Northland Pioneer College

Strategic Planning and Accreditation Steering Committee (SPASC)

March 1, 2013

Members in attendance: Peggy Belknap, Eric Bishop, John Bremer, Paul Clark, Blaine Hatch, Kenneth Keith, Jeannie McCabe, Debra Myers, Ryan Rademacher

Advisory members in attendance: Ann Hess, Cindy Hildebrand, Jeanne Swarthout, Leslie Wasson

Guests: Colleen Readel (recorder)

I. Approval of Minutes from 2/15/2013
    a. Motion to approve by Ryan Rademacher; second by Paul Clark
        i. Unanimously approved
II. Discussion: Open Pathways
    a. Summary Team presentations
        i. The Open Pathway – Kenny Keith & Leslie Wasson
            1. New accreditation process that HLC just put into place.
            2. Background, Intro & Overview
                a. Basic idea colleges & universities get accredited on regional basis.
                b. Look at whether we are fulfilling mission effectively and delivering student learning.
                    i. HLC is the approving body
                    ii. Allows students to continue to receive financial aid
                c. Commission gives us criteria well in advance in which we will be judged. The criteria are posted on the SPASC webpage and the HLC webpage.
                d. Two elements to accreditation
                    i. Basic criteria
                        1. Are you doing what you're supposed to be doing?
                    ii. Quality Project
                        1. Something new that you have not done previously to improve the level of student access to learning.
                            a. Open Pathway
                            b. If a college has had problems they may have to do a Standard Pathway which is more regulated, but we have not had prior issues.

3. Goals of the Open Pathway
   a. College gets to pick its own Custom Project
      i. Designed to improve educational quality in some fashion.
         1. May or may not involve the classroom
         2. May involve support systems
         3. We should use what we already have. HLC is explicit about not trying to make us do some expensive project. Although they are looking for a level of commitment that includes funding.
         4. New initiatives should be fully integrated into our ongoing programs that are already delivering education excellence.
4. Why is NPC in Open Pathway?
   a. We've been good, we have a clean record. The commission loves us. There haven't been any major changes in terms of presidents.
   b. HLC believes we can do it.
   c. We don't want to rest on our laurels. We want to keep doing what we're doing.
5. Any questions on the Open Pathway?
   a. There were none.

ii. Assurance Review System – Peggy Belknap & John Bremer
   1. Open Pathway
      a. It is a 10 year process, we are in year 4.
         i. Year 4 is the assurance review.
         ii. Year 10 comes with an on-site visit.
   2. Our assurance review has two components:
      a. Assurance Argument
      b. Evidence File
   3. Assurance system
      a. The assurance argument is a document we submit through Campus Labs (that's why we think we're guinea pigs). It is a secure web-based system. We have three people assigned with access automatically: Dr. Swarthout, Blaine Hatch and Deb Myers. Our HLC staff liaison, Andrew Lootens White, also has access to the site along with other HLC staff members.
         i. We can also designate up to 12 people to upload docs to this site.
   4. Assurance argument
      a. Must be organized by the five criteria and their components.

                i. Align with our strategic plan.

      b. They no longer want huge studies.

      c. There is a maximum of 35,000 word limit

                i. The last statement in the booklet says not to "annoy" the reviewers. Whoever NPC selects to write this, they need to keep this in mind at all times.

5. Peggy asked if there were any questions.

6. Eric followed up with asking if there were any questions on the Assurance System or the Argument.

      a. He stated that this looks like PEAQ, but not having the system but the Assurance Argument is still there.

      b. Eric asked Ryan at 35,000 words, how many pages is that?

                i. Approximately 100 pages (250 words per page)

                ii. Peggy stated that's not very much considering you are responding under the criteria to each of the components.

                iii. Eric added that was a concern when we did the PEAQ Self-Study to try and keep it shorter as well. We were shooting for 100 pages, but we went a little over.

                iv. Dr. Swarthout stated it is very hard on peer reviewers to go through large documents and data is buried. Shorter format is appreciated by peer reviewers.

                v. Leslie stated that it probably needs several drafts and maybe a committee to go through to look for a tone and consistency.

                vi. Eric added that there are areas that you can link to your documents. Within the actual Assurance Argument you don't have to put everything in, you can add a link to for example: college catalog, mission statement, etc.

