ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Expanding Minds - Changing Lives

Self-Study Report 2008 Addendum
A college self-study in preparation for a site evaluation by an accreditation team must necessarily at some point stop the clock, close the book, and declare that this is the state of affairs as they stand today. Of course the institution goes on working its way through the development and implementation of new projects, solving problems, and addressing new issues. Such has been the case with St. Louis Community College over the past few months. The purpose of this addendum is to identify some significant developments that have taken place since the writing of the self-study.

Permanent Chancellor

At the writing of the self-study St. Louis Community College was led by an interim chancellor and the Board of Trustees had not yet begun working on the process of advertising for and hiring a new permanent chancellor. This condition of transition created some stress within the college and in our dealings with external constituencies. Agreements were uncertain and support was hesitant as there was doubt of the permanence of leadership and the direction of the college. The St. Louis Community College seat on the League for Innovation board was non-voting until a permanent chancellor would be appointed.

Dr. Zelema Harris was named permanent chancellor at the November 2007 meeting of the Board of Trustees. The period of her contract is for three years. This appointment has provided stability and confidence in the college. Dr. Harris will be able to lead the college from a position of strength and stability and with the assurance that she will have the support of the Board and the time to develop initiatives both within the college and with external groups. Further, the Board of Trustees through this action has taken a united position in support of the new chancellor.

Board Relations and Effectiveness

When the self-study was written there were issues related to the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees both in their internal relations and in their interaction with the college administration. The Board was unable to elect new officers at the beginning of the year as the vote was split for positions of both president of the Board and vice president. There were disagreements on procedure during meetings.

Beginning this fall the Board of Trustees has committed to a series of quarterly workshops focusing on improving Board relations and effectiveness. Two retreats
have been conducted with positive results. Board members have agreed that these workshops have been productive. Board of Trustees business is running more smoothly and productively.

Strategic Planning

At the writing of the self-study strategic planning at St. Louis Community College was at the end of a cycle and there was no process in place to carry it forward or open a new phase in the planning process. There was little apparent attention to developing a comprehensive strategic plan. The previous planning was initiated more than four years ago and was coordinated by a retired faculty member on a part-time basis. Although forums for discussion of planning directions had been held, there was no suggested action as a result of the forums.

Chancellor Harris secured Board support to engage a planning consultant to work with a newly created internal strategic planning team. The college has done an analysis of significant data and information on our present state and has shared that with the consultant. The consultant has visited the college and met with the Leadership Team to discuss next steps. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning has been collecting and sharing information with the consultant since the visit in November. A second visit is planned for February. The college has begun to engage in the development of a new process and the creation of a new strategic plan.

Enrollment Management

St. Louis Community College has followed a trend of declining enrollment over the past several years. Although efforts at each of the campuses have attempted to increase enrollment, the college has not been able to engage effectively in enrollment growth. Often the campus recruiters appear to act in competition with one another. There has been little coordinated effort at recruitment. The college has purchased the Banner recruitment module, but has never implemented it.

Chancellor Harris received approval from the Board to contract with Noel-Levitz to consult with the college on enrollment management. Two consultants reviewed enrollment trend data and environmental information from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. The consultants visited each campus and met with campus presidents’ cabinets and recruiters. We held a morning-long college joint cabinet meeting in December at which the consultants presented
their findings and we discussed next steps.

The college created the new position of Director of Enrollment Management during the fall semester and has hired Dr. Joanie Friend in that position. The Board approved hiring Dr. Friend at the December meeting. She will begin work January 18. During the spring the college will staff the office and support her enrollment management efforts through an Enrollment Management Advisory Committee.

**Faculty Evaluation**

Faculty evaluation was identified as an issue in the self-study. Although a task force had worked on a new process for faculty evaluation beginning in 1998 and continuing through a pilot in 2003, the evaluation plan was never implemented. There was much divisiveness and acrimony associated with the proposed process and when the chancellor decided to hold on implementation, some faculty and staff members who had invested much time, effort, and political capital were dismayed that their efforts did not lead to meaningful change. The faculty evaluation process had not been revisited since 2003.

Chancellor Harris announced in both CIAC and CAC, the two arms of formal governance of the college, that the college would take up faculty evaluation immediately. The chancellor and the vice chancellor for education will meet with the executive committee of the faculty union to begin discussions on process in early January.

**Distance Learning**

Through the self-study process for the substantive change request to offer complete programs of study on-line, the college identified shortcomings in support of distance learning. Although several task forces and committees have discussed on-line delivery over the past ten years, there still remain many issues that need to be improved. In addition to faculty training and evaluation of instruction, the whole area of student support services could be improved.

