Honolulu Community College Closes the Loop

Closing the Loop—improvement-oriented planning and action in response to careful assessment—has increasingly framed the College’s efforts to embody its vision of being a student-centered, student-focused institution of post-secondary education. The College understands this process as a dynamic one—not a closed circle, but a spiral of meaningful growth and continuing improvement of the quality of student learning. In addition to addressing the recommendations received as a result of the College’s Self-Evaluation Report and accreditation visit in 2012, the College feels it is important to highlight the ways in which this paradigm of assessment and responsive action is increasingly embedded in the structure and the functions of the College.

Closing the Loop: Remedial Education

The Community Colleges collectively joined the Achieving the Dream initiative in 2008. That required colleges to begin building a process of evaluating student success within a culture of evidence. As part of that initiative, the College began to closely evaluate the success of remedial and developmental education. At the outset, the lowest level of completion for developmental education was 20%. As a result of the involvement of the English faculty resulted in a complete redesign of the curriculum by focusing on reading and writing as parts of an essential skills base for underprepared students. Included in the redesign is the incorporation of technology resources as learning and assessment tools. Similarly, the Math faculty also overhauled the remedial math curriculum in line with successful college models. The incorporation of technology into this curriculum has also been essential to assessment and evaluation of student learning. Assessment of both the English and Math is now in the process of being refined, and becoming integrated into the campus dialogue around student success. Part of the change linked to assessing student performance was the creation of HCCP #5.101, Policy on Student Placement Testing and Developmental Education Class Assignments. The purpose of the policy is to identify those incoming students who are required to participate in the college placement testing process and to determine, if necessary, their appropriate placement in the established developmental reading, writing, and mathematics curricula. As a result of these changes, the college was able to close the loop and celebrate success for the College, as we are tied for the highest success level in the system for developmental writing, and now have the highest success rates for Native Hawaiian students in college level math.

Closing the Loop: Organizational Structure

As a result of an assessment of college operations, a major reorganization occurred for the College in Fall 2012. Prior to the approval of the reorganization plan, a year was spent meeting with each department and academic unit to determine structural barriers as well as areas of improvement that could be implemented to ensure organizational effectiveness.

Over time, and unintentionally, some areas of the College had created an environment that was not fully responsive to the needs of today’s students, and an organizational structure that did not allow the campus to work at a high level of efficiency.
Reorganization was experienced in two key ways: structural changes that meant the College would be better prepared to serve students; and an attitudinal commitment to creating a student-centered, student-focused culture. The implementation of various aspects of reorganization have slowly taken place over the last academic year (2012-2013), resulting in these changes:

**Creation of a Retention Office:** Four positions were reallocated from other areas to focus on student success initiatives not currently underway in a unit entitled the Retention Office. Also included in this structure is the assignment of a Student Success Coordinator to function like a division chair and work campus-wide around the discussion of student success. Closing the loop activities and indicators of success include, for example, reaching out to students. During the summer of 2013, retention personnel called all the students who completed Spring 2013 but did not re-enroll for Fall 2013; outreach calls and emails were made to 995 students, and the Retention Office was successful in getting 383 of them to reenroll for Fall 2013.

**Dean of Academic Support Office:** Two other positions were reallocated and used to support an administrative office entitled Academic Support. This new administrative dean will assist in coordinating all aspects of academic support, including assessment, program review, and student success initiatives.

**Consolidation of non-credit activities:** The campus previously organized its non-credit activities under each academic unit. This resulted in inefficiencies and lost productivity. All non-credit activities are now the responsibility of the Director of the Pacific Center for Advanced Technology Training and Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Creation of the Admission and Records office:** Prior to the reorganization, records and admissions reported separately to two different administrators. This consolidation also allows for better control, productivity, and flow of student information.

**Creation of an academic division of Hawaiian Programs:** The re-organization clustered all of the Hawaiian studies, Hawaiian language and Native Hawaiian Center services under one academic unit, within University College, the campus’ liberal arts program. This illustrates the importance of the campus’ efforts to build more enrollment and graduates of these programs.