7. Eric asked for any other questions.

      a. There were none.

    iii. Evidence File – Paul Clark & Mark Vest (out of town)

1. The mission already has a lot of information about the college and it becomes part of the Evidence File.

      a. This is the biggest, most important part.

      b. You have to link everything together and everything has to apply to the curriculum and the core.

      c. Everything has to be easy for them. Whoever writes the argument, there has to be an addendum so they know where to look for documents in the Evidence Files.

      d. In the Argument, everything has to be linked together.

e. In order to promote more full understanding of transparency and the uploads, it has to be clear and to the point. For example, going in to a debate and not having any evidence to back up your story. Whoever ends up writing the argument is going to need to know what the evidence is so they can include that as one package. Our peers will be looking at this and will have to weed through all this information and if they become frustrated they will quit reading and form an opinion. This will be one of the biggest challenges the college has.

2. Paul asked if there were any questions.

   a. Eric stated it was very clear and the diagram does help.

3. Paul said he and Mark had a question. Since we are in the transition between year 10, are we responsible for coming up with anything for the 4 year?

   a. Leslie stated we are not required to but we are probably going to practice.

   b. Jeanne said she would like us to upload as if year 4 was going to be reviewed and then ask Andrew to look at it and make some comments that are helpful to us.

   c. Paul stated that on the timeline side of this, on the 10 year they lock the Evidence File 4 weeks before they come to the campus to the on-site, so you cannot put anything else into the Evidence File 4 weeks prior to the visit. So the question was, about the 4 year because they change the process.

   d. Eric – Yes, we technically don't have to do anything in year 4 but, we would like to be ahead of the game. It gives more time for feedback and gives it some more meaning.

   e. Paul asked when it is due then, 2019.

   f. Eric – We will have to be contributing to the evidence file but we don't have anything, besides the Quality Initiative, until later on in the term, the year 10 mark when we do the Assurance Argument and have an on-site visit.

   g. Jeanne – We don't want to wait until that hits us, we may set an arbitrary deadline for a "pilot" in the Assurance Portfolio. We're going to have a run at it including the Assurance Argument.

   h. Leslie – Plus it impresses your reviewers if you can demonstrate that you have a consistent ongoing program of gathering data and using it to improve things.

    i.   Paul – If you have 10 years to put this in, if you put information in early do you have a tendency to forget it and forget what it was about and have to redo the cycle again?

        i.   Eric feels some things you're going to want to put in naturally to collect over time like program reviews, assessments, etc. You're not going to want to get anything too close to the Assurance Argument. You build your own resource room as you go rather than have to do it all at the last minute.

        ii.   Leslie – And it's a specific set of things, you have a Portfolio sub-committee that's going help decide which pieces of evidence are going to look the most compelling, because they don't want everything you have.

        iii.   Jeanne feels we'll learn more in Chicago.

        iv.   Paul stated the "just in case" that came right out of their text that says it is not desired or permitted to just keep putting in more information.

        v.   Jeanne's last round with them was that they wanted no more than 4 but 3 or 4 evidence to a component or subcomponent. We pick our best, most compelling 3 or 4 pieces, but we also have the ability to take things out if we want to or move some stuff off to the side and say these are the pieces we're going to use to build our Assurance.

        vi.   Eric would rather be putting them in early on so that when we're ready to submit we can be in the system and look for those things and start pulling out and keeping the best ones. That way you don't forget something that you may have had earlier on. That way it's there to review before you submit.

           1.   The system is very robust, based on the description of the functionality.

        vii.   Paul asked which comes first, the argument or the evidence.

           1.   The evidence.

           2.   Leslie – We gather all the evidence, we sift through for what tells the best story and then we write that story around the evidence.