A committee of faculty and administrators met during the past year and began work on a Distance Learning Handbook that outlines a systematic support, evaluation, and development program for on-line instruction. The academic deans developed a position paper on next steps in distance learning. The presidents and academic vice presidents have met several times this fall
and have established direction on distance learning. Restructuring has been announced and the presidents and vice presidents will meet during the spring along with a reconstituted distance learning task force to continue planning for a comprehensive distance learning program.

Dark Fiber Replacement

For years St. Louis Community College has enjoyed a very economical lease arrangement to access a large bandwidth of high speed telecommunications. That lease will come to an end in January 2009. The dark fiber has supported synchronous telecourses and joint teleconferences for students and staff. Replacement of the same level of infrastructure is prohibitively expensive. In Fall 2007 the college Leadership Team decided to end offering interactive television courses by summer 2008. Some ITV courses will continue where facilities allow direct connection to the Internet and bypass Video Master Control.

Through the TESS Steering Committee and the faculty committee advisory group the college will explore alternatives to high bandwidth instructional delivery.

Banner Recruitment Module

Technical implementation of the Banner Recruitment Module is complete and available for functional use and testing. However, functional implementation was postponed for several reasons. First, the College decided that implementation of the admissions module was a higher priority and needed to precede implementation of the recruitment module. The admissions module is expected to go-live in March 2008. Second, a district-wide communications plan integral to the effective use of the module needs to be developed. And finally, the person responsible for planning and coordinating recruiting activities district-wide needs to be on-board and involved in the functional implementation. During the interim period, campus based recruitment personnel have been learning the system and evaluating its functionality. Campus based personnel have access to the recruitment module and are planning to use its functionality on a limited pilot basis to familiarize themselves with the system in the Spring of 2008.

Focus on the Future Fridays

In mid October as the self-study document was nearing final review and publication, the HLC Steering Committee initiated a series of open forums at
HLC Self-Study

Each campus and at the Cosand Center to discuss the self-study and how the college should make use of the findings. Attendance at these forums averaged about 40 persons at each meeting. During the sessions members were asked to choose one of the HLC criteria and meet in round table discussions focusing on that criterion. They were provided a list of strengths and challenges from the Executive Summary of the self-study and asked to identify one or two highly important issues and then to brainstorm how the college might address the challenges or increase the strengths. The process was then repeated with participants choosing a different criterion.

The Steering Committee feels this activity has been very productive. Notes from each criterion have been recorded and analyzed. They will be forwarded to the strategic planning task force and to other planning bodies. This effort has taken the initial step to assure that the self-study process continues and that the college benefits from its engagement in the PEAQ self-study.

VSP

The college offered a Voluntary Separation Plan to faculty and staff who met certain criteria on longevity. Health insurance or monetary incentives were offered to those who chose to leave during June or December 2007. One hundred eighteen college employees chose to participate in the VSP. The results have been positive.

In addition to the fiscal savings, the college has been able to reallocate human resources to a much greater degree than through the normal retirement cycle. Faculty and staff lines have been moved from areas and campuses where there was less need to those where there was greater. The Wildwood campus as an example has been able to increase staffing as a result. Through this opportunity the college has been able to address structural staffing in an efficient and effective manner.

Stability in Leadership

At the writing of the self-study there was not only the interim position of chancellor, but there was a newly hired president at Meramec and an acting president at Wildwood. Dr. Paul Pai was hired as president at Meramec in August and Pam McIntyre has been selected as president at Wildwood. Pam will be recommended to the Board as the Wildwood President at its January 17th meeting. St. Louis Community College now has all eight college officer positions
filled with permanent appointments. This action provides the college with experienced and stable leadership as we move into the future.

**Assessment Council**

The self-study identifies the work of the Assessment Council and the introduction of Mission-based Assessment. Although the fully active program had only been through one cycle at the time of the writing of the self-study, we now can demonstrate the continuing success of the program and the broad support of its activities. At the end of the first year’s activities each unit or subcommittee issued a report. The chancellor agreed to support one of the recommendations with a $50,000 grant for the 2008 academic year. This support demonstrated the value of the activity and the level of commitment to continuing the program.

St. Louis Community College has taken the self-study process very seriously. It has been a bottom up, grass roots process involving a large number of participants. The college has learned a great deal about itself and has discovered its strengths along with developing new goals to meet our challenges. This addendum demonstrates that we are making good use of the self-study process and the product of that self-study. While the Self-study document is an accurate portrait of the college, it is clear that we continue to advance and improve.