**Redevelopment of Financial Aid:** Not a formal part of the re-organization, but important to the campus, it had become apparent that our Financial Aid office was dealing with major procedural issues. Over the past few years the University of Hawai‘i Community Colleges have undergone a significant transition in the area of Financial Aid. In order to boost the amount of aid awarded a systemized approach was used. This approach has meant that several key functions of the awarding process have moved from the campus to the system level. Although the system had begun to utilize more automated practices related to the awarding of aid, the College was not actively adopting those practices. In an effort to improve our students’ chances for success, the College began to rebuild the office with the help of UH system financial aid experts. The result has allowed the
college to award aid in a matter of days, rather than 3-4 months. As evidence of success, the college had disbursed $543,175 by the beginning of Fall 2012. After making the necessary changes, the college has disbursed $2,018,919 by the beginning of Fall 2013—a 272% increase in disbursement. The college will continue to monitor this progress, and will continue to work in collaboration with the system staff to further improve processes and communication to students.

Closing the Loop: Outreach and Orientation
In response to declining enrollments from specific groups such as high school students, an Outreach Office was created in the summer of 2012. The purpose of this office was to refocus efforts in creating relationships with the surrounding community and high schools, and in recruiting new students to the college. In November 2012, the then-new Dean of Student Services added the function of new student orientation to the office functions, thus creating an Outreach & Orientation Office. Prior to this, orientation had been housed with a committee that had a rotating chair. By adding this function into the outreach area, the college has provided a consistency of leadership and a strong tie with incoming students. The Outreach & Orientation Office will continue to improve services by focusing on two things. First is a revamp of the orientation process, which aims to make the process easier for students and bring more of the orientation components to the local high schools. Second, the office will work in conjunction with the Dean of Students to update and refocus the college’s recruitment plan. This plan will focus on high schools, and have built-in goals and assessments in order to increase our high school-aged population.

Closing the Loop: Academic Support
Another component of the College’s reorganization was the creation of a new administrative position, the Dean of Academic Support; this position was filled on a permanent basis in early August, 2013. Prior to this, faculty and staff in the various units that comprise Academic Support participated in campus-wide workshops on the development and assessment of Service Area Outcomes (SAOs.) This will facilitate both Annual Review and Comprehensive Program Review; all units are modifying survey instruments and other assessment tools to reflect changes made to SAOs.

Of particular importance is the newly developed Student Success Department—tasked with rolling out services related to retention, engagement, and persistence. Programs included in this department are: Retention, Testing and Tutoring, and TRIO-SSS, overseen by a Student Success Coordinator. The goals of the Department are to (1) increase student retention through direct and intrusive services aimed that are both proactive and supportive; (2) actively collaborate with all departments/divisions across our campus to increase student engagement through cross-divisonal programing and support (development of workshops, classes, student engagement events); (3) promotion of placement testing brush-up; (4) expanding tutoring services (including peer mentor tutoring); and (5) having TRIO-SSS and the Retention Department work closely together to coordinate service needs, thus expanding services to students.

As noted in the response to Recommendation No. 3, we have successfully completed the development of the Distance Education Strategic Plan, and will continue to work on
formalizing the process and procedures as stated in the Plan. Support provided by various elements of Academic Support is integral to the success of Distance Education at the College. At this point in time, Distance Education office has: (1) conducted two Town Hall meetings (one to give the campus an update on DE, and the second to provide an opportunity for comment and feedback on the new Distance Education Strategic Plan); (2) developed and conducted a mandatory workshop for faculty who are teaching Distance Education Classes; (3) modification of the Distance Education website to make it more student- and faculty-friendly; and (4) created a “services to students” tab/page in Laulima (UH’s course management platform) for students to have easy access to services. The Distance Education Coordinator will continue to work directly with the Deans, Division Chairs, and faculty teaching DE courses regarding assessment of those courses. The Deans who oversee the divisions/departments of each DE course will need to ensure faculty members are complying with assessment procedures. Additionally, the Education Technology Department (which manages Distance Education) will be working on reaching out to faculty to support classroom-related activities with technology as a means to expand Distance Education offerings.

