

Year One Peer Evaluation Report
Linfield College
McMinnville, Oregon
November 3, 2011

A confidential report of findings prepared
for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Evaluators

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| Chair | Dr. Kristine Bartanen, Academic Vice President and Dean of the University, University of Puget Sound |
| Evaluator | Dr. Michelle Janning, Associate Professor of Sociology and Assistant Dean of the Faculty, Whitman College |
| Evaluator | Mr. Richard Rubsamen, President, Sierra Nevada College |

Introduction and Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report

Linfield College's Year One Self Evaluation Report and accompanying appendices are well-organized, thorough, and clear. Especially impressive was evidence of the inclusion of a wide variety of campus constituencies in the process of drafting the Core Themes. Further, the Core Themes align very well with already-existing thoughtful institutional processes and principles, namely the Linfield Curriculum (LC) and Linfield Foundational Principles (FP). Because the Core themes stem from existing curriculum and principles, Linfield is well-situated to continue to meet the standards for accreditation by the NWCCU.

Past Recommendation

After a focused interim evaluation in April 2010, the NWCCU asked Linfield to continue work on one recommendation:

The evaluator recommends that the College complete its development and implementation of the program review plan and the efforts at assessment of student learning outcomes, with particular attention to the Linfield Curriculum and the Linfield Foundational Principles, to assure that the results of such efforts are appropriately used to guide improvement of the teaching-learning process.

Based on evidence found in both the Year One Report and accompanying appendices, Linfield College has met and completed both the development and implementation of the program review plan, thus completing work articulated within this recommendation. Specifically, on pages 2-4 of the report, the College outlines how the Foundational Principles mesh with academic majors and minors, both in terms of substance and assessment of learning outcomes. Despite disciplinary differences among majors' adherence to the three FPs, the report clearly articulates how overall assessment of the FPs occurs with thoughtful indicators that are housed within departments. Then, in the discussion of how the Linfield Curriculum is assessed, the College includes both additive and integrative, and both direct and indirect, assessment of student learning. The substantive justification for the curricular assessment, as well as the details of the processes surrounding the assessment, are clear, reasonable, and consistent with the College's mission. When the Program Review Schedule, Departmental Assessment Report template and examples, and the detailed outline of the rubrics used to assess the eight categories within the Linfield Curriculum found in the Appendices are included in this analysis, it becomes evident that Linfield is well situated to continue with its thoughtful and thorough program review plan and efforts at assessment of student learning outcomes at all levels. As mentioned above, because these processes are woven into the Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators that have been crafted for the Year One Report, Linfield is well-situated to meet the new standards for accreditation by the NWCCU. This will be particularly helpful as the College uses its efforts to guide improvement in the teaching-learning process over time.

Eligibility Requirements

The self-evaluation report documents that Linfield College meets Eligibility Requirement 2.

The self-evaluation report also affirms that the Linfield College Board of Trustees adopted the current mission statement in 2002 and adopted the Core Themes in February 2011.

Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A. Mission.

Linfield College has a clear mission statement (and a well-phrased concise mission statement) that is easily found on its website and the College Catalog. The mission statement forms the foundation for, and aligns well with, the Linfield Foundational Principles, and thus, with the Core Themes that contain these principles. Adopted in 2002, the Linfield Mission Statement guides the Linfield College Strategic Plan 2007-2012, and will guide a new strategic plan that will begin in 2012. The Core Themes will “help build a bridge between the two strategic plans and continue to provide a foundation for the interpretation of the college’s fulfillment of its mission.”

The program review and assessment processes outlined in the Year One Report will be used to interpret the fulfillment of the mission, as well as to articulate acceptable thresholds or extent of mission fulfillment. Student learning outcomes are well-publicized, assessed regularly, and understood by students, faculty, and staff members. Organized by the Core Themes, Linfield plans to assess mission fulfillment by maintaining its Linfield Curriculum assessment procedures, and by taking discipline and area specific indicators within the Core Themes together as a “dynamic whole” in order to provide a “macro view of institution-wide mission fulfillment.” Most concretely, the newly created College Planning and Budget Council will strive to be mission driven and align with strategic planning efforts. Because this committee is new, and because the Core Themes and the next strategic plan are new or in development, it will be important to look to this committee to see just how the strategic planning process is mission driven and consistent with the Core Themes.

