

MID-CYCLE PEER-EVALUATION REPORT

TRUCKEE MEADOWS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Truckee Meadows, Nevada

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

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EVALUATION COMMITTEE ROSTER

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INTRODUCTION

Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) started as the Stead campus of Western Nevada Community College, which was opened officially in 1971. In 1979, the Board of Regents of the University and Community College System of Nevada, now the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), established Truckee Meadows Community College as the fourth college of the system, leaving WNCC to their Carson City Campus. Truckee Meadows Community College is a comprehensive community college that offers transfer degrees, workforce development programs and certifications, and community enrichment courses. In addition to these efforts, TMCC hosts a high school on the main campus and engages in a number of dual enrollment projects. TMCC uses a number of modalities to deliver education to a diverse group of students: traditional classroom experiences, online offerings, modular courses, 5-, 7-, 10-, and 16-week courses, internships, and apprenticeships. TMCC has one main campus and four additional sites: the William N. Pennington Health Center, the Meadowood Center, the William N. Pennington Applied Technology Center, and the Nell J. Redfield Foundation Performing Arts Center.

On October 22-23, 2018, a two-person Peer-Evaluation Committee (hereafter, known as “Committee”) from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) conducted a Mid-Cycle Evaluation.

ASSESSMENT OF SELF-EVALUATION REPORT AND MATERIALS (PART 1)

The Committee electronically received Truckee Meadows Community College’s “Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report” and appendices through the NWCCU liaison on September 18, 2018. The document provided a general narrative in response to each of the three elements of the Mid-Cycle Report. Through the on-campus visit, the Committee sought additional identification of student learning outcome indicators and deeper analysis of the college’s two representative examples of its operationalized mission and core themes progressing from objectives to indicators to outcomes to mission fulfillment. To further deepen the discussion during the on-campus visit, the Committee provided TMCC a copy of the NWCCU’s “Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress” (see appendix).

Reviewing TMCC’s Self-Evaluation along with observations from the on-campus visit allowed the Committee to understand the college’s integration of core themes, assessment, and planning in the determination of mission fulfillment. It is evident that the college’s leadership, informed by the Board of Regents, develops, reviews, and communicates college-level planning, assessment, and performance. The broad stakeholder representation on the Planning Council demonstrates the inclusiveness of the planning and assessment processes at TMCC. The Strategic Master Plan (SMP) brings together all the various elements of the core theme objectives and indicators to demonstrate relationships, interactions, and confirms that all

elements will be assessed within the needed timeframe to inform improvement and strategic planning.

TMCC has framed mission fulfillment through achievement of at least 80% of the targets of its core themes indicators by the end of the accreditation cycle. TMCC has identified four core themes, thirteen objectives, and eighty indicators. At the 80% achievement for mission fulfillment rate, sixteen indicators could not be achieved without moving out of mission fulfillment status. This approach to mission fulfillment assessment is common, but the Committee offered questions and observations for the college's consideration. If all sixteen unachieved indicators were aligned with one core theme, how would that be reflected in the mission fulfillment status? While it is important to represent all aspects of the college's mission in core themes and objectives, the number of indicators concerns the Committee and the ability of TMCC to sustain that level of assessment and utilize the findings. Many indicators yield information that may prove difficult to assess on a regular basis or are duplicative in nature. Additionally, much of the Core Theme language was in terms of college input and output (number of courses offered, for example) rather than student learning and outcomes focused (assessment of student learning or success rates in those courses, for example). Reworking the input indicators to student learning outcomes may help to both focus on student outcomes and reduce the number of indicators. Through the discussions during the Committee's visit, the college communicated a dedication to their core themes and their strategic master plan yet acknowledged their indicators are too numerous and focused on input measures.

While the TMCC Mid-cycle report met the expectations of the NWCCU and this committee, through the visit it became clear that TMCC's substantial work was not fully represented in this brief report. In preparation for the seven-year visit, TMCC should more selectively provide representative examples of planning and assessment efforts to more completely reflect the work being done.

NARRATIVE RESPONSE TO SELF-EVALUATION (PART II)

The following response is organized through NWCCU's "Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress." The rubric includes four institutional developmental categories--initial, emerging, developed, and highly developed.

Assessment Planning

The Mid-Cycle Report provided a statement of core theme objectives, strategies, and indicators with baseline, target, and determination of progress based on current status data for each indicators in Appendix A.

TMCC's college planning is between emerging and developed. They are beyond intermittent planning but still developing plans at the division level.

TMCC has a clear plan for assessment and data collection for the two examples provided, program review and general education assessment. The Program Unit Review (PUR) process is

well established, but TMCC is actively refining the process to make it more meaningful for faculty. While the original timeline has not been followed to the letter, all units are scheduled for review. The institutional measures, as presented, frequently do not incorporate direct assessment of student learning.

Responding to a previous recommendation, the college has quickly developed a college general education assessment process. (See item 3 in promising practices.) The integration of the GE assessment cycle with the PUR cycle is not yet clearly made.

