Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

Bates Technical College

Tacoma, Washington

October 2011

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

Roster of Evaluators ...................................................................................................................................... 3

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 4

Assessment of the Institution’s Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials ........................................... 4

Report on Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report ................................. 4

Progress Since the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report ............................................................ 5

Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 ................................................................. 6

Chapter One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations ........................................................................... 7

  Standard 1.A Mission ................................................................................................................................. 7

  Standard 1.B Core Themes ..................................................................................................................... 8

Summary ..................................................................................................................................................... 10

Recommendations ................................................................................................................................... 11
Roster of Evaluators

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Introduction

Bates Technical College is a public, two-year technical college located in Tacoma, Washington. In 2010-2011, the College served a diverse student population enrolling over 11,600 students in all instructional areas in 2010-11. This included over 9,000 enrollments (unduplicated) in state-supported courses and almost 2,500 in student-funded, continuing education, or contract courses. The College’s main campus is located in downtown Tacoma, with a second campus in South Tacoma, and a third campus located south of the downtown campus which houses KBTC, a college-affiliated television station. The College offers 50 program areas in career and technical fields leading to training certificates, Certificates of Competency, Associate Degrees, and AAS-T transfer degrees.

The College has recently completed a conversion from a clock-hour measure of instruction to a traditional collegiate credit-hour based model for instruction. This conversion was accompanied by a significant change in the structure of the College’s annual quarter schedule. Recent Washington State budget reductions in funding for community and technical colleges have impacted the College; budgets were reduced approximately 7% in 2010-2011, with additional reductions anticipated in the current 2011-2013 biennial state fiscal cycle.

Assessment of the Institution’s Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The evaluators received an electronic and printed copy of the Bates Technical College Year One Self-Evaluation Report in a timely manner; the College also included a copy of the Financial Resource Review (FRR) for each evaluator. The panel’s liaison to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (Commission), Dr. William Beardsley, confirmed via email that the FRR was beyond the purview of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report Panel, so the FRR was not reviewed by the panel as part of this report.

The evaluators found the College’s Year One Self-Evaluation Report to be responsive to the Commission’s content requirements, and included preface materials to provide the evaluators with context for the institutional changes since the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation. In accordance with the requests from the Commission, the College’s Year One Self-Evaluation Report included: (a) an Annex on Clock to Credit conversion and calendar change, which the College reports was requested by the Commission in its letter approving the conversion; and (b) an Annex on assessment practices in response to the Commission letter of February 11, 2011, requesting the College address Recommendation 1 from the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report.

Report on Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report

As noted above, Bates Technical College submitted an annex to the Year One Self-Evaluation as requested by the Commission to address Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report:

2010 Recommendation 1: Bates Technical College continues to make enhancements and improvements on its planning and newly enhanced effectiveness processes. The College has
started to implement an assessment program and needs to continue these efforts. It is recommended that the institution use systematic assessment and planning processes to influence resource allocation and improve instructional programs, institutional services and activities for improvements (Standard I.B.4, I.B.5)

[note: this references the 2003 Standards]

The College’s Year One Self-Evaluation Report Annex on assessment practice reviewed the College’s activities over the entire period since the Fall 2008 Regular Interim Evaluation. The narrative describing the timeline of events was difficult for the evaluators to follow in regard to the sequence and chronology of the College’s development and implementation of systematic assessment and planning processes resulting from Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2008 Regular Interim Evaluation Report, and Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report.

The College reports that the strategic planning process was delayed with the approval of the Board of Trustees in 2009, and that the assessment process was put on “hold” in spring 2010. These conditions were in place during the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation, which resulted in Recommendation 1. The College reports that fiscal challenges in 2010-2011 from state budget reductions introduced the need for program reductions, which has further delayed implementation of the new three-year cycle of the institutional strategic planning process and the program assessment process.

**Progress Since the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report**

The Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report recommended that the College continue to implement an assessment process, and to incorporate the results of assessment into the College’s planning processes in order to systematically link them to resource allocation for program improvement. The College’s program assessment planning designed a process with a three-year cycle, and the implementation plan required a three-year roll out. After the initial delays in implementation, the College reports that as of Fall 2011 the assessment process is “officially underway” and that 84 programs and departments will be actively engaged in the assessment process by the end of the 2012-2013 year (see table on pgs. 68-74). For the 2011-2012 academic year, the College reports that 19 programs are in the second or third year of the assessment process cycle.

The College has developed an Assessment Committee with representation from faculty, staff, and administration. The Assessment Committee works closely with the Dean for Institutional Research to oversee and provide guidance for the College’s assessment process. The Assessment Committee reviews the results of the assessment process and identifies priorities for improvement which are then recommended to the Strategic Planning Council.

The evaluators did not find evidence that the priorities identified as an outcome of the assessment process are fully integrated with the College’s planning processes to influence resource allocations for improvement of programs/services. The evaluators did not find evidence that the College is yet able to systematically integrate program assessment with institutional assessment in order to evaluate the accomplishment of core theme objectives to improve overall institutional effectiveness.

