

# Standard 4 Final Report December 17, 2004



## **Brief Summary**

TMCC's faculty is the central pillar on which the College's mission rests. It is not the only pillar, of course; student support, administration, facilities, and others help keep the roof above the students who come through our doors. But without the central pillar – the faculty as it interacts directly with students and fosters, nurtures, and demands the learning around which everything else is built – there would be no college, no graduates, and no changed lives.

A closer look at the College's mission reveals that learning is at its core. The College strives to provide "lifelong learning opportunities" through the delivery of courses and programs that help students "achieve their goals, aspirations, and dreams." TMCC's faculty does not accomplish this alone, but they are the ultimate and most direct deliverers of the elements of this mission, and it is they who are entrusted with most of the College's most important strategic task – to "value, demand, and support academic excellence." As any college instructor will confirm, this task is easy to articulate but accomplished only by faculty who commit a lifetime to mastering the complexities and subtleties of a subject the practice of teaching.

This committee – the Standard 4 Committee of TMCC's 2004 self-study – undertook the evaluation of the condition of the faculty with a serious and conscientious approach that reflected the importance of its subject. Its examination was unflinchingly honest; its recommendations were carefully considered. The report that follows reveals that TMCC's faculty is in excellent condition: highly qualified, committed, and well supported. Although this committee did not confirm this, it is hard to imagine that this faculty is not among the best in the nation. The report reveals a systematic effort by the administration during the last three years to create fair policies and procedures in relation to the faculty, and it did so with considerable faculty input. More needs to be done, but it seems that much of the work needed is a continuation of work already begun, and this is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all members of the TMCC community.

Although much progress has been made, it is important to realize that TMCC's faculty is still recovering from a difficult period in the 1990s. Morale is higher than it has been in years, but it could be higher. Trust in the administration is improving, but a number of the faculty remain suspicious of initiatives from the administration in fear of a return of the poor management of this earlier period.

Before going further, we should note the organizational principle used in this report. In order to conduct this examination in the most efficient way possible, this committee organized the report into categories, each coded by color to make reading easier. Those categories are faculty qualifications (orange), evaluation (blue), workload (green), salary and benefits (brown), scholarship/art (lavender), and recruitment/participation/academic

freedom (pink). Each area contains a detailed analysis and makes recommendations (gathered in a chart located in this report's closing statement). A brief summary of the findings of this report follow.

Regarding the strengths of the institution in regards to its faculty, the committee uncovered the following:

- A highly qualified faculty – full-time and part-time
- A commitment to shared governance
- A clear workload policy that ensures fair distribution of the College's work and compensation
- Salaries that are among the highest in the mountain west region
- A fairly applied system of evaluation
- A reasonably satisfied faculty
- The most extensively supported part-time faculty in the state

This report contains detailed explanations of the areas of concern with considerable supporting evidence. The following is a brief look at some of these areas of concern: In order to achieve its full potential, TMCC should

- hire more faculty members in crucial public service areas such as allied health (nursing in particular)
- raise the number of courses taught by full-time faculty to sixty percent
- continue examination of faculty evaluation procedures to put greater emphasis on teaching excellence and faculty development
- continue examination of the distribution of release time and campus service to ensure equity
- continue examination of the workload of faculty in the allied health and industrial technology areas to ensure that they are compensated fairly and in keeping with national standards
- provide more opportunities for part-time instructors to develop their teaching skills, content knowledge, and understanding of campus policies
- continue to develop the collection of data on all faculty members to allow ready access to information regarding qualifications, workload, and reasons for leaving the institution.
- recognize of the role played by faculty scholarship/art/performance as crucial to faculty professional development and teaching excellence in many of the academic disciplines.
- continue lobbying efforts to increase full-time faculty member's salaries (particularly in response to rising area housing costs) and to stop the gradual erosion of benefits
- continue lobbying efforts to increase part-time salaries
- increase the participation of part-time faculty in their academic department
- continue recruitment of underrepresented minority faculty in both full-time and part-time faculty

- examine academic freedom in theory and practice at TMCC to ensure that both the faculty and administration understand its parameters, importance, and that all are vigilant about encroachments on that freedom.

In summary, TMCC should be commended for its progress, and it should be encouraged to continue to develop and support its faculty, especially in the areas noted above. The central pillar of any structure must not be neglected.