4.   Eric asked if there were any other questions.

    a.   There were none.

    iv.   Visit & Team Report – Debbie Myers & Andrew Hassard (in class)
1. HLC Team will plan on spending a day and a half – possibly longer because of our service area.
   a. They will compare the agenda with Dr. Swarthout.
   b. They will meet with the people who create the Assurance Argument, Evidence File, board and exec team, faculty, assessment teams
      i. Open forums with students, faculty, and staff
      ii. They don't want to review everything in the Argument and Evidence File; they want to see evidence of activities that support what we put in those items.
   c. After they visit, they write a report.
      i. Report will state whether we meet the core components and the criterion with concerns or without concerns or if we fail it, the same with each criterion. The criteria are met only if all the core components are met.
   d. All 5 criteria must be met to merit accreditation.
      i. They will recommend continuing accreditation with or without sanctions, or withdrawing the accreditation.
      ii. They also may restate concerns they have or give recommendations for actions.
      iii. They also evaluate our compliance with the federal compliance requirements.
      iv. They do not address the assumed practices which are integrity and learning unless there is an issue with that.
      v. They will write a report, send to us to review for errors of facts.
         1. We return it to them, they make any corrections and send the final report to the commission and the commission sends us the final report.
         2. Jeanne stated this is quite a bit different than what we have had in the past in that the findings on each component and the total criteria are met, met w/concerns or not met. It really ties the peer reviewers to some specific decision processes. If you're met, you're fine; if you're met with concerns, then there automatically certain follow up things that come into place. In other words, we can't do

what we used to do which was institutional attention needed. Institutional attention was optional for the institution.

    a. Eric – But they asked you to follow up.

    b. Jeanne – If it becomes a concern. Now, if we drop down into the "concern bucket" it is an automatic commission follow-up.

    c. Debbie – Yes, and they can require interim reports.

    d. Jeanne – Interim reports, focus visits – although they don't want to do focus visits. They can do on-notice with concerns and on-probation with concerns.

    e. Leslie – This is in response to a lot of pressure from the federal government to be more transparent and more accountable in the way that we do accreditation.

    f. Jeanne has done 3 visits in the last 14 months: 1 on notice, 1 on probation, and 1 still negotiating.

        i. It's a different environment. Very clear that you either meet or don't meet. Because if you meet with concerns, it means that there will be follow up.

        ii. The first two had tremendous commission follow up in terms of monitoring reports, focus visits and progress reports and it wasn't getting any better.

3. Leslie – We have a lot of expert level knowledge about what the commission looks at and looks for and that's really going to helps us.

4. Eric – And we've stayed informed and educated. We send a good team to HLC.

5. Jeanne – We sent a big team when we were going into the self-study. Coming out of that most colleges either drop back and don't go to

HLC or just send one or two. And our decision to continue to send a good size team and spread out and learn has made a big difference.

6. Leslie – This is a good organization in that there are a lot of people here who have knowledge of this process and can help us move forward with it.

2. Eric asked if there were any questions for either Debbie or Jeanne.

  a. There were none.

v. Quality Initiative (QI) Summary – Ryan Rademacher & Blaine Hatch

1. Two components in Open Pathway

  a. Ryan feels this is the most exciting aspect of accreditation.

  b. We are encouraged to take risks and aim high with the QI.

  c. It's not the destination but the journey and what we learn along the way.

    i. The institution proposes and completes this QI between years 5-9 of the 10-year cycle.

    ii. Focus on innovation and improvement.

    iii. Based on our goals, student needs and demographics.

