual planning: data review and management, budgeting, planning and communication. All activities had occurred at ECC for years – and indeed, well before the 2006 NCA visit – however, each existed informally and separately. As we revised our goals and system, we gave each process careful scrutiny and heightened importance in an interconnected way, such that each process informed and was informed by the others. Our intent in redesigning strategic planning was to rally around integrated, as opposed to parallel, planning.

The first process underlying planning is review. In spring and summer 2008, as we crafted the 12 college-wide goals and 26 objectives of the new ECC Strategic Plan, a review phase was an important part of our process. The President and Board of Trustees formulated broad directions for the College in retreats taking place in October 2007 and in July 2008, and from these broad directions, the Strategic Planning Committee and Strategic Enrollment Management Committee analyzed and discussed challenges and opportunities critical for future actions. In our discussions and in our SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), we relied heavily on external research reports, accreditation reports and internal and external data.

These sources of information were crucial to preparing a set of goals grounded in meaning and practicality.

The second and third phases of strategic planning are budgeting and planning, and in our view, these processes are inextricably linked. Building on lessons learned from past attempts, we tried to be as precise as possible in explaining various types and layers of planning the Strategic Planning Future Vision. We drew a careful distinction between planning that was institution-wide (strategic planning) and planning that was unit-wide (operational planning) – with the former process being formulated by the Strategic Planning Committee and with the perspective of the entire College, and the latter being formulated by unit heads, deans and directors with the perspective of particular departments (Strategic Planning Future Vision, p. 4).

In the Annual Planning Calendar contained in the Strategic Planning Future Vision, we draw a careful distinction between planning and budgeting processes, a dissociation first noted in our 2006 NCA Self-Study Report:

> "While a number of budgeting processes are being linked with planning, currently the overall process is still ad-hoc. Historically, there has been no clear procedure within the planning process which links to budgeting." (2006 NCA Self-Study Report, p. 71).

Now, in the Strategic Planning Future Vision, we call for a budget *informed by* strategic planning. In the Annual Planning Calendar, planning and budgeting are interdependent: the successful completion of any event is predicated on the successful completion of the events that precede it. For example, setting broad financial goals (e.g., tuition rates) in the fall semester necessitates processes of action planning and operational budgeting at the unit level in the spring semester. In turn, feedback on action projects prioritized in the spring semester informs budget planning for the following fiscal year. In essence, what we have outlined with the ECC Strategic Plan is a coordinated sequence of events which closes the feedback loop on the quality improvement momentum begun years earlier but never completed. Further, what we have in place follows the 2006 team's advice:

> "Continuous reporting of indicators will provide necessary feedback for refining the planned strategies to best and as quickly as possible achieve the goals." (Advancement Section, p. 3).

During early 2009, as our budgeting process for fiscal year 2010 gets underway, we expect to prioritize requests for new funding based on the strategic goals and objectives recently adopted. Because requests are likely to exceed resources available, we will prioritize resources based on a worksheet and described later in the section on Budgeting. In addition, we are in the process of developing a rubric for evaluating proposals and responding to requestors.

After budgeting and planning, the third phase of implementation is data management, a phase when the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office updates, tracks and monitors progress. In spring 2009, the Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will create a shared database, based on the Academic Goals Database used in Teaching, Learning and Student Development. Initiatives funded through the planning process will be recorded in the database,

as will all other goals and objectives to which they align. An advantage for us with the new database is the ability to link funding in one particular unit (e.g., an academic program) to the operating plans of another unit whose work might be impacted (e.g., facilities or marketing). This dual step had never been included in past tracking attempts and is one we believe will provide much-needed fluidity with regard to implementation.

Finally, the last process involved in the ECC Strategic Plan is reporting and communication. Historically, communication about planning was stymied at the College, and in the course of re-energizing of planning system in 2008, many on the Strategic Planning Committee came to understand perceptions of poor internal communication as a symptom of a much larger issue of mistrust or misinformation.

Moving forward, we will spend more time on communication issues. We recognize that ECC's planning approach has not been historically perceived as open or inviting. Many interviewed during the 2006 visit explained their role as "more reactionary than creative" when it came to decision-making (Assurance Section, p. 9). To this end, we have made concerted efforts to provide planning updates to regularly occurring meetings: Faculty Senate, Budget and Finance, Deans' Meetings as well as Board of Trustees and Cabinet meetings. The Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness has made regular visits to unit-wide meetings since the inception of the Strategic Planning Committee in January 2008.

Second, with regard to misinformation, we realize we had presumed that representatives on past planning committees had knowledge of the planning efforts in other areas. Cross-understanding was not always the case, and separate units did not always connect their unit plans with those of other units. From now on, increasing cross-functional awareness is a central focus of the Strategic Planning Committee. All taskforces working on particular areas involve members from cross disciplines. In addition, members of the Cabinet are cross-listed on the Strategic Planning Committee, so that any effects one area of implementation may have on a different unit of the College can be discussed together centrally. Finally, mitigating misinformation and raising awareness of the ECC Strategic Plan is a central focus of the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office, which will continue to monitor this area as planning grows and strengthens in the years ahead.

Evidence of Integrated Planning on Related Units

The NCA team recommended that master planning drive the future direction of the College, and advised that, through careful planning, progress in vital areas would become imminent. In this section of the report, we provide evidence that the ECC Strategic Plan is already having a positive impact on processes and systems currently in place. Several of these areas were mentioned in the 2006 visiting team's reports (e.g., resource allocation, administrative procedures, etc.) and other areas are noted where we believe strategic planning has made a noteworthy impact (e.g., enrollment management, marketing, etc.). We address each area in turn.

Enrollment Management

Although the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee (SEM) was originally formed in 2001, it took back-to-back years of enrollment decreases to bring the need to study the student flow into focus. In its initial stages, SEM (primarily composed of mid- and high-level administrators) tended to be primarily reactive to initiatives and information brought to it by the Student Services.

More recently, as a result of tactics developed from the ECC Strategic Plan, the working group has been proactive, examining relevant enrollment related data, ensuring participation in recruitment and retention efforts by all departments and offices, and getting out the message that enrollment management is everyone's responsibility, not just something that the Associate Dean of Enrollment Management deals with. This improved communication and change in perspective have been significant, as demonstrated by many of the initiatives in which SEM has had direct involvement. For instance, environmental scanning conducted by SEM has helped us understand the educational needs of underserved populations and to create broad goals on access and success for minority students (Goals 3 and 5 of the ECC Strategic Plan). In addition, the work of SEM has contributed to our understanding of retention and data we use to inform the Dual Credit and Summer Bridge programs under the Alliance for College Readiness, valuable components of Objective 12.2 (Increasing opportunities for others to participate in the College's initiatives).

Marketing

While the office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness and the office of Marketing and Communications are now separated at ECC, their work is still closely linked. Public relations, market research and satisfaction surveys are examples of projects where the two offices interact. From 2006 to 2008, ECC completed a multi-year and multi-faceted rebranding effort, and the Planning office was involved in this endeavor. The process began shortly after the 2006 NCA visit with qualitative research, focus groups and analysis. From there, it moved on to survey research and quantitative analysis and assistance with data analysis and interpretation. The final phase introduced ECC to a creative analysis and will conclude with refinement and testing of a new institutional logo, tagline, and promotional messages and a full roll-out of new marketing materials (including stationery, newsletters, signs, schedules and recruitment materials) in the summer of 2009.

In addition to achieving standardized marketing materials, the branding effort paved a way for strategic allocation of marketing dollars and staff to new initiatives. Strategic planning has helped Marketing and Communications examine ECC's top strengths and challenges and redefine the evolving nature of the College's future and its role in shaping greater Elgin and District 509. Finally, it has also paved the way for additional large-scale events: a series of celebrations in 2009 to honor the 60th anniversary of the College, a community citizens facilitating team called ENCORE (Examining Needs and Creating Opportunities for Regional Excellence), and ongoing community engagement activities designed to gather opinions from District 509 residents on future College development.

Academic Program Review

Incorporating academic program review into strategic planning has been the topic of numerous conversations over the years in the offices of Teaching, Learning and Student Development and Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. Aligning these areas helps the College to identify programs no longer economically or educationally viable and to strengthen curriculum to be responsive to the needs of constituencies (Goal 1: Ensuring curriculum currency and relevance). More recently, improvements in collecting student learning outcome data has made even more apparent the need to integrate program review and planning, as explained in the Assessment section of this report.

Multiple levels of program review occur at ECC. These include a review of course outlines for content, learning outcomes, and articulation/transferability, a review of programs, a review of cross-disciplinary instruction (including general education, remedial/developmental education, etc.), a reporting of best practices and exemplary innovations, and a reporting of program improvements and changes. All levels of program review occur on a regular, five-year rotating cycle, are based on the standards established by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and other regulatory bodies, and rely on common metrics, such as enrollment, unit cost trends, program objectives, need and quality. Recently, we have added student learning outcomes to the list of measures we track in CurricUNET, a technology platform used in the Compliance and Curriculum office, and intend to use these results for program improvement in future years.

Advisory Councils

In the same manner that assessment results inform program review, we have similarly shored up the role of advisory councils in how we inform curriculum and decide on improvements. In their 2006 feedback report, the visiting team commented that advisory councils in the College had "no clear role and scope," and that there was "no clearly defined process in place [for the] selection of committee members or how they report their information to the public." (Advancement Section, p. 3). The team went on to say that:

> "The College should move forward with publishing definitions and roles of advisory committees, and at least one dean or vice-president should be included in all advisor committees as an *ex-officio* member, so that there is input from someone who has fiscal decision authority." (Advancement Section, p. 4).

Since 2006, we have steadily worked to standardize the sizes and structures of these councils, giving them clearer focus, and creating guidelines for membership and expectations for meetings. An Advisory Committee Resource Handbook was created in April 2008 (and posted as an administrative procedure in August 2008), and lists of active committees are maintained in Teaching, Learning and Student Development. Reports from advisory councils meeting minutes are now used to gauge our effectiveness in meeting Goal 1 (Ensuring curriculum currency and relevance) and Goal 12 (Strengthening relations with vital business, educational and service organizations in the district) of the ECC Strategic Plan. In total, there are four types of committees at ECC: career-technical committees, special purpose committees, as well as committees dedicated to university partnerships and advising the College about student transfer.

The President is responsible for determining appropriate committees and responding to committee input.

Administrative Procedures

One particular area where strategic planning has led to significant improvements is with administrative procedures. In their 2006 report, the visiting team noted that the procedures "seem to have not been revised or revisited much in the 10 years since they were written" and recommended that "ECC review their administrative procedures at the stated intervals and update them as needed." (Advancement Section, p. 7). At the time of the 2006 visit, oversight for monitoring administrative procedures was decentralized. However, shortly after that visit, we reorganized work in this area, re-assigning final oversight to the President and the Cabinet, where cross-functional representation is most widely apparent.

In our new practices, administrative procedures are brought to the Cabinet after they are reviewed by appropriate representative bodies in the unit or units from which they derive. For instance, procedures that affect students (e.g., admission, registration, etc.) are brought to the Cabinet by the Vice President of Teaching, Learning and Student Development, who first gathers feedback from instructional deans and coordinators. When applicable, the Academic Policy Committee, a standing body of appointed administrators and elected faculty, also provide feedback. Those and other procedures from Budget and Finance or Human Resources are similarly brought before groups in those areas, and at times procedures are sent to outside counsel for review prior to the Cabinet.

Review of procedures follows a system of repeated readings and editing by the President and Cabinet. Using this approach, we typically review 12-15 procedures per year, update them regularly on our eNet site, and/or publish them in our Catalog, according to the timelines specified within the procedures themselves (currently, 98 procedures are in place which are reviewed in alternate years). Central oversight and input from appropriate constituencies have contributed significantly to ameliorating perceptions of inequities in governance noted by the 2006 visiting team.

Budgeting

Credit hour reimbursement from the Illinois state government has declined every year since 2002, as evidenced by ECC's budget reports during the past several years. In an attempt to hold steady our tuition rates while meeting expenses, the College has had to identify substantial new financial resources (Objective 9.2: Increasing alternative funding sources). This effort was made more complicated in the past with decentralized planning, as identifying areas of the budget to focus on cost effectiveness was difficult without a college-wide strategic plan to pull from.

Renewed efforts at integrated planning since the 2006 visit have brought the Budget and Finance office and Planning and Institutional Effectiveness offices in closer alignment (Objective 9.1: Improving the links between institutional planning and budgeting). In setting the fiscal year 2010 budget, an activity that takes place in March, the Budget and Finance office is ensuring that expenses for new initiatives will be borne out of strategic priorities. For the first time in 2009, a

standardized New Initiatives Request Form will replace separate division-by-division requests for new initiative funding. This form makes salient the criteria upon which new funding is earmarked and new initiatives are evaluated. Criteria include: alignment to strategic goals and objectives, reportable outcomes, impact on student learning and other quality indicators, and so on.[3]

In addition, the Budget and Finance office has set aside a store of funds to support the ECC Strategic Plan centrally. This time, everyone in the College is welcome to submit proposals for the same "pot" of money, a move expected to bring about much-needed transparency in the budgeting process and improve perceptions of communication and inequities in governance. Further, this process should help to reinforce adherence to the Annual Planning Calendar, as the dates and events contained in that document are now intentionally sequenced in such a way to keep the College on track.

Facilities and Space Planning

As part of their regular commitment to the College, the Operations and Maintenance and Information Technology offices prepare reports to guide the scope of capital planning at ECC. First, as part of its commitment to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Operations and Maintenance office prepares an annual Resource Allocation Management Plan (RAMP) each summer. In addition, the Information Technology office prepares a comprehensive three-year rotating plan on replacements to network infrastructure, staff computers, upgrades and telecommunications. The NCA visiting team praised the Information Technology Plan at ECC, saying it "provides a clear snapshot of current resources and sets future priorities." (Assurance Section, p. 13).

In the ECC Strategic Plan, facilities and technology planning are featured prominently. In particular, we see Operations and Maintenance in Objective 2.2 (Redesigning physical space to promote intentional learning) and Information Technology in Objective 7.1 (Increasing online and hybrid options for courses and programs). Further, as indicated on the New Initiatives Request Form described previously, any new initiative that impacts Operations and Maintenance or Information Technology must be accounted for and planned accordingly as budgets are set.