**Concern 1:** Since receiving Recommendation 1 in the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report, Bates Technical College continues to make progress on refining its program and
department assessment plans. However, the evaluators found that the College has not yet fully implemented the assessment process across all programs and departments. As a result, the evaluators did not find evidence that the College has a systematic assessment program and uses the results of assessments to influence planning and resource allocation for improvement of the College's instructional and service programs. (2003 Standard 1.B.4; 2010 Standard 4.A.2, 4.A.5)

Concern 2: Within the progress report addressing Recommendation 1 from the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report, the evaluators did not find evidence that Bates Technical College has integrated assessment and planning processes within the newly-developed institutional assessment framework of core themes, goals, strategic objectives, and indicators. The evaluators recommend that the College continue to implement, align, and integrate strategic planning, assessment of programs and services, and resource allocation within the institutional core theme evaluation framework to prioritize resources for the improvement of the College’s overall effectiveness in the accomplishment of its mission. (2003 Standard 1.B.5; 2010 Standard 4.A.1, 4.A.4)

Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3

2. Authority

Bates Technical College is authorized by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in the State of Washington, under RCW Chapter 28B.50, and operates under the requirements described therein.

3. Mission and Core Themes

The Bates Technical College mission is: “To inspire, challenge and educate.” The College has developed an accompanying vision statement to describe how the mission serves the educational interests of the College’s students and the academic needs of the community it serves:

“Bates Technical College helps students realize their potential for growth and success through innovative instruction in a nurturing, diverse environment. Students achieve their career and personal goals, strengthening the region’s social and economic vibrancy. Strong local and global partnerships with business, industry, labor and the public make the College a respected contributor to community vitality.”

Based on the mission and vision, the College has developed the conceptual framework for defining and assessing mission fulfillment with four core themes: Workforce Education; Student Centered; General Education; and Community Relationships. The mission and core themes have been adopted by the Board of Trustees and are appropriate for a technical college that grants certificates and degrees in recognized programs of study leading to employment or transfer to baccalaureate programs. Substantially all of College’s resources focus on instructional and service programs and activities in support of the mission and core themes.

Evaluators found inconsistent timelines in the Year One Self-Evaluation Report in reference to the approval dates of the College’s mission and core themes. Specifically, in the section “Date of the Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes,” on page nine, paragraph two, the College reports that the Board of Trustees approved the new College mission “To inspire, challenge and educate” in April 2005.
However, on page ten, paragraph four, the College reports that it adopted its mission with approval of the Board of Trustees in 2006. Regarding core theme approval, on page nine, paragraph six, the College reports that the core themes were presented to the Board of Trustees for approval at their July 2011 meeting. However, on page ten, paragraph four, the College reports that the core themes were approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees in May 2011. Minutes of the Board of Trustees were not available in the report or on the College’s web site to verify which of these timelines was correct.

**Concern 3**: The evaluators are concerned by the inconsistency of reporting of the dates of the Board of Trustees’ approval for the Bates Technical College mission and core themes in the Year One Self-Evaluation Report, and remind the College to address this discrepancy in the updated Chapter One section of the Fall 2012 Year Three Report.

**Chapter One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations**

The Bates Technical College mission statement is: “To inspire, challenge and educate.” The College has identified the essential elements of its mission with four core themes: Workforce Education; Student Centered; General Education; and Community Relationships.

**Standard 1.A Mission**

The College reports that the mission statement is generally understood by its community and was derived from an inclusive process of review and wide consultation across the college, which included opportunities for input of Advisory Committee members and community stakeholders. As noted above, the College’s Year One Self-Evaluation Report has inconsistencies in the dates cited for the Board of Trustees’ approval of the mission statement and core themes.

The mission statement is available on the College’s web site, but the evaluators did not find the mission statement published in the current College Catalog.

**Concern 4**: The evaluators encourage Bates Technical College to more widely publish the mission statement by including it within the College Catalog. (Standard of 1.A.1)

The College’s mission statement articulates a purpose appropriate for a technical college, and as described above, when combined with the vision statement gives direction for the College’s efforts in its community.

The College defines mission fulfillment for itself as the attainment of an acceptable level of institutional performance relative to the goals and strategic objectives of the core themes. To articulate the acceptable level of institutional performance, the College reports that in Fall 2011 it will set performance targets for the indicators of success, which are aligned with strategic objectives identified for each goal within the core themes.

To establish these performance targets, the College reports that it will first establish a baseline of its own performance from 2010-2011 performance data for each of the indicators of success. The College reports that it will develop a comparative performance measure based on comparable performance data from four peer institutions selected by the Strategic Planning Council. In fall 2011, the Strategic Planning Council
will use the College’s baseline and the peer comparisons in combination with their evaluation of environmental conditions (economic, demographic, community) to establish performance targets. Achieving these targets will constitute an acceptable level of mission fulfillment.

The College also includes “the application of a collective evaluation of institutional effectiveness in the associated processes (Standard Four)” in its definition of mission fulfillment. The evaluators found the College’s terminology for defining this aspect of mission fulfillment confusing, and found the report’s statement “Bates recognizes that mission fulfillment may be an unattainable goal” was inconsistent with the Standard’s requirement for the institution to define mission fulfillment and articulate an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.