      1. Design, implement & complete during 5-9.

      2. We can continue with something already in progress or we can include achievement of a longer term initiative.

    iv. One of three forms

      1. Design and propose a QI based on current concerns & goals.

      2. Choose from menu of topics.

      3. Participate in a commission facilitated program.

    v. QI Forum available in fall of 2013.

    vi. Approval from HLC

      1. 4,500 words or less (roughly 18 pages)

      2. HLC staff review

      3. Peer review

      4. HLC response letting us know if they approve or if we need to revise and resubmit, then official notification that QI has been approved.

    vii. QI report due no later than year 9

      1. Looking for seriousness of the undertaking

      2. Significance of scope

      3. Genuineness of commitment

      4. Adequate resource provision

5. Final review to HLC, it comes back, and then the institution gets a chance for a written response.

d. Blaine added thinks the timing is right for us as well particularly in the years 5-9.

e. Eric asked what happens if you do the QI and it fails, what is the impact.

   i. Ryan – HLC will ask what did you learn and why did it fail? He doesn't feel that it is a pass/fail kind of thing; it is the journey getting there.

      1. Eric – The QI can have no impact on your reaffirmation of accreditation or not. It is all based on the Assurance Argument and the Evidence File. We do it to get something out of it.

      2. Jeanne feels the main criterion is going to be genuineness of effort.

   ii. Blaine asked if the report is key, particularly if it is something that we have primarily used as a learning process and not as a success or something we are going to be implementing as we move forward. So that report will be a key aspect in particular if we don't reach our goals.

   iii. Paul asked if the commission will not look at this as a part of the accreditation.

   iv. Jeanne – It isn't a factor, theoretically in accreditation, it's the assurance review that is. But if you undertake something and you fail, because you didn't do it, it's going to have other consequences.

   v. Eric – Because you're not following the process.

   vi. Eric – We don't have to be afraid to go a little bit bigger than a basic project. Do what we need to do, even if we're not positive we can get all the way through it or get to the goal that we want. If we might fail at the end of it that's fine as long as we have learned something from it.

   vii. Leslie – This is one of those where we want to show all of our work.

   viii. Blaine thinks that it is also key that we show that we have put some resources, money, time and energy in it.

   ix. Eric – These are things institutions should to be doing anyway, so you just need to document the process a

little bit better. He sees multiple areas where we are doing things already and we can take things a little bit further that would be perfect for these sorts of things but we need to look at this as we have one big thing to do over a course of a few years what do we want to focus on.

    x. Jeanne – The other thing is we can team up with other institutions – peer institutions, high schools and universities. We can team this if we find something that we think would be really good for this institution that another institution is interested in joining in. Even if we're not on the same point on the Quality Improvement project, institutions benchmark for where they are on that project so that we could tie together.

        1. Jeanne gave an example of a joint project.

    xi. Ryan asked if it would have to be another educational institution or could it be a community development?

    xii. Jeanne feels we should stay in education but it doesn't mean you couldn't have a third partner that was a community member or business. But the main focus needs to stay with partnering with education.

  2. Eric asked if there were any questions for Ryan or Blaine.

    a. There were none.

  vi. Eric had two questions for the group.

    1. Who can summarize the Open Pathway Model from what we learned today?

      a. Ryan – It's the pathway we want to be on because we've done so well with the HLC in the past.

        i. Eric – What are the parts?

          1. Peggy

            a. There are two components, the Assurance section and the Evidence.

          2. Debbie

            a. Evaluation

            b. Visit

            c. Report

            d. Quality Initiative

    2. Eric – now that we have a better understanding the process, hope this helped with the understanding. What do we do next?

      a. Debbie – pick a Quality Initiative proposal

      b. Peggy – pick a project

       c. Eric agreed. We need to come up with ideas and see what's best and talk to the commission about it briefly.

       d. Leslie – Talk about what's feasible in terms of accomplishment and measurement.

       e. Eric – Figure out what sort of resources we would need to have.

3. Jeanne – A couple things we need to address, we need an internal timeline in terms of how we want to do the Portfolio, Assurance Review and when, because we don't have to wait for the Quality Initiative year. If we have something we want to start we can do it. Also a timeline for when we want to have the Quality Initiative project so that we know what we are working toward and the Quality Initiative project – so three timelines.

4. Eric and the other thing, collecting documents

       a. Not creating new documents for accreditation, but as you're going through certain things look at the criteria and the core components.

       b. We'll need to get information out to the college that the new criteria for accreditation have changed. New resources are coming out soon.