Data sources for measuring progress with these goals are set by the Operations and Maintenance include the necessary steps required to improve facilities and technology infrastructure such as regular inspections, maintaining a log of requests, and tallying the number of requests and the number of steps accomplished over certain intervals of time. For Information Technology, indicators include the number of hits on website pages, the length of time and steps required to complete Help Desk requests, etc. Using this information regularly provides a basis for prioritizing work, including ordering software and maintaining the network infrastructure.

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[3] Recently, we have had discussions about transforming the paper-based process to an online process and intend to move in that direction for fiscal year 2011, after a DataOrchestrator ODS module is added to our Datatel ERP in April 2009. In addition, we have been actively planning to expand our system to include other types of funding requests, such as requests for new staff.

The particular projects we are working on now in Operations and Maintenance and in Information Technology are those originally outlined in 2005 in the Strategic Campus Plan Report and include: the construction of a new Learning Resource Center; the construction of a new Health Careers Center of Excellence; the construction of a new facility for training in the emergency medical, fire and police professions; ongoing repairs to existing roads, sidewalks and parking lots; and gathering information necessary to make strategic real estate decisions. These projects tie directly into Goal 7 (Creating and offering programs and services that meet the emerging learning needs of our students) and are described in the third part of this report.

Equipment Purchase and Replacement

Within the general area of facilities planning, the College has made significant improvements since 2006 in how it purchases and replaces new instructional equipment, computers and related peripherals. At the time of the 2006 visit, the team noted:

> "The institution as a whole does not have a comprehensive [plan] to fund acquisition, redistribution, and replacement of equipment. Putting in place a plan for the academic unit would be the final step towards developing such a plan for the entire institution. Several units of the institution have good resource allocation plans…and, of these, the IT plan is perhaps the most useful example to use as a model for resource allocation." (Advancement Section, p. 8).

In general, the college dedicates $325,000 of its annual budget for instructional equipment, and since 2006, such purchases have been tracked systematically and strategically. In Teaching, Learning and Student Development, for example, new equipment purchases are officially noted in the Academic Goals Database and used to inform future goal development. The seven academic goals and annual objectives stemming from them (Academic Master Plan) have served as a basis for prioritizing among initial requests, and funding for upgrades and replacements have been tracked in the unit operating plans of Information Technology. Prioritizing for new purchase was done in deliberations by top administrators in Teaching, Learning and Student Development.[4]

Because fiscal year 2010 marks the beginning of a new and integrated college-wide planning system, requests for new funding in the future will be linked to the 12 goals and 26 objectives in the ECC Strategic Plan. Prioritizing will be done using the New Initiatives Request Form categories by members of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Cabinet. For fiscal year 2010 and following, the tracking process will also be centralized and linked to college-wide budgeting in a process described in the Budgeting of this report. This change mirrors the College's shift from decentralized to centralized planning.

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[4] We have adopted the following rule-of-thumb with respect to new equipment: First-time purchases of hardware for faculty, support staff or other instructional/classroom purposes (including computers, keyboards, mice and other peripherals) come out of departmental budgets and are linked to strategic goals. Funds begin at a certain dollar amount (usually $7,500) and after four years, upgrades and replacements come out of the Information Technology office's budget.

Communication

Communication among internal departments has often been cited as an area of concern. As planning has become centralized and more integral to decision making, a better awareness is emerging of how information is shared. An example of improved communication appears in the form of a series of strategic planning surveys released in 2008. Results from a preliminary survey, conducted in conjunction with our May 2008 rebranding initiative, showed that, on average, 65% of all ECC constituencies (students, recent alumni, current employees and residents of our district) agreed with the goals the Strategic Planning Committee had created and felt they were strategically important directions for the College.

A second survey released in the summer of 2008 (and analyzed at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester) showed again that strategic goals were well regarded, with 73% of faculty, staff and administration agreeing or strongly agreeing that the goals as drafted were important. In addition, the Mission was judged quite favorably, with 86% of respondents in agreement.

In contrast, the Vision was judged favorably by only 52% of respondents, which led us to revise the statement in late 2008. In our revisions, we reorganized the Vision around the goals and shared values already in place. By the time the third and final version of the Strategic Plan Survey was analyzed (December 2008), we saw approval ratings on the Vision increase from 52% to 70%, thereby putting the plan in prime position for formal endorsement and approval by the President and Board of Trustees, which occurred in late January 2009.

In general, feedback from constituencies has had a beneficial trickle-down effect to many areas of the institution, connected through the guise of communication. Feedback on three planning surveys helped shape the ECC Strategic Plan, and the plan has, in turn, helped to improve understanding of the intent and reasons behind certain departmental procedures and processes.

Future Steps

Now that the ECC Strategic Plan has been formally adopted for fiscal year 2010, the College will soon be engaged in a number of deployment activities. These activities will ensure a smooth roll-out and close the loop on transforming planning into action.

The first activity, mentioned in the section on Budgeting, is the March 2009 roll-out of the New Initiatives Request Form and prioritizing process. This form, to be completed by budget officers in various units, will be the first of several to align funding with strategic objectives. It will allow us to record systematically and formally the types and scope of funding requests received, and in future years, we plan to include requests for new equipment and new staff.

The second activity will be to refine some key performance indicators (KPIs). As mentioned previously, KPIs are key components of the Institutional Effectiveness Indicator Report and Performance Report we submit each year to the College and the Illinois Community College Board respectively.

The Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office is the unit chiefly responsible for monitoring KPIs, and beginning in February 2009, a subgroup of the Strategic Planning Committee will meet regularly to discuss existing KPIs and identify data sources for defining new ones.[5]

The third activity to take place will be for units to create or reconfirm action steps for identified objectives. For this purpose, many units already create business or operating plans to guide their work. As an example, for Objective 6.1 (Increasing enrollment of adult students), Strategic Enrollment Management and Teaching, Learning and Student Development have outlined steps to guide future work, including a focus group of adult learners creating an inventory of needs based on the Council of Adult Experiential Education (CAEL) adult learning inventory. We expect actions or activities at the unit level to be tracked locally in unit-wide reporting systems and databases as they are now; however, the additional step of tracking them centrally in the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office will also be undertaken.

The final activity will be to report on our progress in meeting stated goals and objectives. While this activity really amounts to an expansion of existing practices, we expect to formalize our processes more than we have in the past. In previous years, the Academic Goals Database provided the only formal system for sharing activities among units. For fiscal year 2010, the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office will track progress centrally and include not only academic deans, but also directors in Marketing, Finance and other units. The database will be housed in the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office and, as is the case currently with the Academic Goals Database, updates will be received and reported twice annually to the College. For the first year, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will keep updates on paper, but in the future we will have the ability to record and update progress digitally via a web interface.

In sum, each of these roll-out activities amounts to formalization and standardization of processes that were previously informal or specific to particular units. Standardization is expected to contribute significantly to buy-in and compliance.

Conclusion

As stated in the beginning of this section, the College has responded to concerns with several lines of activity. First, the campus developed and implemented an annual strategic planning process involving representative bodies throughout the campus. We followed the recommendations of the NCA and used the Academic Master Plan as a basis for setting strategic goals and integrated other existing plans into those. Second, the College leadership made necessary organizational changes to allow for implementation. Changes included dividing the Marketing and Communications office from the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office, and reconstituting the Strategic Planning Committee, centralizing authority for prioritizing new initiatives to the Cabinet. Third, we drafted a four-process model to guide the implementation of the plan itself. We critically and carefully considered the interdependent nature of research/data gathering, planning, budgeting, and reporting/communication to create an Annual Planning Calendar that was sequenced and ordered appropriately.

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[5] Much of the work in setting KPIs was done simultaneously with formulating the plan itself.

Two final activities centered on implementation. First, we began a process of aligning strategic planning to budgeting, an action we expect to continue into the future.   We begin this year by aligning new initiatives into the budgeting process, and in the future, we have plans to track other types of funding requests – new equipment, new staff and unit-wide operational activities – to strategic objectives. Finally, we improved communication by inviting feedback on the plan throughout the process, obtaining input from internal constituency groups, such as the Faculty Senate, and external groups, such as the Regional Economic Development Network. In sum, we have responded to NCA's feedback to produce a strategic plan and an implementation system that fosters coordination, integration and continuous quality improvement.

Timeline of Strategic Planning Activities

YEAR	KEY ACTIVITIES: 2004-2009
2004	• The Planning and Quality Improvement Committee drafts the 2004-2008 Strategic Initiatives and Targets, which serves as the College's strategic plan until the end of 2008.
2005	• Costing for the newly formed targets are set and a plan put in place to update the strategic targets every year in September. • Finance and administration units (Information Technology, Operations and Maintenance, etc.) create unit-wide business plans for fiscal year 2006 and for every year thereafter. • The Academic Master Plan is created, which serves as the strategic plan for the Teaching, Learning and Student Development division.
2006	• ECC creates the 2006 NCA Self-Study Report and NCA evaluation visits the campus. • The Academic Goals Database is created and is linked to the Academic Master Plan.
2007	• President Sam takes office. • An Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness is hired. • The Planning and Quality Improvement Committee dissolves.
2008	• The Strategic Planning Committee is formed. • The Strategic Planning Committee drafts the Strategic Planning Future Vision conceptual white paper. • The ECC Strategic Plan (for fiscal Year 2010) is created, and many key performance indicators (KPIs) are revised.
2009	• The ECC Strategic Plan is adopted by the ECC Board of Trustees. • Planning for new initiatives is formally linked to budgeting.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Following its 2006 comprehensive visit, the NCA evaluation team made several observations and recommendations regarding ECC's Assessment Plan. The team noted that "the College has progressed…in its attempt to use student outcomes for assessment at all levels" (Assurance Section, p. 7) and noted a concentrated effort to involve the College community, including the Board of Trustees. However, in 2006, the College was in the midst of collecting general education outcomes and had not yet collected data or closed feedback cycles. The team noted this omission, and advised the College for its 2009 focused visit to "have implemented the Assessment Plan and to have collected at least two years of data to demonstrate how it is using assessment to improve student learning" (Assurance Section, p. 20). In addition, citing the short period of time between creation of the Assessment Plan and the 2006 visit, the team commented how "the amount of data collected has yet been inadequate to draw many conclusions" (Advancement Section, p. 4) and advised the College to demonstrate buy-in from faculty and an overall improvement in communication and ownership of the plan and overall initiative.

The assessment initiative has been a College priority for several years. Data on general education outcomes has been collected and analyzed now for over three years, using tools and processes recommended by faculty and aggregated and reported by the Compliance and Curriculum office. In addition, the Assessment Plan calls for two other outcome dimensions for assessment: program outcomes and course outcomes. Since 2006, we have completed full cycles of all dimensions. Moreover, faculty interest has improved significantly and includes broad and open representation on the College's Assessment Committee, which in addition to faculty, includes a full-time Director of Outcomes Assessment.

History, Organization and Funding of ECC's Assessment Initiative

As discussed in the original 2006 NCA Self-Study Report, ECC's Assessment Committee was formally recognized as a standing committee in 2004. Since its inception, the committee has been committed to providing the necessary resources and infrastructure to ensure the success of the Assessment Plan.

Recognizing that any initiative would require buy-in, the College has structured the Assessment Committee to include a membership and length-of-term infrastructure to ensure that the committee is headed by, and principally composed of, faculty. Committee members include faculty representatives from each academic division, including Student Services. As a Faculty Senate committee, the committee requires nominations for membership, including the chair and co-chair positions, and public meeting minutes. In the fall 2008, new committee leadership recommended meetings opened to all faculty.

The committee structure and organization has expanded since 2004 (Figure 1), a sign of the College's recognition of, and commitment to, the assessment initiative. In late 2006, the committee recommended an administrative position to provide assistance and oversight for creating assessment tools and providing assistance with data collection. The committee also recommended a Director of Outcomes Assessment to support an increased need for data and analysis, which could not be sustained by the Institutional Research office alone. This position

was created and filled in October 2007 by the former Director of Institutional Research, allowing for consistent support and a seamless transition with regard to data reporting. The Director of Outcomes Assessment reports to the Executive Director of Compliance and Curriculum. The College also provides release time to the committee chair (three hours per semester) and vice-chair (one hour per semester) and funding to support faculty who evaluate writing essays collected each semester as part of the assessment of writing outcomes for general education assessment.

In addition, the College has set aside necessary funding. The Assessment Committee began with a budget of $10,000, managed by the Assistant Vice President of Teaching, Learning and Student Development in collaboration with the chair and co-chair of the Assessment Committee. In January 2009, the Executive Director of Compliance and Curriculum was appointed the administrative and budgeting liaison. The Compliance and Curriculum office also organizes bimonthly meetings, takes and distributes meeting minutes, and maintains a website and repository of materials on eNet, which is available to all ECC employees. The budget for the assessment initiative funds the purchase of testing materials, materials for in-house assessment trainings and workshops, as well as conference registration fees, travel and lodging expenses. The committee's budget has tripled to nearly $30,000 since 2004.