Standard 1.B. Core Themes.

Linfield College identifies four Core Themes: Culture of Engagement and Excellence, Integrated Teaching and Learning, Global and Multicultural Understanding, and Experiential Learning. The College uses the term “overarching objective” to refer to the NWCCU’s term “objective.” These terms are used interchangeably in this document. Three of the four Core Themes stem directly from the Linfield Foundational Principles. The Core Theme discussion is organized such that the overarching objectives are listed within the categories of Linfield Curriculum, Academic Departments, Administrative Departments, and Institutional. While not all of these categories are included within each objective, it is helpful to differentiate the location of the objectives because it provides a clearer division of labor for further assessment and accreditation work than would be present if the indicators were disconnected from existing entities on campus. It also reinforces the breadth of campus constituencies who work on objectives contained within the Core Themes. Finally, each Core Theme contains a helpful discussion entitled “Mapping to the Mission Statement,” which serves to explicitly connect components within the mission statement and each core theme.

Core Theme I: Culture of Engagement and Excellence

The Core Theme “Culture of Engagement and Excellence,” which is not one of the Linfield Foundational Principles, encompasses the broadest set of overarching objectives. In brief, the three overarching objectives articulate that faculty, staff, and students develop expertise

(Objective 1), use reflection to improve and engage in life-long learning (Objective 2), and demonstrate engagement (Objective 3). The first objective (“Faculty, staff, and students continuously develop expertise in their chosen disciplines/professions”) is indicated by faculty participation and engagement in scholarly, artistic, and other professional development endeavors, staff professional development, and student success found primarily within majors. The second objective (“Faculty, staff, and students use reflection and systematic analysis to improve programs and engage in life-long learning”) is indicated by the existing and ongoing Linfield Curriculum and Major and Minor assessment procedures, evaluations of teaching effectiveness, and existing assessment techniques in administrative departments that demonstrate innovation and improvement. The third objective (“Faculty, staff, and students demonstrate engagement through their contributions to Linfield, their professional organizations, and local, regional, and global communities”) is indicated by faculty and staff leadership on and off campus, incorporation of scholarly and creative research into courses, and other campus-level sustainability and engagement efforts. This objective overlaps with Core Theme 4, Objective 3.

Core Theme II: Integrated Teaching and Learning

The Core Theme “Integrated Teaching and Learning” incorporates the College’s devotion to teaching and learning in curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and institutional programming. This integration is elaborated in three overarching objectives that center on achievement of theoretical breadth and depth within disciplines (Objective 1), articulation of principal concepts from and between disciplinary perspectives (Objective 2), and demonstration of connections between teaching and professional activity (Objective 3). The first objective (“Faculty and students demonstrate achievement of both depth and breadth of theoretical perspectives within their disciplines”) is indicated by faculty publications, students’ success in this area within major-specific measures, and student workers’ experience in the Controller’s and Budget Offices. The second objective (“Students articulate principal concepts from and relationships among multiple disciplinary perspectives and scholarly/creative traditions”) is indicated by student exemplars submitted in the LC Assessment program, students’ success in this area within major-specific measures (both disciplinary and interdisciplinary), and student participation in Library and Portland Student Affairs activities. The third objective (“Faculty, students, and staff demonstrate connections among pedagogy, scholarship/creative endeavor, and professional practice”) is indicated by students’ success in this area within major-specific measures, faculty, student, and staff participation in professional activities such as conferences and workshops, faculty participation in pedagogical development programming, and student activities within the College Activities Office and Library.

