

Executive Summary

Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) is one of seventeen community colleges in a system under the direction of the Oregon State Department of Education, division of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. The College is located on over 140 acres of former strawberry fields on the eastern region of the district. MHCC attracts nearly 26,000 students yearly with diverse backgrounds and experiences from the district and beyond. During the College's 40th birthday celebration in 2006 we celebrated not only touching the lives of 866,000 students and impacting our district's economy by \$608 million annually, but also by honoring the efforts of those who paved the way – some still with us, others not – and recognized how far we've come.

The College undertook a major strategic planning initiative after the 1997 accreditation visit. The mission, vision and goals developed in that process set the direction for MHCC, one of Oregon's premiere community colleges. Building on this platform of positive energy, the college began the intense period of self-reflection and assessment, culminating in the 2007 self study.

The self study process enabled the college to identify factors that need further study, clarification and/or action, as well as areas in which the College is achieving excellent results. A number of themes repeatedly surfaced during the reflective exercises. Communication is one of those themes.

One of the cornerstone activities of the self study was the 2006-07 climate survey which

was administered to obtain a measure of staff perception of the College climate. The Personal Assessment of College Environment (PACE) was distributed electronically to all staff and compiled by an independent party (North Carolina State University). The survey examined four categories of the institution:

- Institutional Structure
- Supervisory Relationships
- Student Focus
- Team Work

The results were examined in light of common community college organizational styles or systems:

- *Coercive*. Leaders have very little confidence in employees; decisions are made at the top level; influence is exercised through punishment rather than rewards.
- *Competitive*. Leaders have limited confidence and trust in employees; decision-making takes place at middle levels but power is retained at the top; some rewards are given but punishment is more common.
- *Consultative*. Leaders have some, but not complete confidence in employees; more decisions are made at lower levels; most influence is exercised through rewards.
- *Collaborative*. Leaders have high confidence and trust in employees; decision-making is dispersed throughout the organization; employees are influenced primarily through participation, recognition, and rewards (adapted from Likert, 1967).

A number of strengths were identified (healthy campus climate; a high level of student focus; employees feel their jobs are relevant to the mission; organization is consultative with some ar-

eas in the collaborative style; et al.). Weaknesses include the need for more open communication, information sharing and involvement in decision making; involvement in problem solving; and opportunities for professional advancement. The President's Cabinet reviewed the results and shared them across campus, focusing on the future goal of moving the college toward a more collaborative environment and identifying a number of areas to emphasize such as providing leadership skill development; participation and involvement of staff in problem solving and decision making; and fostering innovation at the college. The theme of "Communication" is interpreted in light of the four systems previously mentioned as the need to continue to strengthen the efforts in the collaborative style or system.

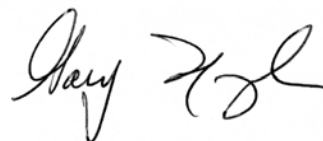
Another theme repeatedly identified in the self study process and supported by findings in the climate survey relates to the College goal of efficiency. Resource shortages have clearly had their impact on the College. People are stretched and have limited energy. The College must review its current initiatives, analyze shared goals, and identify points of overlap and possibilities for interconnections or internal collaborations. The College must review its systems and processes with an eye towards streamlining and/or updating these processes with appropriate technologies. Many colleges have invested time and resources with great success in reducing practices that have their roots in tradition as opposed to necessity. MHCC is committed to this re-engineering, to obtain the efficiencies mandated by our limited resources.

The 2007 Oregon legislative session is touted as a victory for higher education with an 18 percent increase over current funding levels. MHCC is also one of the fortunate institutions celebrating additional support for capital projects (\$2.5 mil-

lion for the new Child Development Center). One session, however, cannot make up for 25 years of disinvestment by the State of Oregon. This is only the first step in a long journey towards defining and supporting a sustainable level of higher education for the State. It is within the reality of this economic and political climate that the College must once again re-visit the mission, vision and goals of the institution, its standing in the community, the role it plays in the globalization of our society, and set a corrected course if not a new direction.

Some of this new direction will come from the dynamics of change. Robert Silverman, the president of MHCC for the past six years, has left the College for other professional opportunities. However, the success of the College will continue based on the commitment of the Board of Education, the professionalism of its management team, the quality of its faculty and staff, and the support of its communities. As the Interim President, it is with pleasure and pride that I present to the Commission and to our esteemed visitors a quality product, steeped in reflection and analysis, and borne by caring, dedicated and highly regarded individuals. The College, although in transition, remains committed to its core values and has never been stronger. The College looks forward to hosting your visit in October.

Respectfully submitted,



Gary Murph, Interim President
Mt. Hood Community College