Figure 1. Organization Chart of the Assessment Initiative
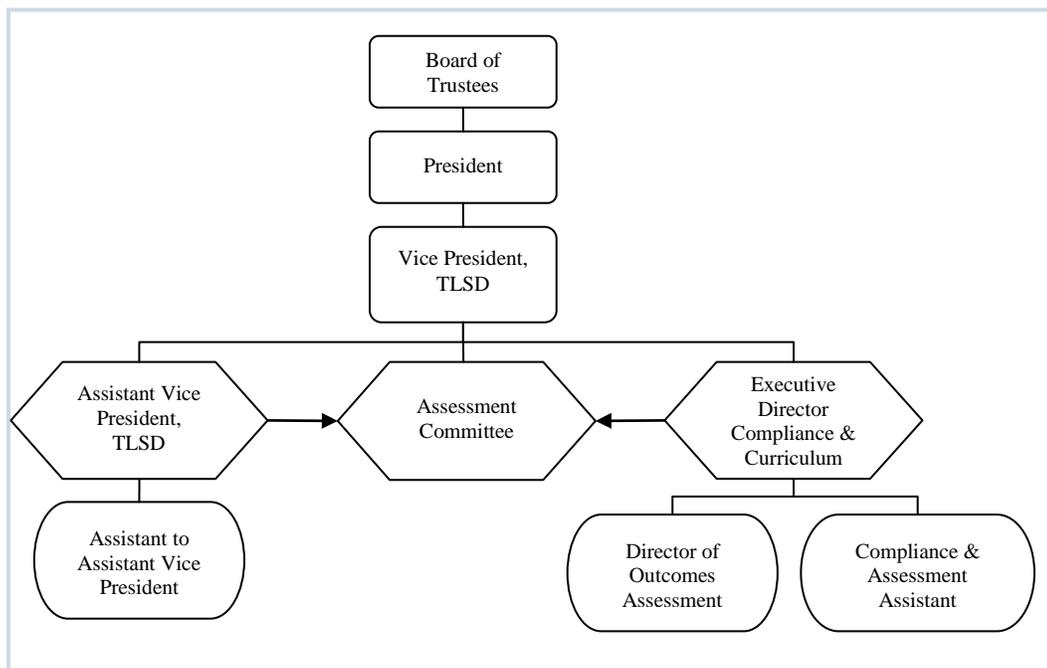
The Assessment Plan

As reported in the 2006 NCA Self-Study Report, the College's assessment initiative was guided by the goals and directives of the Assessment Committee established in fall 2004. The Assessment Plan identified outcomes for general education outcomes and discussion of methods for measuring them. Originally, the plan included four outcome dimensions: general education outcomes, program outcomes, course outcomes and instruction-level outcomes. However, subsequent discussions about measurement and implementation revealed that instruction-level outcomes could not be objectively assessed on a college-wide basis. Thus, this dimension was combined with course-level outcome measurements to yield the three dimensions of outcomes measurement.

The Assessment Plan also outlined a phase-in period covering the first three years of implementation. In the first year, general education outcomes (which had already been identified in fall 2004) would be measured and analyzed, and would continue to be measured annually from that time forward, while program-level outcomes would be identified and planned. In the second year, program-level outcomes would begin to be measured, and course-level outcomes would be identified and planned. Course-level outcomes would then be measured in the third year, after which time all three outcome dimensions would be measured on an annual basis. Table 1 shows the rolling implementation timeline. General education outcomes were collected beginning in spring 2005, followed by program-level outcomes beginning in fall 2005, and ending with course-level outcomes beginning in fall 2006.

Table 1. Assessment Plan Implementation Timeline

Term	General Education Outcomes	Program-Level Outcomes	Course-Level Outcomes
Fall 2004: Assessment Committee established			
Spring 2005	CAAP test, writing sample & speaking assessment administered (1st time)		
Fall 2005	CCTST test, information literacy, technology & global awareness assessments administered (1st Time)	Program-level outcomes and measurement plans developed (1st time)	
Spring 2006: Assessment Plan drafted			
Spring 2006	CAAP test and writing sample assessment administered (2nd time)	Program-level outcomes and measurement plans developed (1st Time)	
Fall 2006	CCTST test, information literacy, technology & global awareness assessments administered (2nd time)	Program-level outcomes data collection (1st Time)	Course-level outcome process communicated
Spring 2007	CAAP test and writing sample assessment administered (3rd time)		
Fall 2007	CCTST test, information literacy, technology & global awareness assessments administered (3rd time)	Program-level outcomes data collection (2nd time)	Course-level outcomes measured and reported

Term	General Education Outcomes	Program-Level Outcomes	Course-Level Outcomes
Spring 2008	CAAP test and writing sample assessment administered (4th time)	Program-level outcomes analyzed and disseminated (2nd time)	
Fall 2008	CCTST test, information literacy, technology & global awareness assessments administered (4th time)	Program-level outcomes data collected (3rd time)	

General Education Outcomes

The first task of the Assessment Committee in fall 2004 was to establish a measurement protocol for the College's general education outcomes. Working with a list of outcomes previously generated by ECC's Curriculum Committee, the Assessment Committee established the following eight outcomes:

1. Reading

2. Writing

3. Scientific Literacy

4. Quantitative Literacy

5. Critical Thinking

6. Technology

7. Information Literacy

8. Global Awareness

These general education outcomes are documented more fully in the ECC Catalog, our website, and included in marketing materials to highlight their importance and to bring about heightened awareness. A ninth outcome (speaking) was originally included in the set but was eliminated in fall 2005 when the Assessment Committee determined that its measurement process was not sustainable. Additionally, the outcome was considered more appropriate as a program-level or course-level outcome.

After deliberation, the Assessment Committee recommended the administration of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) tests to measure reading, scientific literacy and quantitative literacy and writing outcomes. The CAAP test is a nationally-normed and standardized battery of tests developed by the American College Testing Program (ACT), which provide assessment results at both the cohort and individual student levels. The committee also recommended the administration of the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) to measure critical thinking skills. The CCTST is also a nationally-normed and discipline-neutral assessment which measures critical thinking skills as defined by international expert consensus (Facione, 1990).

Finally, locally-developed instruments were created to measure technological literacy, informational literacy and global awareness outcomes. The Information Literacy Test was developed by members of the Assessment Committee in 2005 and based on a test developed by the Bay Area Community Colleges Information Competency Assessment Project. It was developed based on specific performance outcomes and is criterion-referenced to national standards.

The Technology Literacy Assessment was developed by faculty on the Assessment Committee in 2005. This instrument consists of 40 test questions (with 5 specifically related to MAC computing) and 5 background questions. It was specifically designed to assess students' ability to use technology as a learning tool.

For the outcome of global awareness, the committee created a perceptual self-reflective measure modeled after a similar instrument developed by a neighboring peer institution, the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. These perceptual items are added to the end of the information literacy and the technology literacy assessments rather than being administered as independent instruments. These instruments will be available for review during the March focused visit.

The writing skills outcome is also measured through a writing sample assessment that is evaluated by a team of ECC faculty using a common rubric. For this assessment, students are asked to respond to a writing prompt developed by the Assessment Committee in conjunction with faculty. Students who complete the writing assessment are also asked to provide demographic information (e.g., native language, whether or not they have taken English Composition, etc.) to provide additional background information for subsequent analysis. Copies of all general education assessment instruments are available as attachments to this report and in the resource room.

The Assessment Committee decided to use the recommended measurement tools listed above for three years to establish baseline data. Upon completion of the three years, the committee would evaluate data and make further recommendations for revision or continued use of the instruments.

General Education Assessment Outcomes Analysis: Sampling Procedures

The baseline sample contains data collected over the past three years. For data collection, courses were randomly selected from the pool of all Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) courses in a given semester, until approximately 500 students are included in the spring sample and approximately 300 students are included in the fall sample.[6] Students in the spring sample received one of the four subtests of the CAAP (reading, writing, math and science) or the

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[6] The Assessment Committee's consensus was that general education outcomes should only be measured for those students who would be exposed to the general education curriculum. To this end, only those courses with IAI status or those courses with at least one IAI course as a prerequisite have been included in the sampling pool. The IAI "is a voluntary statewide transfer agreement among 110 participating two- and four-year Illinois public and independent institutions." Courses with IAI status are the ones where students are most likely to be exposed to each of the eight general education outcomes, and for this reason, comprise the baseline sample. While the College's intent is not to

ECC-developed writing assessment. The CAAP subtests were equally distributed by subject area within each course section, so that each of the area tests was completed by a quarter of the students in each class. If the class was selected for CAAP, the four different tests were randomly distributed to students so that one quarter of the class took each test (approximately 100 students per subject test). If the class was selected for the writing sample, all students in the class completed the same assessment (approximately 100 students total).

Students in the fall sample received the CCTST test, the Information Literacy Test or the Technological Literacy Assessment so that there were approximately 100 students completing each. The global awareness perceptual measure was added to the end of these instruments.

For analysis, the committee did not construct cohorts but analyzed results at the student level. Data has been categorized into groupings based on students' cumulative credit hours earned: 15 hours and below, 16 to 39 hours, and 40+ hours. It was hypothesized that, as students progress through the curriculum, there would be observable improvement in the general education competencies measured.

General Education Assessment Outcomes Analysis: Administration

Instructors in each of the selected classes were notified by the Director of Outcomes Assessment prior to the semester in which their sections were selected for inclusion in the assessment process. Instructors were asked to identify a class period during the fifth and sixth week of the term to administer the assessment tools. Each test was designed to take approximately 40 to 50 minutes to complete. There were no instances in which instructors refused to allow class time to be taken for testing purposes, although a few course sections were excluded due to school closure (inclement weather). Students were notified by mail soon after the start of the semester that one (or more) of their classes had been selected. They were not informed of the exact date in which assessments were to occur.

During the initial implementation, workshops were held for instructors to inform them about the logistics. In subsequent semesters, faculty were notified by email. On the chosen date, a member of the Compliance and Curriculum office brought all testing materials to the classroom, which included a procedural script, an accounting form to track the tests given, a roster with students' unique identification numbers, pencils, calculators (if applicable), tests, and answer sheets.

Completed CAAP and CCTST tests were returned to the vendors and results sent back to ECC electronically. Additionally, CAAP provided individual results sheets for each participant. Those students who scored in the top 50th percentile nationally received a certificate of recognition, mailed to the receiving student from the Compliance and Curriculum office at the end of the semester. One benefit in using both CAAP and CCTST is that ECC also received data comparing students' scores with a national sample of two-year community college students.

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exclude students in career-technical programs, general education skills taught in IAI transfer courses have been a primary focus of analyses thus far.

The writing samples were assessed internally by teams of three faculty members and ECC personnel. A common rubric was designed and approved by the Assessment Committee and faculty for this purpose. The rubric is holistic, so it was not possible to analyze specific deficiencies (e.g., grammar or organization). Artifacts were given an overall score between 1 and 5.

To achieve the most reliable data, the first three years of results were aggregated to form a baseline. A baseline was achieved by spring 2007 for the reading, writing, math and science outcomes using the CAAP test and the writing sample. By fall 2007, baselines for critical thinking, information literacy, technology and global awareness outcomes were established using the CCTST test and home-grown instruments. The standardized tests created a comparison to national benchmarks, and results were reported as percentile scores. The committee was most interested in the number of student cumulative earned credit hours, assuming that, as students progress through coursework, skill and proficiency would increase.

Results

Reading, Writing, Math and Science Outcomes

The three-year baseline data summary includes the participation of over 1,200 students, as summarized in Table 2. The sample includes primarily full-time status who are under the age of 23 and enrolled with the intent of university transfer. In addition, the sample is drawn exclusively from transfer-oriented courses that occur predominantly during the day. By design, the demographic characteristics of this sample are very similar to those of all students enrolled in IAI courses over this time, and as such, the results provided in the three-year baseline period can be reasonably generalized to a broader population for whom the general education outcomes are intended to apply.

Table 2. Characteristics of Baseline Sample for the CAAP Test (*N*=1,217)

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
Cumulative Credit Hours			
15 or less Hours	460	38.2%	45.4%
16 to 39 Hours	390	32.4%	31.3%
40+ Hours	355	29.5%	23.3%
Gender			
Male	502	41.4%	42.6%
Female	710	58.6%	57.4%
FT/PT Status			
Part-time	282	24.3%	24.2%
Full-time	876	75.7%	75.8%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	1,026	85.0%	*
ELL	181	15.0%	*

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
Age			
Under 23	978	81.2%	75.7%
23 and older	226	18.8%	24.3%
Area of Study			
Career-Technical	221	18.8%	18.0%
University Transfer	956	81.2%	82.0%

* Not measured on IAI population

During the three-year baseline period, 312 students took the CAAP reading test (scoring at the 54th percentile in comparison to other two-year students who took this test), 298 students took the writing test (scoring at the 49th percentile), 307 students took the math test (scoring at the 65th percentile), and 300 students took the science test (scoring at the 60th percentile).

Students for whom English is not their native language performed worse than students who were native English speakers in reading, writing and science outcome measures, but performed approximately the same on math outcome measures. Students who were enrolled in programs designed for transfer to four-year institutions performed better than students who enrolled in programs that were career-oriented on math, science and writing outcome measures, but interestingly, not the reading outcome measure. Older students performed better than younger students on math and reading outcome measures, but approximately equal on science outcome measures and worse on writing outcome measures. In all subject tests (Table 3), transfer students scored higher than those in career-technical programs, and full-time students scored higher than part-time students. As with reading, the English Language Learner (ELL) group scored lower than native English speaking students.

Table 3. Results from CAAP Subtests in Reading, Writing, Math and Science

	Reading Results		Writing Results		Math Results		Science Results	
All Students	**%ile**	*N*	**%ile**	*N*	**%ile**	*N*	**%ile**	*N*
Overall Score	**54.1**	**312**	**49.0**	**298**	**65.1**	**307**	**60.3**	**300**
Arts/Literature	57.5	312						
Social Studies/Science	55.3	312						
Usage/Mechanical			52.7	298				
Rhetorical			50.9	298				
Basic Algebra					67.5	307		
College Algebra					64.4	307		
Cumulative Credit Hours								
15 or less Hours	55.2	127	49.4	107	61.1	117	54.7	109
16 to 39 Hours	52.9	97	44.5	97	66.0	109	62.0	87
40+ Hours	54.0	83	53.6	93	69.7	77	64.9	102
Gender								
Male	56.9	118	47.8	137	71.1	125	65.2	122
Female	52.8	191	50.0	161	60.8	181	56.7	177

FT/PT Status								
Part-time	51.6	78	45.5	68	53.2	71	52.1	65
Full-time	54.6	217	50.0	219	68.3	222	62.7	218
English as Primary Language								
Primary	56.1	263	52.8	248	65.8	261	63.7	254
ELL	40.0	45	29.9	47	61.1	44	41.6	45
Age								
Under 23	53.3	246	50.6	235	67.5	248	60.4	249
23 and older	58.5	61	43.3	61	53.6	55	58.9	49
Area of Study								
Career-Technical	54.7	57	44.0	55	55.9	58	51.9	51
University Transfer	54.0	243	50.1	237	67.2	239	62.5	237

Using the 50th percentile as a benchmark, ECC students performed at about the national average (when compared with other two-year college students) on their reading and writing performance, and above average in math and science performance. The committee's primary hypothesis – that there would be improvement in performance as the number of hours that a student completed grew – was supported when examining math and science performance, but not reading and writing. The baseline data collection period has provided an opportunity to reflect upon the use of the CAAP as an instrument to gather general education outcome data. Overall, the assessment committee has been satisfied with the results provided by the CAAP tests and plans to continue using it as one of ECC's general education assessment instruments.