Other Departments in the Academic Support Division have been relatively stable (Disability Services, Policy Planning and Institutional Research, Library, Design Center) with only minor changes to programs, operations and outcomes.

**Closing the Loop: Assessment Training and Follow-Up**

While the College has functioned effectively in the context of instructional assessment, it was important to extend that understanding and embrace of assessment in the context of non-instructional units of the campus. To address that need, the Chancellor engaged the services of an external consultant in Spring 2013 to provide guidance to the campus at large and to develop a common language and understanding for outcomes-based assessment. The College selected a provider that utilized assessment practices based on those developed by Ruth Stiehl. The three-day workshop in April 2013 provided a transformative experience for the campus, as faculty, staff and administrators worked side by side to address issues of assessment, from developing robust SLOs (or SAOs) to considering the best means to assess those outcomes and plan for improvement.

As a follow-up to the workshop, all faculty were asked to complete a form that would allow them to identify course-level SLOs, alignment with program learning outcomes (PLOs), methods of assessment, and data gathered that would contribute to “closing the loop” in terms of continuous improvement. A summary of course-level actions made in early Fall 2013 indicated that almost all faculty had completed the SLO inventory forms for active courses and are in the process of gathering data that will aid them in completing assessment activities. Follow-up activities include Deans working with programs in their division, as well as individual peer-mentoring activities with faculty members.

The campus-wide effort to look at assessment activities, applied to both instructional and non-instructional areas, has resulted in a common focus and shared concern with improving services to students linked to specific and measurable outcomes. The College
has moved from a climate where some areas were doing assessment well to an institutional focus on assessment as part of the general culture of the College. As one of the manifestations of that shift in focus, the College is developing a multi-year Assessment and Planning Calendar so that various assessment-related activities are more readily identified and given priority.

**Closing the Loop: Campus Communication**

In early 2012, through small- and large-group discussions, it was determined that communication in the Administrative Services division needed improvement. The campus community asked that the communication sent from Administrative Services to students and employees regarding campus operations (i.e., construction, traffic, closures, etc.) occur more frequently. As a result, a portion of the college intranet was designated for construction and operations updates. In addition, weekly, sometimes daily, emails are sent to the campus to keep everyone abreast of various facilities-related issues that may impact building and campus users. Another area of communication that required improvement was the internal communication between Administrative Services employees. Several people voiced concern that communication between Administrative Services units was non-existent. To address this issue Administrative Services supervisor’s meetings were scheduled once a month, and during certain portions of the year increase to every other week. Both changes came as a result of employee and student feedback, and have helped to improve coordination.

**Closing the Loop: Safety and Security**

In 2012 the campus instituted a new incident reporting software system. Prior to its implementation, all incident reports were recorded by hand on paper, and a paper filing system was maintained. Although the campus is required to keep certain documents in hard copy form for seven years, the vast majority of paperwork is now done electronically in the web-based Report Exec software system.

**Closing the Loop: High School Transition**

As part of the Community Colleges Strategic Plan, the community college system has been tracking the high school “going rate.” This is defined as recent high school graduates entering fall semester at the community college following their spring graduation from high school. The overall community college system has been able to meet the annual goals. However, Honolulu Community College declined in the high school going rate over the past four years beginning in 2009 and has not met the established goal. *(VPCC campus visit 2013.)*

To address this decline, the campus has increased its activities with the high school campuses. The Dean of Student Services identified an outreach counselor. Summer bridge programs were established to target high school students. These programs were designed to introduce high school students to the various programs at Honolulu Community College, and to develop a relationship with participating student, parents, and
high school counselors. The belief was that familiarity with the campus would translate to a smoother transition to Honolulu Community College for students.