Core Theme III: Global and Multicultural Understanding

The Core Theme “Global and Multicultural Understanding” incorporates the College’s devotion to global and multicultural understanding in curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and institutional programming. This Core Theme is elaborated in three overarching objectives that center on student understanding of diversity (Objective 1), student citizenship (Objective 2), and global and multicultural experiences (Objective 3). The first objective (“Students demonstrate theoretical understanding of the role of diversity in society”) is indicated by courses, enrollments, and assessment of student learning in courses and majors and minors that are part of

the LC diversity requirements, critical reflection about diversity in the Colloquium and Connections programs, student engagement and reflection in service opportunities that relate to diversity, senior exit survey data measuring attitudes toward diversity, and institutional diversity-related programming. The second objective (“Students attain skills required for responsible citizenship”) is indicated by citizenship skills found in courses assessed in the LC program, community service projects within academic departments, student training in offices across campus, student participation in co- and extra-curricular activities devoted to diversity, intercultural understanding, and global awareness. The third objective (“Students, faculty, and staff engage in global and multicultural experiences”) is indicated by faculty and student involvement in study abroad, summer, and other course offerings related to diversity, staff awareness of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws, student attendance at multicultural events, College-funded student travel expenses, and student survey questions.

Core theme IV: Experiential Learning

The Core Theme “Experiential Learning” incorporates the College’s devotion to application of theory and knowledge to lived experience in curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and institutional programming. This integration is elaborated in three overarching objectives that center on presentation of research and creative objects (Objective 1), practical experience (Objective 2), and engaged citizenship (Objective 3). The first objective (“Faculty, students, and staff demonstrate acquisition of knowledge and skills by presenting their research and creative projects”) is indicated by institutional support and evidence of presentations and publications by faculty, students, staff, and administrators, faculty and staff evaluation processes, and number of graduates who attend graduate school. The second objective (“Students test and refine knowledge and skills through practical experiences”) is indicated by assessment procedures in the LC experiential learning component, student participation in departmental practical experiences, advising reflection essays, student workers’ experiences in on-campus offices, student co- and extra-curricular participation. The third objective (“Students demonstrate engaged citizenship through community service, service learning, and leadership experiences”) is indicated by department-level service learning and community service participation, student services offices’ reporting of student involvement in service activities, and internal and external measures of student leadership and community service.

Summary

Linfield College demonstrates both breadth and depth in the elaboration of indicators and objectives within each of its four Core Themes, and the Core Themes are well-articulated and connected to existing planning and principles at the college. Students, staff, faculty, and administrators are involved in what will serve as the eventual indication of mission fulfillment via the Core Themes.

Importantly, some of the indicators are very general (e.g., “Graduating Student Survey” or “NSSE”), and will need to be specified. Other indicators will need to be explained as to whether they are measures of the existence of certain types of programming or experiences, or evidence that programming or experiences yield certain outcomes. This will help to determine the threshold upon which success for each indicator will eventually be assessed. In addition, some indicators contain acronyms that could use elaboration for outside readers.

Linfield's collection of indicators contained within the overarching objectives within each Core Theme is extensive, in some cases referring to the entire collection of department and program indicators, and in other cases referring to a small number of departments and programs. This is likely the result of the thorough process by which campus constituencies were included in the Core Theme development (see p. 17). Because of this, one item that should be clarified is how the College uses the term "sample" to refer to its indicators (see Recommendation below). Are the lists of indicators meant to be samples in that they are representative exemplars of what *may* be used to indicate whether overarching objectives are met? Or are the lists of indicators exhaustive? Because the appendices contain indicators found at each department and program level, and because the word "sample" can be interpreted in multiple ways, it will be important to clarify precisely which indicators will be used in the Core Themes. This clarification will be more likely to yield a manageable list of indicators that are *most central* for each objective.

Recommendation

1. The evaluators recommend that Linfield College clarify its use of the term "Sample" when discussing the indicators that will serve as measures of the "Overarching Objectives" contained within each Core Theme, and adjust its list of indicators to reflect that clarification.