Results point to clear differences across demographic subgroups in the reading and writing performance of ECC's students versus math and science performance. Committee discussions of this finding have led, in part, to the institution of minimum competency requirements for students at the college (and discussed later in this section), but have also caused the committee to reconsider the sampling process that is used to select class sections. The sampling method that the committee used purposefully oversampled upper-level courses (those numbered 200 and above) in an attempt to ensure relatively equivalent proportions of students by cumulative credit hours. As can be seen in Table 3, this was accomplished. However, part of the reason for the above-average math and science subtest performance may have been because upper-level IAI courses are disproportionately math, physics, chemistry and biology courses. The committee has discussed several changes to the sampling procedure to be implemented in the future.

Writing Outcome (Essay Sample)

During the three-year baseline period, 390 students participated in the ECC writing sample assessment, as summarized in Table 4. Students taking this assessment were similar to those who took the CAAP. The group was slightly skewed toward transfer majors, those under the age of 23 and enrolled full-time. The sample contained an even distribution of students with varying earned credit hours and was slightly skewed toward freshman. The proportions for males versus females and for primary English speakers versus ELL speakers were representative of the College's overall student population.

Table 4. Characteristics of Baseline Sample for Essay (*N=390*)

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
Cumulative Credit Hours			
15 or less Hours	136	39.7%	45.4%
16 to 39 Hours	119	34.7%	31.3%
40+ Hours	88	25.7%	23.3%
Have you taken ENG101?			
Yes	155	62.0%	*
No, but I am taking it now	46	18.4%	*
No, I haven't	49	19.6%	*
Gender			
Male	158	43.6%	42.6%
Female	204	56.4%	57.4%
FT/PT Status			
Part-time	81	23.9%	24.2%
Full-time	258	76.1%	75.8%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	314	84.4%	*
ELL	58	15.6%	*
Age			
Under 23	271	75.7%	75.7%
23 and older	87	24.3%	24.3%
Area of Study			
Career-Technical	287	82.9%	18.0%
University Transfer	59	17.1%	82.0%

* Not measured on IAI population

Table 5 contains the results of the baseline samples using the writing rubric. The mean score earned overall was 3.0, and only slight variations were obtained across the different categories of analysis. Those students who had taken 40 or more credit hours and those who completed ENG101 scored slightly higher than those with fewer earned hours or those who had not completed an English course. In addition, students enrolled in transfer programs slightly outscored students in career-technical programs.

Results from the writing sample suggest that the rubric and the writing process itself need to be revised. First, because the rubric is holistic, it is not possible to analyze specific areas of writing, and for this reason, English faculty will review and revise the rubric to include writing structure and mechanics, critical thinking, and other general skill areas. Similarly, the writing prompt will change to allow students to write about current global events or controversial topics. Finally, the sampling process will be changed. With the addition of new prerequisite courses, current students do not enroll in the sampled courses until they have completed an ENG101 course. Thus, the background questions asked of the sampled students must be changed to ask whether or not students have enrolled in a more advanced English course.

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Table 5. Results of Baseline Sample for Essay (*N=390*)

	Mean	N
All Students	**3.0**	**390**
Cumulative Credit Hours		
15 or less Hours	3.0	136
16 to 39 Hours	2.9	119
40+ Hours	3.2	88
Have you taken ENG101?		
Yes	3.3	155
No, but I am taking it now	3.0	46
No, I haven't	3.0	49
Gender		
Male	2.9	158
Female	3.1	204
FT/PT Status		
Part-time	3.0	81
Full-time	3.0	258
English as Primary Language		
Primary	3.2	314
ELL	2.2	58
Age		
Under 23	3.0	271
23 and older	3.1	87
Area of Study		
Career-Technical	3.1	287
University Transfer	2.8	59

Critical Thinking Skills Outcome

During the three-year baseline period, 377 students have taken the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) to comprise a baseline sample, as displayed in Table 6. Students who took this assessment were similar to those who took the CAAP. The group reflects a larger population of transfer majors, those under the age of 23 and enrolled full-time. The characteristics of this sample are similar to the general population of ECC students enrolled in IAI courses (i.e., the population from which this sample was intended to have been drawn from). In this sense, results can be reasonably generalized to a broader population for whom critical thinking skills outcomes are intended to apply.

Table 6. Characteristics of Baseline Sample for the CCTST (*N=377*)

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	%	%
Cumulative Credit Hours			
15 or less Hours	121	35.1%	45.3%
16 to 39 Hours	139	40.3%	33.9%
40+ Hours	85	24.6%	20.7%

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
Gender			
Male	153	40.6%	43.0%
Female	224	59.4%	57.0%
FT/PT Status			
Part-time	80	23.2%	25.1%
Full-time	265	76.8%	74.9%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	1,026	84.3%	*
ELL	181	14.9%	*
Age			
Under 23	289	83.8%	75.1%
23 and older	56	16.2%	24.9%
Area of Study			
Career-Technical	57	16.6%	17.2%
University Transfer	287	83.4%	82.8%

* Not measured on IAI population

The CCTST comprises 34 questions: 7 related to the skill of analysis, 16 related to inference, and 11 related to evaluation. Half of the questions on the test measure inductive reasoning, while the other half measure deductive reasoning. Independent subscores are provided for each of the critical thinking skills as well.

Table 7 displays the results of the CCTST assessment. ECC students achieved an aggregated score of 15.5 during the three-year baseline measurement period. This represents performance at the 65th percentile, when compared to a national sample of two-year college students. In terms of global critical thinking ability, results indicate that ECC students perform above the national average (again using the 50th percentile as the benchmark for the national average). Overall, ECC students appear to be especially strong in their analytical thinking skills, and comparatively weaker in their evaluative and deductive reasoning skills. Full-time students perform better than part-time students in each critical thinking skill, and this difference is significant when comparing inferential, evaluative and deductive thinking skills. Students enrolled in university transfer programs perform slightly better than students in career-technical programs, especially in evaluative thinking. However, no other pronounced differences were obtained. Contrary to the Assessment Committee's initial hypothesis, there were no significant differences between students by cumulative credits earned.

Overall, the committee was pleased with the results of the CCTST and plans to continue using this instrument in the future. In particular, the committee will focus on the critical thinking outcomes and devise strategies to bring more opportunities to develop this skill inside and outside the classroom.

Table 7. Results from the CCTST by Characteristics

Percent of CCTST Questions Correct						
All Students	**Total**	**Analysis**	**Inference**	**Evaluation**	**Inductive**	**Deductive**
National Benchmark	**43.8%**	**60.0%**	**43.1%**	**35.5%**	**49.4%**	**38.2%**
ECC Overall Score	**45.7%**	**61.5%**	**45.0%**	**36.7%**	**51.7%**	**39.7%**
Cumulative Credit Hours						
15 or less Hours	46.7%	62.6%	47.4%	35.5%	52.6%	40.8%
16 to 39 Hours	45.4%	60.4%	44.0%	37.9%	51.6%	39.2%
40+ Hours	45.4%	61.8%	44.0%	37.1%	51.2%	39.7%
Gender						
Male	47.3%	61.6%	47.7%	37.7%	51.9%	42.8%
Female	44.6%	61.4%	43.1%	35.9%	51.5%	37.6%
FT/PT Status						
Part-time	42.2%	59.8%	40.3%	33.6%	49.8%	34.6%
Full-time	47.0%	62.0%	46.7%	37.8%	52.5%	41.5%
Age						
Under 23	45.7%	60.9%	45.2%	36.7%	51.6%	39.7%
23 and older	47.0%	65.1%	45.3%	37.8%	53.4%	40.5%
Area of Study						
University Transfer	46.6%	61.6%	46.0%	37.9%	52.4%	40.7%
Career-Technical	42.6%	61.9%	41.6%	31.7%	49.5%	35.6%

Information Literacy Outcome

During the three-year baseline period, 349 completed the information literacy assessment. The characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 8. Students taking this assessment are similar to the group who took CAAP and the CCTST assessments. The group reflects a larger population of transfer majors, students under the age of 23, and full-time students, and the sample comparable to the general population. Again, this result suggests that our sample can be reasonable generalized to a broader population for whom these critical thinking skills outcomes are intended to apply. The assessment also asks students how long they have attended ECC.

Table 8. Characteristics of Baseline Sample for the Information Literacy Test (*N*=349)

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
Semesters completed at ECC			
None, this is first semester	81	23.7%	*
1 to 2 semesters	123	36.0%	*
3 to 4 semesters	4	27.5%	*
5 or more semesters	44	12.9%	*
Gender			
Male	142	43.4%	43.0%
Female	185	56.6%	57.0%

FT/PT Status			
Part-time	53	15.2%	25.1%
Full-time	295	84.8%	74.9%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	301	88.5%	*
ELL	39	11.5%	*
Age			
Under 23	306	88.2%	75.1%
23 and older	41	11.8%	24.9%
Area of Study			
Career-Technical	45	13.8%	17.2%
University Transfer	282	86.2%	82.8%
Have you had any training/instruction in doing library or web research?			
Yes	285	81.9%	*
No	63	18.1%	*
Rate your library research skills			
Excellent	42	12.4%	*
Good	162	47.6%	*
Moderate	116	34.1%	*
Fair	17	5.0%	*
Poor	3	0.9%	*

* Not measured on IAI population

Students who completed this assessment responded correctly to nearly two-thirds of the questions (64.8%) in aggregate (Table 9). In support of the committee's hypothesis that students' understanding of outcomes would increase as time spent at the College increased, there was a slight increase in percentage of correct responses on the Information Literacy Test as the number of completed semesters increased. No significant differences associated with other characteristics were obtained.

The assessment instrument also asked whether they received training/instruction in library or web research (which is formally provided in COL101 among other courses), and also asked for a self-rating of library research skill level on a five-point Likert scale. Results show those who received research training in the ECC Library (82% of the group) scored slightly higher than those who had not, suggesting a positive impact of the library research training provided in ECC courses. In addition, students who rated their library research skills as "excellent" or "good" performed better than those who reported themselves as "moderate" or worse, suggesting that this instrument can accurately discern information literacy skills.

The Assessment Committee is pleased with the ability of this instrument to distinguish varying levels of library research skills and will continue to use this instrument to assess information literacy outcomes. However, the committee has determined that the next step for this assessment would be to group the 54 questions into a number of related factors (citations, search mechanisms, etc.) that combine to form information literacy. Identifying component scores will provide the committee information on specific areas of library research skills for future improvement. The committee will discuss newly obtained findings on component performance in spring 2009 meetings.

Table 9. Results from the Information Literacy Test (*N*=349)

	% Correct Responses	
	N	**%**
All Students	**349**	**64.8%**
Semesters Completed at ECC		
None, this is first semester	222	63.7%
1 to 2 semesters	229	65.9%
3 to 4 semesters	231	66.2%
5 or more semesters	231	66.1%
Gender		
Male	223	64.0%
Female	229	65.7%
FT/PT Status		
Part-time	225	64.6%
Full-time	232	66.4%
English as Primary Language		
Primary	232	66.4%
ELL	195	56.0%
Age		
Under 23	226	64.8%
23 and older	232	66.4%
Area of Study		
Career-Technical	221	63.3%
University Transfer	228	65.2%
Have you had any training/instruction in doing library or web research?		
Yes	230	65.8%
No	215	61.5%
Rate your library research skills		
Excellent	232	66.6%
Good	230	65.8%
Moderate	227	64.9%
Fair	219	62.7%
Poor	177	50.6%

Technology Literacy Outcome

During the three-year baseline measurement period, 352 students completed the Technology
Literacy Assessment, and characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 10. Students
taking this assessment are similar to the groups who took CAAP, the CCTST and the
Information Literacy Test. The group reflects a larger population of transfer majors, students
under the age of 23, full-time students, and is similar to those of all students enrolled in IAI
courses over this time. The Technology Literacy Assessment also asks which computer platform
the students used most often. The overwhelming majority (91%) of ECC students favor the
MAC over the PC platform.

Table 10. Characteristics of Baseline Sample for the Technology Literacy Assessment (*N*=349)

	Total Sample		Total IAI Population
	N	*%*	*%*
All Students, 40 Questions	*349*	*74.7%*	*
All Students, 35 Questions	*349*	*81.0%*	*
Semesters Completed at ECC			
None, this is first semester	91	26.2%	*
3 to 4 semesters	116	33.4%	*
5 or more semesters	89	25.6%	*
1 to 2 semesters	51	14.7%	*
Gender			
Male	149	46.1%	43.0%
Female	174	53.9%	57.0%
FT/PT Status			
Part-time	95	27.5%	25.1%
Full-time	251	72.5%	74.9%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	293	88.5%	*
ELL	39	11.5%	*
Age			
23 and younger	290	83.6%	75.1%
24 and older	56	16.4%	24.9%
Area of Study			
Career-Technical	46	14.2%	17.2%
University Transfer	277	85.8%	82.8%
Which computer platform do you use most often?			
MAC	318	91%	*
PC	30	9%	*

* Not measured on IAI population

Over the three-year baseline period, ECC students responded correctly to 75% of the technology questions in aggregate (Table 10). This assessment also included five MAC-specific questions that intended to assess specific knowledge about the MAC operating platform. Interestingly, performance on these five questions was poor, regardless of whether the student typically used a MAC platform (33% correct) or a PC platform (30% correct) for computing purposes. Removing these items, performance by characteristic is presented for the remaining 35 (non-MAC specific) questions.

Contrary to the committee's initial hypothesis, performance differs little by the number of semesters completed at ECC. Younger students (under 24) performed slightly better than older students, and full-time students perform slightly better than part-time students. Males slightly outscored females, and students with English as a primary language scored higher than ELL students. However, none of these differences were significant.

The committee has decided to reconsider this measurement and did not implement it during the 2008-2009 assessment cycle (the first cycle after the three-year baseline period). A closer

examination of the questions has led to the conclusion there is a discrepancy between the technology information competencies that are prescribed by the Assessment Plan and what this instrument actually measures. Therefore, the committee has been discussing a more authentic assessment of technology skills, including methods that measure computer-based tasks in action.