Honolulu Community College has established and implemented three summer high school programs. The Automotive Academy is a six-week program from public high schools throughout the island of Oahu. Students receive college credit through instruction at the College and through an internship at a local dealership. This program could not be successful without our partnerships with the local First Hawaiian Bank and local Cutter Dealerships.

Honolulu Community College received a P-20 grant for the past two summers to implement a Summer Engineering Academy. This past summer over fifty high school students attended a 6-week program on campus. Students rotated between three modules designed to explore mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering. The program also hosted thirty middle school students for a one-day hands-on field trip.

Construction Academy’s 2012 Summer Program afforded 63 high school students from various public, charter school, and private high schools on O‘ahu the opportunity to learn about the construction industry. Of these students, 30 (47.6%) were 2012 high school graduates; 9 students (14.3%) were female; 21 students (33.3%) were Native Hawaiian. Eighty-three percent (25 students) of the program participants who recently graduated in 2012 were admitted into the University of Hawai‘i System during the Fall 2012 semester; of the students who matriculated into the University of Hawai‘i System, 67% (20 students) were admitted to Honolulu Community College.

Closing the Loop: Redefining General Education for Career-Technical Programs
In response to ACCJC’s recommendation regarding Honolulu Community College’s general education requirements for all associate degree programs, the College moved immediately to address this concern. Through on-going campus-wide dialogue and unified work efforts with major governing bodies, HCC’s policy on general education was modified and approved in April 2013 (HCCP #5.213.) Specific language was included to clarify that the general education components for all associate degrees must be at the “college level.” College level has been defined as 100-level and transferable. In addition, the College has established a Career and Technical General Education Board to establish parameters and a thorough review process to certify general education courses specific to each associate degree program. Most importantly, faculty from both CTE and Liberal Arts received funding from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to develop and implement appropriate curriculum that meet the new requirements.

As noted above, many associate degrees have been impacted and have positively responded to making the necessary curricular changes. To ensure the College continues to strengthen students’ general education skill sets, five courses are in the process of being developed, funded through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. These include courses in Math, Science, English, and Philosophy. Throughout the process, CTE and Liberal Arts faculty met to discuss specific program needs and have taken appropriate action to develop program-specific general education curriculum.
Subsequent implementation and related curriculum action will continue throughout the 2013-2014 academic year. Faculty will also work with college counselors and CTE program leaders to inform them of these course options for general education.

Below is a brief description of each project funded through Perkins, the amount of money received, and the semester of implementation. Specific proposals can also be found in the appendix.

*Table 1.1*

*Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act 2013-2014 HonCC Awards*

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<th>Strategy Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy 109: Reasoning and Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Philosophy/Tech. 1</td>
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<td>Spring 2014</td>
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<td>CTE Gen. Ed. Accelerated English 60/100</td>
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<td>College-Level Physics for Automotive, Electrical Installation and Maintenance, Metallurgy, and Fire Science Students</td>
<td>Physics/Tech. 1</td>
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**Closing the Loop: Student Success in Distance Education**

Preliminary data from the college’s institutional research office indicated lower success and higher withdrawal rates for students in DE courses versus face-to-face courses. To address these disparities, the Distance Education Coordinator and other staff members implemented the following:

1. Administered a survey to DE students to better ascertain the obstacles to their success in DE courses;
2. Planned and directed a formal campus-wide dialogue (via Town Hall) that presented faculty and staff with these data, and solicited ideas for college assistance and intervention to assist students, change processes;
3. Directed the College’s Retention Office to pay particular attention to DE students in their outreach efforts during the summer (Retention Office contacted students who had not re-registered for Fall 2013 courses and assisted them as appropriate. This effort was highly successful and resulted in about 400 re-registrations);
4. Developed new ways to better build greater community and “buy-in” in DE courses with respect to student identification with, and sense of belonging to, the college campus. Efforts have focused on social media and web resources. Further areas of research and assessment include a look at other characteristics that might separate successful from unsuccessful DE students in terms of place of residence, year in program, and other courses being taken concurrently. PPIR can do further analysis of data to see if there are patterns that indicate possible college follow-up to improve likelihood of student success. Such information would be helpful to counselors, instructors, and students by indicating potentially difficult combinations of courses, or time/format challenges.