5. Jeanne would also like this group to think about Fall convocation

       a. Jeanne would like this group to consider doing the equivalent of what we just did. Break into teams and present to the college, so that the college begins to understand better. Also have another set of teams that informs the college of the 5 criteria.

       b. Leslie asked if she would like both the Quality Initiative and the 5 criteria.

           i. We'll think about it, but she does want to do the process as we have done here and the criteria. Whether it is a different set of teams within SPASC or bringing some people from outside of SPASC.

       c. We have a list of Quality Initiative projects that have come up through various venues across the college. 12-14 suggestions of what would make a good QI project.

           i. Triage this list and put it out to the college in Qualtrix and have the college vote on their top two in terms of moving the college forward.

           ii. Jeanne shared the suggestions:

               1. General Education Assessment

               2. Student Service Assessment

               3. Overall Institutional assessment

          a.   How do we assess ourselves as a complete service institution?

4. Imbedding information literacy more thoroughly in the curriculum and assessing information literacy
5. High school project with Blue Ridge and Holbrook – pipeline project
6. Institution provision of childcare
7. Improvements of libraries
8. Transportation of students
9. Park pipeline project with another community college
10. Implement IT service management
11. Arts & Science high school & college faculty dialogue groups

     iii. Ryan thought some items would be:

1. Getting GED programs out to the safe houses or the prison systems. Are those not appropriate for the Quality Initiative?
2. Jeanne stated it is more about quality improvement for the institution. But if you contextualize that correctly, it doesn't mean it couldn't be part of a Quality Initiative project. We just have to connect it to how it moves NPC into a quality improvement situation. Don't toss it out, rethink about how you may rephrase it differently.
3. You could link Gen Ed assessment with another institution.
4. Jeanne says think big and if it's too big we scale it back for this project or we make it an 8-year project and benchmark 4-years for the commission.

     vii. Eric asked if there was any other Open Pathway discussion.

1. There were none.

III.   HLC Multi-site Visit Information

    a. We are getting a visit the week of April 22 from an HLC representative

      i. Every 5 years they visit colleges that have multiple sites to assure that the quality of instructional delivery is similar across locations.

1. Cosmo off-site in St. Johns
2. Springerville

3. WLD off-site in Show Low
    ii. Make sure we are giving the correct level of service.
    iii. We're making travel arrangements with them right now.
    iv. Representative from South Dakota – similar type of college
  b. Peggy asked if we are assigning anyone to go with the team.
    i. Leslie stated just one person visiting, currently setting up dates when he can come. We will probably be calling on Peggy for some of that.
        1. They usually just meet with people at the locations and speak with the students and have a tour of the facilities.
        2. Peggy just wants to be sure that we notify the faculty that someone will be visiting and they do not need to prepare anything special.
    ii. Jeanne – We have a very good match in our multi-site visitor.
        1. He is used to the great distance and outdoors. He is from Black Hills, South Dakota, and used to this type of area, which will help him make this visit quick and efficient.

IV. Update: Portfolio Content Group (PCG)
  a. Leslie – PCG is going to help us identify and focus on pieces of evidence that will tell the most compelling story for HLC narrative.
    i. Leslie has gathered an inventory of reports that are already done.
        1. Address criteria
        2. Already have plenty of material, it appears that its not going to be a case of digging and finding as it is focusing and narrowing down to tell the best story that we do about what is we do.
    ii. PCG is going to meet on March 15
        1. Identify who will address which criteria and what reports they're going to look at.
        2. Define which criteria are well covered, which need more material.
        3. Ask SPASC to help decide what else might work for those criteria that are still missing.
    iii. Peggy asked if the team could see the list.
        1. Leslie stated she will send that out on Monday to the Deans and the PCG.
    iv. Leslie asked if there were any other questions.
        1. There were none.

V. Other
  a. Eric asked if there were any other topics
    i. There were none.

VI. Adjourn
  a. Motion to adjourn by Ryan Rademacher; second by Debbie Myers
    i. Unanimously approved