Table 11. Results of the Technology Literacy Assessment (*N*=349)

	% Correct Responses	
	N	*%*
All Students, 40 questions	**349**	**74.7%**
All Students, 35 questions	**349**	**81.0%**
Semesters Completed at ECC		
None, this is first semester	91	81.6%
1 to 2 semesters	116	81.2%
3 to 4 semesters	89	82.9%
5 or more semesters	51	78.4%
Gender		
Male	149	84.2%
Female	174	79.5%
FT/PT Status		
Part-time	95	80.5%
Full-time	251	82.1%
English as Primary Language		
Primary	293	82.8%
ELL	39	77.2%
Age		
Under 24	290	82.0%
24 and older	57	80.4%
Area of Study		
Career-Technical	46	81.7%
University Transfer	277	81.6%

Global Awareness Outcome

Over the three-year baseline period, 816 students completed the global awareness assessment questions (included in both the Technology Literacy Assessment and the Information Literacy Test). Characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 12. Only those students who completed at least one term at ECC were asked to respond, leaving 637 students in the final sample for analysis of global awareness.

Table 12. Characteristics of the Baseline Sample for the Global Awareness Assessment (*N*=637)

	Total Sample	
	N	*%*
Gender		
Male	259	42.7%
Female	347	57.3%

FT/PT Status		
Part-time	141	23.6%
Full-time	457	76.4%
English as Primary Language		
Primary	435	86.7%
ELL	67	13.3%
Age		
Under 23	546	87.1%
24 and older	81	12.9%
Area of Study		
Career-Technical	92	15.4%
University Transfer	506	84.6%
Race Ethnicity		
Asian or Pacific Islander	62	10.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.2%
Black Non-Hispanic	11	1.8%
Latino	99	16.4%
White Non-Hispanic	431	71.4%

Approximately 30% of students reported that global topics and different cultures were discussed in most or all of their ECC classes, as shown in Table 13a. Interestingly, student reports of discussions about different cultures appear to decline as their time spent at ECC increases. Students attending one to two semesters before completing the assessment report that different cultures were addressed in most or all of their classes 32% of the time. However, only 19% of students who have completed five or more semesters at ECC report discussion of different cultures in all or most of their classes. It is possible that such discussions are more salient to students who are new to ECC (and thus more likely to report them), while students who have spent more time at ECC have become "desensitized" to such discussions, making them less salient in retrospect. Another possibility is that such discussions are less frequent in upper-level courses, which would be comprised, predominantly, of those students who have completed multiple terms at ECC.

In addition to asking how frequently their courses addressed these two issues of global awareness, this assessment instrument also asked respondents how ECC courses have increased their *understanding* of global topics. As displayed in Table 13b, nearly 38% of students in the baseline sample report classes having a meaningful or significant impact on their understanding of different cultures, and 33% report the same for understanding of global topics.

Older students are significantly more likely to report a "meaningful' or "significant" impact of ECC courses on their understanding of global topics than younger students. This same pattern appears for the impact of ECC coursework on understanding of different cultures, although the difference is not significant. Interestingly, English Language Learner (ELL) students report significantly more impact of ECC courses on their understanding of different cultures and global topics than non-ELL students, suggesting that ECC's English as a Second Language (ESL) courses impart a broader understanding of cultures other than the Midwest American culture for which they are learning this second language. Very little difference was noted between males and females, full and part-time students, and transfer versus career-technical majors.

The committee also recommended examining global awareness based on a student's ethnic and racial background. Although African-American students are the least represented in the baseline group (*N*=11), they are the most likely to report a significant or meaningful impact on understanding of global topics and different cultures. Asian/Pacific Islander students are the next highest group reporting significant or meaningful impacts on the concepts. Latino and white students report similar levels of impact of ECC coursework on their understanding of different cultures and global topics.

Table 13a. Results from the Global Awareness Assessment (*N*=637)

	N	ECC courses included discussion of….	
		…Different Cultures	…Global Topics
		(% responding "most" or "all" courses)	
All Students	637	28.8%	32.7%
Semesters Completed at ECC			
1 to 2 semesters	301	31.7%	33.9%
3 to 4 semesters	222	29.5%	34.8%
5 or more semesters	114	19.4%	25.7%

Table 13b. Results from the Global Awareness Assessment, Perceived Increased Understanding (*N*=637)

	N	ECC courses increased understanding of….	
		…Different Cultures	…Global Topics
		(% responding "meaningful" or "significant" impact)	
All Students	637	37.8%	32.7%
Semesters Completed at ECC			
1 to 2 semesters	301	31.7%	26.9%
3 to 4 semesters	222	40.6%	40.0%
5 or more semesters	114	33.9%	33.6%
Gender			
Male	259	35.9%	34.1%
Female	347	38.7%	32.4%
FT/PT Status			
Part-time	141	32.6%	33.6%
Full-time	457	38.7%	32.9%
English as Primary Language			
Primary	435	39.1%	32.2%
ELL	67	52.3%	50.7%
Age			
Under 24	546	36.9%	31.0%
24 and older	81	40.3%	43.6%

Area of Study			
Career-Technical	92	37.0%	34.4%
University Transfer	506	37.3%	32.9%
Race Ethnicity			
Asian or Pacific Islander	62	45.2%	46.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0	0
Black	11	55.6%	66.7%
Latino	99	37.9%	37.1%
White	431	35.9%	21.4%

NOTE: Figures represent % responding "in a meaningful" or "in a significant way."

The pattern of student-reported frequency of global awareness discussions in ECC courses and impact of these discussions on students' understanding of these topics do not follow the hypothesized pattern when examining responses by semesters completed at the College. However, as mentioned above, it may be class discussions become less salient to students the more they are exposed to them in their courses, so a student's frame of reference frequency or impact changes as they complete more semesters. A competing, but not mutually exclusive, explanation is that students who have completed more semesters at the college have moved from very broad general education courses, where such topics have a natural fit, into the higher-level courses in their major, where the courses become more advanced and focused on content of their majors.

The College has also demonstrated a commitment to promoting diversity and living in a global society that may have had an indirect (albeit difficult to objectively measure) impact on students' understanding of different cultures and global topics. Several college-wide committees, including the MAGIC and GIST committees, are examining new ways to infuse the curriculum and student activities with a wide array of multicultural perspectives.

The Assessment Committee is relatively pleased with the assessment of students' global awareness. However, a critical review of questions used in this assessment is currently being conducted so as to provide a new or expanded set of questions that will provide a better examination of factors that comprise global awareness.

General Education Assessment: Summary and Conclusions

With the completion of the three-year baseline period of measurement of general education outcomes, the Assessment Committee has been relatively pleased with the instruments used and the data collected. It is determined to continue assessing reading, writing, math, science, and critical thinking skills outcomes in the same manner and with the same instruments.
The committee has determined that the ECC-developed instruments – Information Literacy Test, the Technology Literacy Assessment and the Global Awareness Assessment – will be revised, as explained.

At the beginning of the final year of the three-year baseline period, the Assessment Committee established three taskforces to address potential weaknesses in reading, writing and quantitative literacy that had been noted in the first two years of measurement. These groups were lead by members of the Assessment Committee and were comprised of committee and non-committee

members. Taskforces met bi-monthly, apart from the general Assessment Committee, and sought to research areas of improvement within these outcomes. In spring 2008, the groups submitted recommendations to the Assessment Committee.

In general, each taskforce recommended additional research conducted to identify student learning needs and patterns of learning exhibited by students who do not score high on placement tests in each discipline. They also recommended reinforcement of communication and feedback mechanisms so that faculty can learn more frequently how to tailor instruction to meet students' needs. Other recommendations pertain to potential new initiatives linked to the strategic plan to support instruction of developmental students. The Assessment Committee has reviewed all recommendations submitted and has identified priorities to be addressed throughout fiscal year 2010. The Committee has also identified responsible agents for which each goal may be addressed and incorporated these stakeholders into the strategic planning process.

Minimum Competencies

In their 2006 feedback report, the visiting team noted that the College was engaged in an initiative "to attack the problem of remediation head-on" (Assurance Section, p. 10). During that year, a taskforce was convened for the purpose of identifying and remediating underprepared students – a program which involved comprehensive initial assessment combined with the deployment of appropriate prerequisites for various general education courses. More specifically, the taskforce established minimum competencies for all general education courses articulated through the IAI agreement. The purpose and rationale for this policy was contained in the Academic Master Plan at that time and now resides in Goal 7 of the ECC Strategic Plan (Creating and offering programs and services that meet the emerging needs of our students).

According to the policy, and based on recommendations of the Assessment Committee, the College adopted the following minimum competencies in each of three content areas:

- Reading: A grade of C or better in RDG091, an ACT Reading score of 18 or above, OR an appropriate placement score (which currently is 80 or above on the Compass Test)

- Writing: A grade of C or better in ENG098, an ACT English score of 20 or above, OR an appropriate placement score (currently is 55 or higher on the ECC writing sample assessment).

- Math: A grade of C or better in MTH098, an ACT Math score of 23 or above, OR an appropriate placement test score on the Compass Test

For example, the Psychology department implemented reading and writing prerequisites for their PSY100 *(Introduction to Psychology)* courses, as these skills are important for success in this course. Similarly, other programs were encouraged to add their own minimum competency prerequisites to IAI courses. In addition, some programs added prerequisites to non-IAI courses when appropriate.

As of fall 2006, ECC had on record 115 IAI courses with new prerequisites. The majority of these courses added the reading and writing prerequisites, as seen in Figure 2, with math prerequisites, alone or in combination, characterizing fewer courses.

Figure 2. Distribution of Minimum Competency Prerequisites in IAI Courses
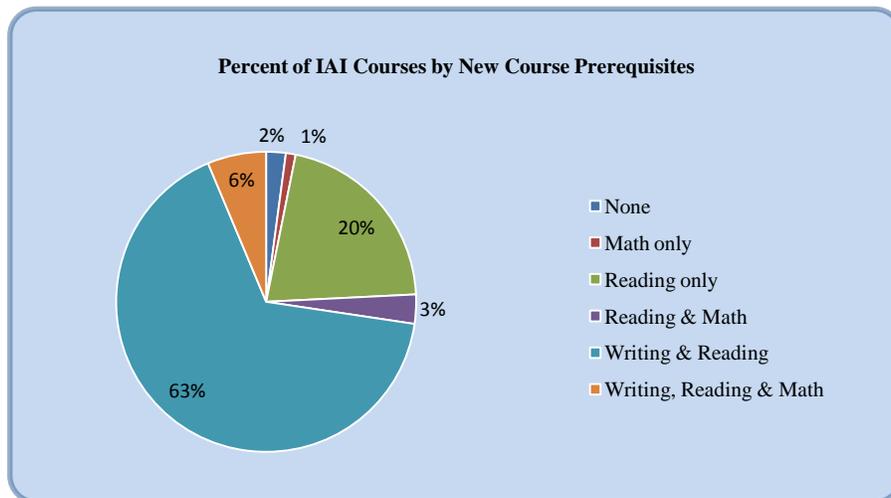
The adoption of minimum competencies was a significant shift for the College, and many on campus knew that few open-enrollment institutions had successfully instituted similar policies in the past. This concern was noted by the 2006 visiting team, who wrote:

> "This initiative is not without controversy and involves a potential reallocation of funding between regular sections and developmental sections." (Assurance Section, p. 10).

A primary concern was that the College's enrollment would be negatively impacted, and in turn, a predictive analysis was conducted by the Institutional Research office to forecast what effects this policy might create. Results suggested that IAI course enrollments might experience as much as a 20% drop in enrollment; however, additional evidence suggested a marked shift from college-level to developmental courses.

The policy was implemented in 2006. After the conclusion of the spring 2007 semester, an analysis was conducted to determine the policy's impact on enrollments during the 2006-2007 academic year. This analysis compared combined seat counts for the 2006-2007 academic year (fall and spring only) to similar combined seat counts for the 2005-2006 academic year (fall and spring only).

Enrollment was reviewed in all transfer courses and is described in Table 14. Overall, the college experienced a slight decline in transfer course enrollments of more than 900 seats (a decline of 2.9% from the 2005-2006 academic year). However, this decline was buffered by a sizable increase in student enrollments in the COL101 (*Introduction to College Success*), which was mandatory for all new students. In fact, seat count in this course grew by 859%. As expected, there was also an increase in developmental course enrollments, the largest being in

the Reading department, where enrollments grew by 164%. Developmental math and English grew by 11.6% and 7.0% respectively.

Further analysis examined the impact of the minimum competency policy on enrollments in all transfer course enrollments excluding COL101. The impact on IAI courses was much less than the 20% decline we had predicted (a 12% decline), and when non-IAI courses were analyzed separately (i.e., excluding COL101 enrollments), the effect of the decrease was even smaller (a 3% decline). Our conclusion from these analyses was that enrollments were not dramatically affected by the minimum competency policy after all. In fact, most students *did* shift from IAI courses into developmental courses when required. [7]

Table 14. Total Seat Counts in Transfer Courses, Developmental Courses and COL101 in Academic Years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007

	2005-2006 Seat Counts	2006-2007 Seat Counts	Change in Seats	
			N	%
All Transfer Courses	33,750	32,758	-922	-2.9%
COL101	120	1,151	+1,031	+859%
Developmental	3,750	4,495	+745	+19.9%
IAI college-level	20,095	17,642	-2,453	-12.2%
Non-IAI college-level (excl.COL-101)	9,785	9,470	-315	-3.2%

In the end, the minimum competencies policy had a minimal effect on enrollment. In addition, we examined two other measures thought to be correlated with minimum competencies. The first was within-semester retention (i.e., on the proportion of students who registered for a class and completed it without withdrawing), and the second was student success (as measured by grades).

First, we examined within-semester retention. Figure 3 presents the results of this analysis graphically for IAI courses, non-IAI courses, and for total transfer courses. As displayed, the retention rate for all three types of courses was higher after the minimum competencies policy was enacted (2006-2007) than it was during the year before (2005-2006), with little change across all three types of courses and little difference between years. The consistency of these findings suggest no negative impact of minimum competencies on within-semester retention, and to be certain, we plan to longer-term measures of persistence in the future, including year-to-year retention, program completion and graduation rates.