**Concern 5:** The evaluators encourage Bates Technical College to clarify its terminology in regard to the definition of mission fulfillment. (Standard 1.A.2)

The Strategic Planning Council is developing a performance dashboard tool to monitor the College’s performance using data reports provided annually; critical indicators will be reviewed more frequently based on Council priorities. Standards of performance for each the targets are quantitatively defined for “exceeds expectations,” “meets expectations,” and “below expectations.”

**Concern 6:** For all of the Bates Technical College’s four core themes, 12 goals, and 39 strategic objectives mapped to 100 indicators of success, the evaluators encourage the College to continue to implement the plan for defining and developing baseline performance; benchmarking based on peer comparators; and setting performance targets to more clearly define mission effectiveness and evaluate the College’s performance toward mission fulfillment in the Fall 2012 Year Three Report. (Standard 1.A.2)

### Standard 1.B Core Themes

Bates Technical College has interpreted the essential elements of its mission with four core themes: Workforce Education; Student Centered; General Education; and Community Relationships.

The evaluators found the connection of the core themes Workforce Education and General Education to the College’s mission to “educate” very direct. It was less clear how the core themes of Student Centered and Community Relationships were manifested in the college’s mission statement. The evaluators found that the College’s accompanying vision statement helped to establish this connection for these latter two core themes. The vision statement provides a more complete description of how the College defines the essential elements of its mission statement and connects the mission to the core themes and goals. The first two sentences in the vision statement clarify the linkage of the mission to “inspire” and “challenge” to the Student Centered core theme; the third sentence expresses the value of partnerships and connects the mission with the core theme of Community Relationships. The evaluators found that the core themes collectively encompass and express the essential elements of the College’s mission when accompanied by the vision statement.

For each core theme, the College has identified goals with strategic objectives and developed a rationale of how the indicators of success will directly measure progress toward the strategic objective. The evaluators found that the quality of the rationale for how the indicators linked to the strategic objectives
and goals was highly variable with regard to how well indicators are direct, meaningful, and verifiable measures for assessing strategic objectives and achievement of core theme goals.

**Concern 7:** The evaluators are concerned by the number of goals, strategic objectives, and indicators of success that have been identified to evaluate the accomplishment of the objectives of Bates Technical College’s core themes. The evaluators encourage the College to continue to refine and focus the core theme goals and to reduce the number of indicators of success by identifying key indicators for the institution that are direct, meaningful, measurable, verifiable, and provide a clear rationale for evaluating the accomplishment of the core theme goals and strategic objectives. (Standards 1.B.2)
Summary

Bates Technical College’s Year One Self-Evaluation Report provided the evaluators with the requisite information to complete the Year One Peer-Evaluation Report.

The College reports progress in addressing assessment and planning in response to Recommendation 1 from the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report, and to Recommendation 2 from the Fall 2008 Regular Interim Evaluation Report. The evaluators found that the College’s progress has not yet satisfied the 2010 Recommendation 1 to meet the cited 2003 Standards, or the currently-applicable 2010 Standards.

The College’s mission statement is accompanied by a vision statement; the essential elements of the mission are described by four core themes. The evaluators found that the College is fully engaged in continuing efforts to refine its definition of mission fulfillment in order to evaluate its performance toward achieving core theme goals and objectives, as well as the College’s progress in the accomplishment of its mission.
Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Since receiving Recommendation 1 in the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report, Bates Technical College continues to make progress on refining its program and department assessment plans. However, the evaluators found that the College has not yet fully implemented the assessment process across all programs and departments. The evaluators recommend that the College fully implement the assessment process in order to systematically use the results of assessment to influence planning and resource allocation for improvement of the College's instructional and service programs. (2003 Standard 1.B.4; 2010 Standard 4.A.2, 4.A.5)

Recommendation 2: Within the progress report addressing Recommendation 1 from the Fall 2010 Focused Interim Evaluation Report, the evaluators did not find evidence that Bates Technical College has integrated assessment and planning processes within the newly-developed institutional assessment framework of core themes, goals, strategic objectives, and indicators. The evaluators recommend that the College continue to implement, align, and integrate strategic planning, assessment of programs and services, and resource allocation within the institutional core theme evaluation framework to prioritize resources for the improvement of the College’s overall effectiveness in the accomplishment of its mission. (2003 Standard 1.B.5; 2010 Standard 4.A.1, 4.A.4)

Recommendation 3: For all indicators of success, the evaluators recommend that Bates Technical College fully implement their plan for developing their baseline performance, benchmarking based on peer comparators, and setting performance targets in order to more clearly define mission fulfillment, articulate an acceptable threshold of performance, and evaluate the College’s accomplishments and outcomes for mission fulfillment. (Standard 1.A.2)

Recommendation 4: For each of its four core themes, Bates Technical College has identified goals, strategic objectives, and indicators of success. The evaluators recommend the College continue to refine and focus the goals and objectives in order to reduce the number of indicators by identifying key institutional indicators that are direct, meaningful, measurable, verifiable, and provide a clear rationale for evaluating the accomplishment of the core theme goals and strategic objectives. (Standards 1.B.2)