Closing the Loop: Support for Distance Education Faculty
General feedback and Town Hall discussion indicated greater need for flexible faculty development and training opportunities for technical aspects of distance education and course development, particularly in light of impending unavailability of classrooms in Spring 2014 due to Building 7 renovation. To address these concerns, the Distance Education Coordinator

1. Negotiated a special arrangement with DE support resources at Kapiʻolani Community College to offer: (1) large group presentation on DE support resources and instruction available; (2) free participation in an online course that is designed to take instructors through entire process of DE course development, offered in summer 2013 in preparation for upcoming semesters;
2. Organized a mandatory orientation held on August 21, 2013, for all faculty teaching DE courses in Fall 2013. Orientation covered key technical and resource issues, and also encouraged intra-faculty dialogue on best practices and tips;
3. Organized DE faculty training sessions planned for September 2013, responding to faculty request for more flexible scheduling of DE training to accommodate class schedules.

4. Closing the Loop: Resources for Distance Education Students
Campus Town Hall discussion indicated a greater need for clearly identifiable, consolidated, and easily accessible online resources for DE students. To address that need, the College is supporting the following:

1. Student Services is taking the lead in ensuring that DE support services are accessible and “packaged” in a convenient way for DE students. The Dean of Academic Support has already taken a leadership role in consolidating and improving DE support services, including information access on the web to both HCC and UH system DE resources;
2. A Laulima (official UH course management system) page has been designed and implemented, which automatically appears for all DE students. This page includes information and links that are helpful to DE students.

Closing the Loop: HCConnect
HCConnect, a social networking site for the campus community, addresses both retention/course engagement issues as well as technical issues (e.g., how to upload video to share with others). Expansion of HCConnect was discussed as a good way to improve
students’ DE experience (and all students’ experience) and create a greater sense of HCC’s online community. This discussion began in Spring 2012, and will continue in the current academic year.

Closing the Loop: Use of Social Media
For the always “connected” generation, hand held devices and constant communications are normal. The Millennial generation will most likely have a smart phone or handheld device with which to communicate, and send/receive upwards of 50 text messages a day (according to recent Nielsen Report.) They will have a Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other social media networking account in which to stay connected to their friends and favorites. To promote the good work of the college, Honolulu Community College has built a social media strategy using the following social media outlets: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Word Press blog (The Water Blog), NING (HCConnect), and a campus mobile app. In Spring 2012, a Social Media Strategic Plan was created to differentiate goals, reach, content and audience to best leverage social media as open and free communication between the campus and its stakeholders.

Closing the Loop: Continuing Education (non-credit customers)
For several years the limitations of the Non-Credit registration system at Honolulu Community College (HCC) have been evident, including the inability to handle on-line registrations and having limited access to data reports. The college had already moved to a University-wide on-line registration system for our customers taking credit classes. Through a lengthy Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the Destiny One registration system, provided by Destiny Solutions, was selected as the new University of Hawai’i Community Colleges (UHCC) non-credit registration system with a Go-Live date of November 25, 2013. Destiny One provides a rich online experience that improves student self-service while maximizing staff efficiency. It includes an on-line shopping cart and multiple registration and payment options that streamline registration processes and improve customer satisfaction. Up-to-the-minute data allows staff to quickly respond to inquiries, saving valuable time and work effort. HCC has closed the loop for our customers expecting web-based equivalents for in-person transactions by supporting the acquisition of a UHCC-wide registration system.