A follow-up analysis was also conducted to examine whether persistence was affected by the type of prerequisite course (e.g., reading, writing or math). For this analysis, we looked at the types of prerequisites displayed in Figure 2. We found that courses with combined writing and reading prerequisites and courses with combined reading and math prerequisites netted marginal increases in persistence (a 2.5% gain for writing and reading; a 5% gain for reading and math).

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[7] In 2007, the College had been experiencing a slight downward trend in enrollment overall, which began after 2005. For this reason, it may not be fair to assume that all observed differences in enrollment are due solely to the minimum competencies policy.

These results suggest a positive impact of the minimum competency policy, but future analysis will help pinpoint the exact nature of these observed effects.

Figure 3. Within Semester Retention in Transfer Courses (IAI and non-IAI) for Academic Years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007
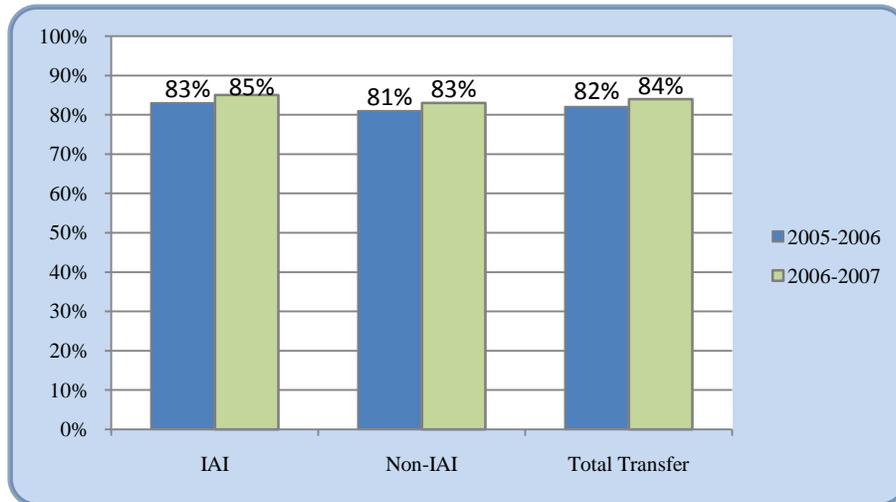
While persistence is certainly an important and worthy measure to study, we also examined whether there were any measurable effects on student success. To this end, a second set of analyses examined the effect of minimum competency policy on the proportion of students receiving grades of C or higher in transfer courses. For this analysis, aggregate levels of course success were measured for IAI, non-IAI or total transfer courses. For each comparison, we examined results collected during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years (fall & spring only). Figure 4 shows the results of this analysis. As the graph illustrates, within each year, there were no differences in regard to student success. That is, students were just as likely to receive grades of C or better regardless of having required minimum competencies or not.

A follow-up analysis was conducted to examine the effect of type of prerequisites on student success. We divided the data once more by the types of prerequisites displayed in Figure 2 (English, reading and/or math). Again, we found no significant effects by type of prerequisites between the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years; however, courses that included a math prerequisite did show a slight 4% gain.

Figure 4. Course Success in Transfer Courses (IAI and non-IAI) for Academic Years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007
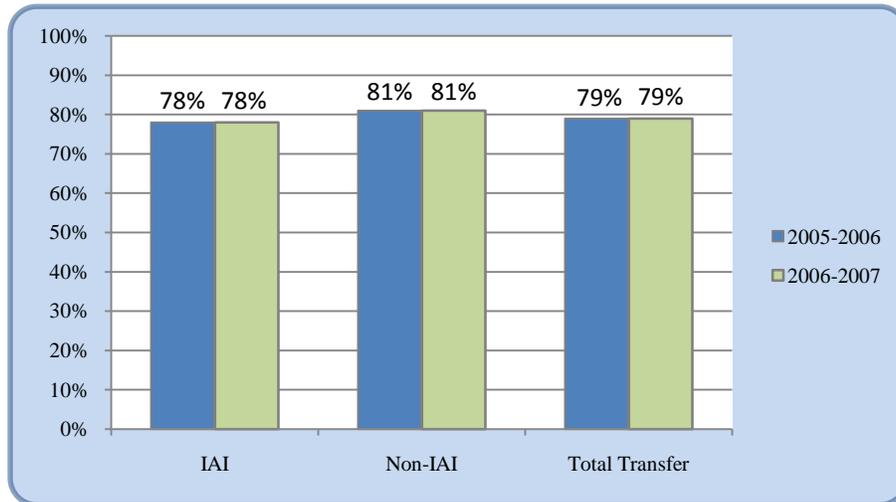
Overall, the consistency of the findings in Figure 3 and Figure 4 suggests that the minimum competency policy is helping the College. It appears to have a minimal effect on enrollment patterns and a positive effect on both within-semester persistence and on student success. As the NCA visiting team remarked after their 2006 visit:

> "The [minimum competencies] program, by avoiding the necessity of lowering standards in classes and the high failure rates of underprepared students, upholds and protects both the academic and business integrity of the institution." (Assurance Section, p. 11).

In the future, we will continue to explore data on retention and student success to yield a more complete trend analysis. We expect, for example, that within-semester retention rate will soon plateau. Additionally, we will explore students who were grandfathered out of the minimum competency requirement during the past few years and will explore efforts to target students who are at higher risk and courses with lower pass rates. A developmental taskforce has been convened and has worked in fiscal year 2008 to study retention and success patterns in developmental courses and compare results to subsequent success in college-level coursework. Other courses have added minimum competency prerequisites as well since the 2006 adoption of the policy.

Program-Level Outcomes

The program-level dimension of the assessment initiative examines students' learning in a sequence of courses taken within a discipline or career-technical program or within a Student Service area. At ECC, faculty select the discipline content areas they feel are most important to assess in consultation with advisory board members, counselors or advisors, or faculty from other disciplines or divisions. Measures for program-level outcomes may include both quantitative means (e.g., standardized tests, locally-developed tests, embedded test questions, students' papers, licensure exams or surveys) or qualitative means (e.g., portfolios, public performances, juried competitions, oral examinations or interviews) or some combination.

Each department/discipline has autonomy to select what they believe is the most appropriate means. Results are gathered by faculty and used to monitor and modify courses, programs or other parts of the curriculum. If requested, consultation and guidance is available from the Director of Outcomes Assessment. The process of program-level assessment began in fall 2005, as indicated in Table 1.

Program-Level Example

An example of program-level assessment comes from the Psychology department, which has successfully completed an assessment plan and data collection cycle, as an example of the intended program-level assessment process at ECC.

The Psychology department collected writing samples from a common assignment were collected from all 200-level psychology courses. In addition to the assignment, students were asked to indicate which of the department's courses they had previously taken. Fifty-nine valid samples were used for the analysis, and were rated by department faculty using a common rubric. The rubric asked readers to score writing samples on a scale from 1 to 3 ("insufficient", "acceptable", or "superior") on four criteria (theory and content of psychology, research methods, critical thinking and application). It was hypothesized that performance on this writing sample would be positively correlated with the number of upper-level psychology courses that students were enrolled in. More specific analysis was planned to would to determine if any individual course had a significantly greater contribution to student performance on this writing sample than others. The average scores for this assessment are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Average Scores for Criteria on Psychology Department Rubric

	Theory & Content	Research Methods	Critical Thinking	Application	Total Score (of 12)
Avg. Score	2.25	1.71	1.98	1.63	7.59

A correlation analysis confirmed that the score on each outcome, as well as the aggregate score, were significantly and positively impacted by the number of psychology courses that these students enrolled in. Additionally, a regression analysis suggested that three courses, PSY211, PSY201 and PSY215, contributed the most to variance in the total score. This was not surprising, as PSY211 has two psychology courses as a prerequisite; and PSY201 and PSY215 incorporate an empirical research project as part of the course grade.

As a result of this analysis, the department concluded that more emphasis needed to be placed on research methods and real-world applications in all psychology courses, and held department meetings with faculty to discuss methods to accomplish this. For the psychology program's next cycle of program-level assessment, begun in spring 2008, analysis will focus on whether or not these improvements were realized.

Results

To evaluate progress, the Assessment Committee developed a chart, Program Outcomes Progress Sheet (POPS), for organizing and tracking the submission and approval of outcomes. An audit of the POPS, taken in January 2008, showed that some program-level assessment reports had not been submitted, so to facilitate reporting, a workshop was held for the deans and associate deans in February 2008 to discuss the program-level assessment procedures and stress the importance of the assessment process. Deans and faculty were also asked to finalize and/or resubmit 2006-2007 program outcomes documentation through the Assistant Vice President's office in coordination with the Director of Outcomes Assessment. These efforts helped dramatically improve the response rate of program-level outcome reports over the first year. In the 2007-2008 round of program-level assessment, processes and deadlines were communicated to faculty in multiple venues, such as announcements at the College's Convocation and via email.

The resulting program-level data from the most recent audit shows marked increases in compliance with all required components. As displayed in Table 16, the number of programs having program-level outcomes approved by the Assessment Committee has increased between the years 2005-2006 to the present time. While 32 programs submitted outcomes the first year of implementation, that number has increased to 57 this year. Secondly, the number of programs having plans has also increased. Plan submissions were not required by the Assessment Committee until 2007; however, in a year's time, their numbers have increased from 17 to 29. Finally, the number of programs submitting findings reports has increased. While the rate of increase for reports is not as high as the rate for other required components, results suggest continued compliance. Reports for the current academic year are still in the process of being submitted, and we expect the total number to be higher than last year's totals.

Table 16. Distribution of Program-Level Reports and Plans by Year

	2005-2006 Academic Year	2006-2007 Academic Year	2007-2008 Academic Year	2008-2009 Academic Year
Total ECC programs	55	55	57	57
Programs with approved program-level outcomes	32	49	56	57
Programs with any program-level plans	Not required	Not required	17	29
Programs with program-level findings reports	Not required	33	37	In progress

NOTE: In 2006 and 2007, several programs submitted findings reports for vocational certificate tracks (within parent programs) which are not included in this table.

Course-Level Outcomes

The system of course-level assessment began in fall 2006 per the implementation schedule proposed by the Assessment Committee. To fulfill the course-level assessment dimension, ECC faculty members work together to determine course objectives and outcomes, the means of assessment them, and the use of assessment data to inform future programmatic or discipline developments.

Course-Level Examples

Examples of course-level assessments come from the Psychology and Paralegal programs, each of which successfully completed an assessment plan and data collection cycle.

Psychology 101. The Psychology department created a 20-question multiple-choice exam which covered the 9 mandatory content areas for PSY100 (*Introduction to Psychology*). This course-level assessment was administered during the spring 2007 semester. The department established a goal of 70% correct, in the aggregate, on this instrument for all PSY100 students. However, subsequent analysis of the data showed that only 7 of the 20 questions were answered correctly 70% or more of the time.

Departmental discussion of these results led to the realization by faculty that individual instructors emphasized different material. The department concluded that material needed to be standardized and followed more consistently by all faculty teaching the course. To that end, a new textbook and more web-based material were adopted. For this program's next round of course-level assessment, begun in spring 2008, the results will be examined by final course grade to account for any differential retention of the nine core concepts by course success. The department anticipates that overall understanding of these core psychology concepts will improve as a result of the changes implemented.

Paralegal 101. The Paralegal department developed a course portfolio to assess PAR101 *(Introduction to Legal Technology)*. The portfolio included all written assignments from the spring 2007 semester. Seven of the 36 students (19.4%) enrolled in this course in the spring 2007 semester did not receive a passing grade (A, B, or C). Investigation into the commonalities between those who were unsuccessful yielded a finding that the unsuccessful students had many more incomplete assignments in their portfolios than the successful students. Ultimately, the program concluded that poor attendance was a common factor for these students, which led to the incomplete assignments and contributed to poor performance on objective quizzes and tests.

The faculty sought to improve student participation by enhancing the PAR101 course with an online component (Desire2Learn) to provide lectures, classroom exhibits, and summary materials for students to access online. The same course-level assessment was conducted in spring 2008, and the rate of unsuccessful students had subsequently declined to only 13.6% of the students completing this course. While online enhancements to the class cannot be the only factor influencing the observed increase in student success, it does provides evidence that using an online enhancement in traditional classes is a means to further engage students in coursework. The Paralegal program plans to continue this course-level assessment to further investigate the impact, if any, of this course-level enhancement.

Results

Beginning in the fall 2006 term, course-level assessment began as each department or discipline discussed outcomes and means for measurement. At that time, each department was asked to designate faculty responsible for the development of course-level outcomes. The committee recommended that each department start course-level assessment by focusing only on courses

with the highest enrollment for the program. The Math, Reading, and English programs were also asked to include a developmental course. This general workflow continues today. During subsequent semesters, departments will identify additional courses to assess until all courses have assessed 100% of the courses in their respective programs by the scheduled program review cycle dates. As with program-level assessment, each department has autonomy to select what they believe to be the most appropriate means for assessment.

The first course-level assessment findings reports were submitted to the Assistant Vice President's office in the fall semester of 2007. As with program-level report submissions, a spring 2008 compliance audit conducted by the Director of Outcomes Assessment indicated that some programs did not submit course-level reports. The February 2008 workshop (mentioned in the section on program-level outcomes) provided guidance in this regard, helping to increase the course-level compliance rate. In the 2008-2009 academic year, processes and deadlines were communicated to faculty in multiple venues, as with the program-level assessment processes and deadlines, to improve the course-level report participation even further.

The data on course-level assessment shows success with this effort. As Table 17 shows, both course-level reports and plans have steadily increased. Programs with course reports for their highest-enrolled courses doubled in a year's time from academic year 2006-2007 to academic year 2007-2008. In 2008-2009, programs will chart a plan in which all courses will be assessed over the courses a five-year program review cycle. Even more impressive, reports for other courses have risen significantly. In 2006-2007, the number course reports collected was 19, a figure that triples to 56 by the following academic year. Finally, we have also witnessed marked increases in the plans themselves. Plans collected in 2007-2008 increased from 36 to 89 over the previous academic year. Overall, compliance and buy-in with the assessment initiative is clearly evident.

Table 17. Distribution of Course-Level Reports and Plans by Year

	2006-2007 Academic Year	2007-2008 Academic Year	2008-2009 Academic Year
Total number of highest-enrolled courses at ECC	79	79	79
Programs with reports for highest-enrolled courses	16	32	In progress
Programs with reports for other courses	19	56	In progress
Programs with course-level plans for all courses	Not required	36	89*

* Includes vocational tracks within parent programs

Integration of Assessment Phases

Upon completion of the three initial phases of the assessment initiative, the Assessment Committee is prepared to integrate all levels of assessment and its processes forthcoming. Throughout the fall 2008 semester, the Compliance and Curriculum office identified several processes to ensure that assessment outcomes continue to be reviewed and reported annually, as well as integrated to ensure consistency and relevance of identified outcomes.

One identified process is to ensure that each program or department uses the identified course-level outcomes in their master course outlines submitted and reviewed by the Curriculum

Committee. Early on in implementation of assessment, the Assessment Committee overlooked some course outcomes already in existence, resulting in duplication and, at times, inconsistencies. By requiring this simple step, all courses will have current and measureable outcomes reported both on the master course file and the assessment documentation.

Another identified process has been to create a database to collect and monitor all assessment reports and documentation. This database work in collaboration with CurricUNET, our online database that houses all curricular information, so that as programs and courses are created or revised, all required information is recorded by an originator (an assigned faculty member), approved by instructional coordinators and deans, and finally approved by Curriculum Committee. Because this database is web-based, it has eliminated all paper submissions and increased productivity.

Lastly, as these processes continue to be developed and implemented, it is evident the need for the Assessment Committee to be involved in the review of new or revised programs and/or course outcomes and program review reports, previously under the purview of the Curriculum Committee alone. In the future, as programs/departments submit proposals through CurricUNET, the Assessment Committee will review them to ensure appropriateness and measurability prior to being forwarded onto the Curriculum Committee. Because the process is web-based, these steps only minimally impact the current processes, but they will greatly impact the sustainability of the assessment initiative.

Process Improvements and Future Directions for 2009 and Beyond

As the assessment initiative continues, several additional methods have been implemented or proposed to improve communication and the collection of data. These improvements include: the development of new forms and timelines, increasing the availability of resources, creation of a database, and the development of additional workshops for faculty and staff.

Forms and Timelines

In May 2008, the Compliance and Curriculum office recognized the need to collect future assessment plans to ensure that faculty were track each subsequent academic year. The Director created an Update Status Sheet for each program and one course in each department. Header information is pre-populated with division/department/dean and instructional coordinator information. The form asked each instructional coordinator to briefly explain the program and course-level assessments that were conducted in the current year to provide a preview of what will be reported by the October deadline.

The creation of the audit report was an important step of the assessment process, and is the responsibility of the Director of Outcomes Assessment. This "status-check" has been incorporated into our standard process to serve as an early-alert system to departments needing intervening assistance. An Outcomes Assessment Project Plan form was developed to document intended measurements for the year due in October. The form also includes a mid-year progress update, due in February of each year. It is intended that this process will increase communication of deadlines as well as monitor and track programs that need assistance.

Departments are allowed to modify original measurements to emphasize the philosophy that assessment is a fluid and dynamic process. Lastly, it is the intention that by having implemented these two check-points, departments will be able to stay on track to encourage continuous improvement.

Programs that experience routine challenges with their assessment plans are now regularly receiving assistance from the Director of Outcomes Assessment. Each department instructional coordinator receives, by email copies of their audit including instructions to forward completed and signed forms to their deans' office to be filed with the Compliance and Curriculum office.

Resources

Since the development of the position of Director of Outcomes Assessment, our priority has been to enhance existing resources and develop new resources to assist faculty with the assessment initiative process. The eNet site houses resources, in addition to providing other web links for faculty to use. Examples of future resources will include an Assessment Guideline Manual and existing program and course outcomes for faculty to share.

In order to sustain committee taskforce recommendations, mini-grants will be made available for faculty to apply each year. Faculty will be encouraged to submit proposals that will address these recommendations. It is the College's intention to encourage continuous improvement by providing opportunities for faculty to research and develop new ideas that support the assessment initiative. In addition, those faculty awarded a mini-grant will be encouraged to share their proposal and its results annually at Opening Day Convocation.

In addition to maintaining existing course and program outcomes, the Director of Outcomes Assessment will attend bi-monthly curriculum committee meetings to provide guidance and oversight of the development of assessment outcomes for new courses or programs.

Database

As mentioned, the College is in the process of creating tracking systems in CurricUNET. In developing a database, additional fields were recently created to track program and course outcomes electronically through the assessment and program review module. In the future, as curriculum and courses are entered, CurricUNET will prompt faculty to enter certain required assessment fields. Once the curriculum or course revision(s) are approved by the Curriculum Committee, the stated program and/or course outcomes will be used to measure and report annually. As stated above, this process will ensure that outcomes are consistent with the master curriculum and course files to reduce duplication of effort.

Moving forward, the Assistant Vice President is in the process of developing a module to collect and monitor the annual Program Review Reports prepared for ICCB. The current process works independently of either the Curriculum Committee or Assessment Committee, but in the future, the assessment process will work in conjunction with the program review process such that programs will have amassed five years' worth of annual assessment data to integrate into their

program review reports for the state. In addition, by integrating assessment and program review data gathering cycles, we expect the quality and accuracy of data to improve significantly.

Together these two modules will simulate the current Curriculum Committee structure of approval to ensure that when programs or course outcomes are revised, they are reviewed and approved by instructional coordinators, division deans and the Director of Outcomes Assessment.

Training and Professional Development

To ensure growth and sustainability of the assessment initiative, the College supports training and professional development in a variety of ways, including recognized speakers for opening day, state and national conferences and/or workshops and internal training.

A number of process improvements are planned to improve staff and faculty understanding and skills in assessment. In 2004, we invited to campus Jeff Seybert, a renowned speaker and experienced facilitator of assessment. This forum laid a foundation for the college that transitioned into further discussion and development of the college's assessment initiative. In other years, the committee chair has been invited to present a brief update of the assessment initiative, including data and analysis of the general education outcomes. Finally, faculty and administration has also participated several staff development conferences related to assessment specifically, to reporting and communication and to the interplay between institutional research and assessment.

Secondly, throughout fiscal year 2009, the Director of Outcomes Assessment plans to enhance the training offerings for faculty in collaboration with the college's Center for Enhancement Teaching & Learning (CETL) program. CETL schedules workshops that support College goals and enhances educational growth and provides internal workshops for faculty and staff. Workshops are available free of charge to all employees, but primarily targets faculty members. At the request of the Associate Dean for Health Professions, a specific series will be planned to prepare for the upcoming National League of Nursing accreditation visit.

The Compliance and Curriculum office is continuously seeking additional opportunities to speak to college audiences about assessment. In August 2008, a 50-minute session was given to a full faculty audience to announce the new processes and forms. Custom assessment notepads and cookies were presented to make the session fun and memorable. A topical session was held again for deans in September 2008, and at the request of the Dean of Students, a similar customized session was prepared for student services leadership staff in December 2008. Two break-out sessions were held on Opening Day Convocation in January 2009 to feature faculty panelists sharing their assessment experiences with their peers. Lastly, the newly created "Assessment at ECC" is a permanent presentation for new faculty orientation held each semester.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In conclusion, the College continues its progress toward a fully mature a college-wide assessment program. Since 2006, the College has collected three years' worth of data, completed a full-cycle of the Assessment Plan's dimensions, and hired a full-time administrator to assist with operations, reporting and communication. While the dimensions will continue to be collected and analyzed annually, the Compliance and Curriculum office's plans include to finalize the integration of assessment reporting with program review in the Curriculum Committee, to refine the database to streamline paperwork, creating a repository for documentation, and to enhance existing workshops for faculty to increase knowledge and skills with regard to data collection, measurement and reporting.

PROGRESS ON RENOVATION OF THE EXISTING LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

The Renner Learning Resource Center (LRC) at ECC is a favorite place on ECC's Spartan campus. Housed inside the Student Resource Center (SRC), ECC's largest and most centrally located building, the LRC is a place where patrons are welcomed to conduct research, study and learn, and where they are always greeted by an enthusiastic and professional staff of librarians willing to provide on-the-spot training and support. At the 2006 site visit, the NCA team praised the LRC for its exceptional staff and noted how its "vast online library databases for historical and contemporary resources [are] on par with other community colleges." (Assurance Section, p. 20).

As important as the LRC is for the College, it is not without challenges. In their 2006 report, the NCA team noted serious concerns related to the future development of the LRC, noting its small size and its need to modernize facilities. For many years – indeed even at the NCA visit in 1996 – there was a growing sentiment from internal and external constituencies that the LRC is limited in its capacity to serve students and faculty. Its primary offices and learning spaces are small and overcrowded. The arrangement and flow of various service areas is confusing. Spaces are compartmentalized and uninviting to conversation or interaction. The 2006 visiting team acknowledged these limitations, noting that the LRC had potential but that it was far from becoming a state-of-the-art "information commons" for the ECC campus. While much of its collections and holdings were on par with other smaller community colleges, they were contained in an area too limiting for future growth. Indeed, the total square footage of ECC's LRC is the smallest of all other community colleges in our region – even smaller than colleges enrolling 40% fewer students than ECC (McHenry County College vs. ECC on Table 18).

In addition, while the visiting team noted the Board of Trustees' sincere interest in improving the LRC, the team also expressed concerns about vacancies in LRC leadership and an associate dean position that needed to be filled in order to give the LRC strategic direction in the future. In addition, the team noted that size and area limitations of the LRC would inhibit the growth of print and circulating collections to meet students' expectations – particularly among those students intent on transferring to 4-year institutions (Assurance Section, p. 20). In sum, changes were needed along variety of fronts -- from expanding existing materials storage spaces, to training new leadership, to increasing the LRC's print collection.

In the follow-up reports, the visiting team recommended the March 2009 focus visit and a comprehensive plan for redesigning the LRC space. To steer ECC in the right direction, the team offered several helpful recommendations, all of which revolved around creating an "all-inclusive, multi-purpose and multi-service information commons concept library for the College." (Advancement Section, p. 5). The recommendations called for a facility containing modernized research areas, interactive spaces, technology-rich study rooms, more contemporary office spaces, and storage spaces with a capacity to house ever-expanding resources and equipment. Specifically, the team suggested consideration of:

> "one place that serves several needs…information and research skill improvement areas, a flexible floor plan, expanded computing services, tutoring and out-of-the-classroom

learning/academic support services, social interactive spaces…staff and collaborative office space…IT rich group study rooms, and quiet solitary spaces conducive to contemplation and individual study" (Advancement Section, p. 5).

In the end, the team recommended significant improvements not "as piecemeal patches" but in the form of "a clear path to a comprehensive, long-term solution." (Advancement Section, p. 5).

Table 18. Renner LRC Versus Other Regional Illinois Community College Libraries

	Fall 2008 Enrollment (Reported at 10th Day)	Sq. Foot Library
Elgin Community College	9,821	17,600
Joliet Junior College	14,088	20,304
Oakton Community College	10,747	20,600
McHenry County College	5,374	22,480
Harper College	15,250	31,000
Moraine Valley Community College	17,477	35,500
College of Lake County	16,359	42,000
College of DuPage	25,668	138,000

Note: The Library Fact Sheets report LRC square footage at 18,700.
     This figure includes two restrooms and an additional closet.

Response to the Team's Comments: Overview

As of January 2009, the College has made remarkable progress in responding to concerns raised by the 2006 visiting team. The remainder of this section describes this progress in detail. In short, we describe three overlapping phases of work that have taken place since the 2006 visit. The chronology begins with a phase of gathering stakeholder perceptions and expectations of a revised LRC facility. It then moves onto description of a phase of self-inquiry and reflection on specific learning needs of ECC students and faculty. Finally, it concludes with detailed plans for an entirely new, state-of-the-art LRC, one containing modern architecture, IT-rich facilities and resources in a two-story building to be erected near the present Student Resource Center (SRC). Above all other major capital initiatives current planned, the pending construction of the new LRC has engendered much enthusiasm both on and off campus. Drawings and plans will be presented to the visiting team in March 2009 to supplement the renderings attached to this report.

Phase One: Assessing Perceptions of the Existing LRC

Planning a renovation of the LRC began years before the 2006 visit. The first phase of the process was to assess internal and external perceptions of campus improvements. Priorities were assessed and initial requests for funding were proposed back in academic year 2000-2001 (2020 Facility Plan, 2000). A request for funding was submitted to the state of Illinois that same summer which not only put ECC on the radar for capital funding from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) but helped to improve the accuracy of our long-term, multi-year budgeting. (For details, refer to the Resource Allocation Management Plan, 2006.)

By September 2006, ECC assessed employees' students' and community perceptions of campus renovations and shared the results of its 2006 Strategic Campus Plan Report, authored by Kluber, Skahan & Associates, the consultancy we hired to situate and prioritize results from the 2020 Facility Plan. The Strategic Campus Plan Report assessed the level of interest among ECC employees and Board in supporting improvements to the LRC versus other campus construction initiatives, which were tested alone or in combination with the LRC project. The LRC renovation emerged an overwhelming favorite among 28 concepts tested, garnering twice as many votes as the next-nearest initiative (Strategic Campus Plan Report, Section 4, p. 17). This report not only placed the LRC as a resounding priority, but it also catalyzed the idea of an integrated LRC solution, combining renovations to the LRC with other improvements to the Student Resource Center (SRC), which were simultaneously tested.

Phase Two: Beginning Examination and Gathering Examples

After the general need for renovation was proposed and budgetary parameters were investigated, we began a closer investigation on the work need to transform the LRC into an "information commons" concept library. In early 2007, administrators from Teaching, Learning and Student Development and Budget and Finance worked together to form the ECC Library Taskforce, a group composed of administrators from both divisions as well as support staff and faculty. At its first meeting in February 2007, the committee outlined its task:

> "To recommend an integrated interim solution to address concerns noted in the Higher Learning Commission report. The solution should address library space, collection, and access needs, academic computing needs and access, and student study space needs and access." (Library Taskforce, Meeting Minutes, February 7, 2007)

The taskforce went on to set parameters for implementation, stipulating that an interim solution should cost between $12 and $16 million in capital funds and that a formal recommendation for a Library and Academic Computing Plan should be prepared for presentation to the Board of Trustees.

At this point in the process, general planning gave way to more specific planning, as we educated ourselves by reviewing literatures from learning and library sciences, architecture and design. In addition, we began a close examination of learning behaviors exhibited by ECC students and the types of interactions engaged in by LRC personnel together with faculty and students. To begin, members of the Library Taskforce attended a training workshop Undergraduate Library Planning & Revitalization Institute in March 2007 where we were trained on the concept of an "information commons" and gained understanding of the requirements for creating this new type of student-focused, flexible learning space.

Among the lessons learned at this conference were the effects of design dynamics on social learning among students and the nature of interactions among students, faculty, librarians, technology professionals and tutors. We gained valuable insight into how intentional learning versus incidental learning both place a role in the design of physical spaces, and how design is shaped by expectations about student learning outcomes and the behaviors that result from those outcomes.

The training gained at this conference inspired the College to look at learning in new ways, as it entered this phase of planning and helped shape questions to inform the future of planning of the LRC renovation:

- What do you want to happen in the library?
- What expectations will you create through your design choices?
- How are you positioning the library within campus learning and campus life?
- How do your design choices shape a culture of learning within the library?

These questions set the stage for other actions, among them a need to survey faculty and students about their visions for a future LRC and a careful examination of the ways students learning and interact at ECC. Photos of students studying throughout campus were taken to illustrate how students were currently using non-library spaces in order to better understand what types of spaces might be incorporated into the future LRC. Visits and tours to neighboring libraries including the newly built Gail Borden Library in Elgin and the new Judson University Library, still under construction at that time. A formal summative report was given by the LRC staff to the ECC Board of Trustees later that academic year (Zera, 2007).

At that time, we also continued conversations with architects and experts specializing in library design and renovation, including Burnidge Cassell Associates (BCA), who designed the Judson Library as well as Demonica Delmuro Associates on recent project examples at Moraine Valley Community College and Morton College Library. In addition, we toured libraries out of state, including San Diego Mesa College Library and the Upjohn Library Commons at Kalamazoo College. Finally, we met with experts in physical space layout and interior design with an eye toward developing new types of flexible furnishings available for students and staff use. These visit included the NeoCon furniture exhibit in Chicago, Academic Impressions webinar on Assessing Learning Spaces and Library Renovation Planning, and Steelcase and Interiors for Business presentations on learning labs.[8] Finally, we laid plans for a future visioning survey of faculty to be conducted during the third phase of LRC planning.

In conclusion, the second phase of planning was marked by concerted efforts in information gathering and synthesis which prepared us for the more formal integration and centralization which characterized the third phase of planning.

Phase Three: Integration

In the third phase of planning, the Library Taskforce began work on integrating compiled information systematically and making recommendations to President Sam and the ECC Board of Trustees. The committee began this phase of planning by drafting a crafting the mission statement for the new LRC, emphasizing the personal enrichment that comes from guiding one's own learning:

> "Empower students to own their learning experience."

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[8] Refer to the Bibliography of Cited Works for these documents.

In addition, a vision statement was crafted to expand the learning function of the Library beyond the classroom or self-study:

> "After the classroom, it is the next place for learning."

The LRC Mission aligns well to the newly adopted ECC Strategic Plan, particularly to Goal 2 (Promoting student engagement and intentional learning) where a connection is made between "empowering students" and "intentional learning." Further, Objective 2.2 specifically mentions "redesigning physical space" and thereby reinforces our position that we look to the physical environment as a scaffold for the learning process. These statements, created from research and data gathering in the second phase of planning, were presented along with a formal report to the Board of Trustees in November 2007, and the recommendation was later adopted and formalized as a course of action.

Following formal adoption of a mission and vision for the LRC, we set to work on drawing up specific design plans. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was sent out in late December 2007 to 50 architectural firms, and a campus tour for 21 of these firms occurred in January 2008. By the end of February, all of the architects' proposals had been reviewed by the Library Taskforce, and the list of architects chosen to present to the Board of Trustees had been narrowed. Presentations by the architecture firms took place March through May 2008, and in the end, the Board of Trustees selected Burnidge Cassell Associates (BCA) as the architects for the project and Illinois Hydraulic Construction Company (IHCC) as the construction management firm. Both firms are located in the greater Elgin area.

In July 2008, BCA began a comprehensive round of interviews with 10 stakeholder groups on campus: office of the President, the Library, Student Services, the Student Life offices and Classrooms/ Computer Labs, Cafeteria and Dining, IT offices, Operations and Maintenance/Switchboard, Financial Aid, Mail Operations/Shipping & Receiving. Leading the interview groups was Dr. Scott Bennett, a consultant with BCA architects, whom we were first acquainted with at the library workshop we attended back in March 2007.

Results from these interviews were reported in an ECC report entitled *On the Vision Informing a Redesign of the Elgin Community College SRC/Library Building*. This report reached five major conclusions which helped to propel us from Mission and Vision to deployment and provided a basis for future meetings:

1. Pedagogy and learning must be the central motivations for the design of learning spaces, and in line with an understanding goals or outcomes of learning and associated behaviors that characterize it when it occurs.

2. We must invite students and faculty into the LRC through convenience, access to resources.

3. We must provide built-ins for collaboration among students, librarians, and other professional personnel.

4. We should strive to create a central focal point of entry.

5. We should make technology resources as accessible as possible.

These conclusions helped guide the drafting of official designs, which took place in late fall 2008. They clearly represent a space where learning is intentional (conclusion 1), where a central entry point is evident (conclusion 4), and where built-ins invite conversation and interaction (conclusions 2 and 3). Further, we designed a space with technology growth in mind – with ample ports for desktop and laptop computers, with computer-aided audiovisuals in tutoring and teaching rooms, and where reference databases are easily accessible via an expanded and wireless network infrastructure (conclusion 5).

Response to the Team's Comments about Materials

During the past several years and since 2006, ECC has made a concerted effort to become more evidence-driven in its decisions regarding program improvements as well as in its acquisition and selection of course books, texts and instructional materials.

First, ECC is increasingly using strategic planning to guide collection expansion. As an example, in 2008, $28,000 was given to establish collections for a new program, Radiography (Objective 7.2: Expanding health career education offerings). In fiscal year 2009, another $20,000 is given to expand collection for program undergoing five-year program reviews (Objective 1.1: Using results of assessment and program review to improve learning).

In the Assurance Section of the 2006 feedback, the NCA visiting team noted that "the print collection of circulating materials is not as deep or broad in scope as would be expected from a college library" and that:

> "Future 2+2 or other agreements with four-year institutions may exacerbate the more scholarly student's disappointment with the depth and breadth of the collection." (Assurance Section, p. 20).

Currently and since 2006, transfer agreements with four-year colleges are used to guide the strategic decisions on course books, texts and circulating materials. As agreements and guides are planned, implications about LRC collections are now raised along with negotiations on physical space requirements, credit hours and so on. The Executive Director of Compliance and Curriculum, using the CurricUNET software described in Assessment section, has been instrumental in providing data and evidence as well as advice and guidance to instructional coordinators in their ongoing work with faculty.

Secondly, and in response to Objective 7.1 (Increasing online and hybrid options for courses and programs), titles in both print and e-book form have been added to the reference collection, making these sources accessible both on and off-campus. We have increasingly transitioned paper-based reference materials to digital formats and anticipate increased record capacity of volume with the expansion and renovation of the LRC. We have witnessed a marked shift in use by students, faculty and other patrons to the use of these newly acquired online databases and the services of online tutors.

Finally, we have been more systematic in measuring the quantity and quality of searches on information databases. Satisfaction surveys administered as part of the required COL101 course shows that students are pleased with the quantity and quality of the information extracted from LRC databases as well as the overall accuracy and appropriateness of information found within them. Additional data gathered each year by the Assessment Committee comes through the use of the Information Literacy Test and shows marked increases in students' understanding and skill in database searching (e.g., ECC Performance Report).

We continue to monitor spending in this area closely and continuously make adjustments to our decisions about materials acquisition based on informed directions about student learning and program improvements. The LRC Facts Sheets from fiscal years 2005 through 2008 contains information related to spending, acquisitions, and circulation.

Table 19. LRC Materials Budget: Fiscal Years 2005-2006

Fiscal Year	Audiovisual	Books	Serials
2005-2006	$10,185.00	$ 83,774.00	$ 86,478.00
2006-2007	$10,582.00	$ 87,041.00	$120,000.00
2007-2008	$13,452.00	$142,087.00*	$129,200.00
2008-2009	$14,056.00	$122,350.00	$133,076.00

*Books for 2007-2008 include a one-year increase of $28,000 to build a collection for the Radiography program.

A Modern LRC: From Vision to Reality

Since 2006, the College's Board of Trustees and administration have been discussing costs and scope of the LRC and other construction projects planned for ECC. Working with Burnidge Cassell Association (BCA) and library specialists for the design and programming of the new space, we have outlined plans to expand the library from its current 17,600 square feet of space to 57,585 square feet – thereby putting ECC's library on par with those of other community colleges in the region. The estimated cost of LRC project, including equipment and labor, is $26 million and we expect to break ground in early 2010 for completion by the early spring 2012.[9]

With the expanded facility, we expect that our collection increase from our current 78,872 volumes to 100,000 volumes by the time we move into the new facility. Among the 78,872 volumes, 341 are periodical titles, 64 are electronic article databases, and 6,906 are non-print materials. Since 2006, the number of print periodicals has dropped by 59, while the number of non-print materials has increased significantly by 706 (ECC College Library Fact Sheets for fiscal years 2004, 2006 and 2008). With efforts made in recent years, and described previously in this report, there has been a significant increase in electronic materials (e.g., databases, e-books, etc.). In addition, tutoring services, expanded collections, and a new Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL) will be housed in the new facility to provide

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[9] Our timeline calls for designs to be finalized in early 2009, funding to be finalized in late 2009, and construction to be finalized in 2012. As is typically done in large-scale construction projects, we took an interim measure to provide workarounds for a few years until final construction is complete. In fall 2008, designers from Interiors for Business made $47,000 worth of modifications to improve workflow, to add functional furniture, to rearrange LRC stations (e.g., circulation, reference area, etc.) and to increase storage.

professional development training to faculty. Finally, we plan a concurrent renovation of the SRC building, which houses other Student Services areas such as registration, the bookstore, and financial aid. The renovation of this space will cost $24 million and to provide uninterrupted services with the LRC construction.

Three-dimensional drawings and more design details are being created presently and will be available for review in the resource room during the March 2009 visit. The designs will take into account the five conclusions reached as a result of BCA's vision interviews (summer 2008) and will include: special consideration for open space, a new "front door" for the campus, ample natural light, a two-story glass atrium, a walkway connecting the LRC to a redesigned Student Resource Center and Student Services areas – all blended with the same architectural style as the rest of ECC's campus buildings.

On January 27, 2009, after much consideration of alternative funding strategies to build the new facility, the ECC Board of Trustees voted to place a bond referendum on the ballot for the April 7, 2009 election. The measure, which asks district residents to support a tax levy of $178 million, will provide sufficient financial resources to fund the LRC renovation and other large construction projects. In anticipation, we have reorganized the library staff and leadership. Two well-respected librarians retired in late 2008, and we quickly replaced them with other equally talented professionals. We expect a new associate dean of the LRC to begin work later in 2009. Further, we hired a Distance Learning Librarian in August 2008 and have plans to hire a full-time Cataloguing Librarian next year.

Conclusion

The College has made a concerted effort to construct a brand-new Learning Resource Center. In the past three years since the last visit, a Library Taskforce has reviewed literature and consulted with experts in the field of library science and design. In particular, the group studied the feasibility of construction at the main ECC campus, the particular learning and research needs of ECC students and faculty, and conducted comparison visits to information commons libraries at other institutions. Finally, the College leadership committed contractually with architects and construction managers to begin construction of a new campus building containing a revitalized LRC.

For many years the College has envisioned a new LRC. As we celebrate our 60th anniversary and the new ECC Strategic Plan, this vision is fast becoming a reality. The LRC renovation has positively re-energized the campus and surrounding community with a promise to provide state-of-the-art services well into the future.

Timeline of Learning Resource Center Activities

TERM	KEY ACTIVITIES: 2006-2009
2006	• Funding for LRC renovation is submitted for state consideration (RAMP document). • The Strategic Campus Plan Report (Kluber Skahan & Associates) is formulated (September 2006).
Spring 2007	• The Library Taskforce attends the Undergraduate Library Planning and Revitalization Institute (March 2007). • Library staff provides report to the ECC Board of Trustees (April 2007).
Fall 2007	• The Library Taskforce provides a progress report on planning for the LRC redesign to the ECC Board of Trustees (November 2007).
Spring 2008	• The Library Taskforce begins interviewing architects for the project; five (5) firms are recommended to the President and Board. • The Board of Trustees hires Burnidge Cassell Associates as architects for the project.
Summer 2008	• Burnidge Cassell Associates conducts visioning exercises.
Fall 2008	• The Teaching, Learning and Student Development division hires Interiors for Business to reconfigure existing office spaces, workflow and storage concerns. • The community-based ENCORE team studies feedback from District 509 residents and proposes a bond referendum for funding an LRC renovation and other major capital projects.
Spring 2009	• Board adopts a resolution for issuing bonds to voters at the consolidated election in April 2009 (January 2009).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past three years, Elgin Community Colleges has engaged in meaningful actions to address the issues raised by the NCA evaluation team in their 2006 visit. Each specific action and initiative described in this report has helped to ensure the College's compliance in the three areas identified by the team:

- institutional planning and effectiveness

- assessment of student learning outcomes

- progress on renovation of the existing Library and Student Resources Center

ECC's actions have been well-focused and realistic. The campus has made a serious commitment to success in the areas of learning assessment and in the redesign and renovation of its Learning Resource Center. Neither project would have been possible without a strong and solid strategic planning process permeating all levels of the institution.

New campus leadership, strong financial stewardship and broad community support have paved the way toward progress in fulfilling the College's Mission "to improve people's lives through learning." We look forward to sharing future successes in these and other areas in 2016 when we prepare our next comprehensive self-study report for the Commission.

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