While the primary focus of the TMCC mid-cycle review is on assessment of student learning in academic areas, the Committee felt it important to recognize TMCC's initial efforts to assess and evaluate outcomes resulting from work led by the student services and diversity division reported in the document and visit.

For this category to become "highly developed" the plan would include several years of historical data for each indicator, stated baselines and clearly identifiable benchmarks over multiple years, and clarification on plans for full assessment of all aligned core theme objectives. It would also clarify institutional planning and assessment activities to identify all planning and assessment processes and efforts in one assessment planning document.

Assessable Outcomes

This category addresses the presence of demonstrated student learning outcomes in the assessment framework.

As noted in the assessment planning section, the Committee's concerns at the Strategic Master Plan (SMP) level are that the indicators are often inputs rather than measurable outcomes reflecting assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and college level.

The General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) process is early in its implementation and appears to be on the right track to provide evidence of college level student learning. The GE process has utilized the VALUE rubrics' student learning outcomes in order to move forward quickly even if they are later found to not be adequate or a best fit for TMCC. The GEAR committee seems to be prepared to move forward with improvement to the process and continuing to document college level outcomes.

TMCC has had an established process for course level assessment for several years. It is unclear from the report and the visit how the course assessment review cycle is integrated into the PUR cycle and how it contributes to departmental conversations about student learning and teaching practices. The course review documents do show the utilization of the student learning assessments at the individual course or instructor level.

As provided in the Mid-Cycle Report, many of TMCC's PUR measures represent either inputs (e.g., faculty counts, recruitment strategies, etc.) or outputs (e.g., FTEs, credits earned, etc.). The inputs and outputs plan represent important aspects of achieving mission fulfillment but are insufficient to provide assessable student learning outcomes at the program level. There does not yet seem to be a process for systematically assessing student learning outcomes based on completing a program curriculum or any mapping of courses to program outcomes.

In the example provided describing the Program Unit Review (PUR), the process requires an indication that course level student learning outcomes are assessed or plan to be, but there were no program level student learning outcomes assessment in the samples reviewed (Core Humanities, Humanities, and Philosophy; Emergency Medical and Fire; Sociology; and Criminal Justice). Some PURs included examples of course-level student learning assessment (Sociology) but others did not (Core Humanities, Emergency Medical and Fire; Criminal Justice). The SLO Evaluation section of PUR seems to be not assessment of student learning but a review of the identified student learning outcomes continuing appropriateness for the program unit. This concern was noted by TMCC in the report and the PUR template is being revised. The Committee sought additional information and status of that revision during the visit.

It is not clear how the current PUR and GE structures assure meaningful and coherent assessment of student learning at the course, program, and college levels. These multiple processes are functioning at different levels. Thus, this category is seen as "Initial." We are encouraged that some examples do include evidence of student learning. There may be more and better assessment of SLO taking place than presented in either the report or found in the small sample, but the Committee is concerned with the inconsistency of the application of the process.

Through the Committee's conversation with the faculty and administrators at TMCC, we are confident they are prepared to engage in the task of revising SMP indicators to demonstrate student learning outcomes for the SMP, supporting institutional effectiveness and mission fulfillment and integration of course and program level assessments.

A "highly developed" plan in this category would include multiple measures of direct student learning (in addition to inputs and outputs) with clear evidence that assessment results were being used to make improvements.

Assessment Implementation

Assessment implementation refers to collection of data and development of review criteria by relevant faculty. The Committee was encouraged by the breadth and depth of faculty participation in and administrative support for assessment in the report. The Committee saw this category to be "emerging" based on the college's two examples of implementation of their assessment processes.

While the PUR process has an established history (reports back to 2004 are available on the website), the implementation seems to have been interrupted and inconsistent over the years. While flexibility is a necessity in the higher education environment, interruptions in a five-year schedule can create a significant delay in generating institutional knowledge of program strength and challenges. It was noted that TMCC has made recent changes to the PUR process to make it more meaningful to faculty and relevant to programs. For example, the English department provides service to a large number of students but the English program may have substantially fewer students. The Academic Standards and Assessment committee is considering how to differentiate these two aspects of the discipline.

It is unclear to the Committee the assessment structure for GE outcomes. While there are five GE competencies being assessed each semester, it is not clear that all GE SLOs are being assessed. Further understanding of GE assessment implementation was sought by the Committee in discussions during the visit. While acknowledging they are early in the GE SLO assessment process, TMCC will need to review the results of their assessments to determine if all criteria are being assessed within the designated GE cycle.

A “highly developed” category would include multiple sets of data from consistent implementation of assessment processes (as TMCC identified in the mid-cycle report).

Alignment

Alignment among TMCC’s planning, core themes, and curriculum is implied by the Strategic Master Plan. The input and output indicators in the SMP create challenges for demonstrating relationships between outcomes and curriculum. The SMP identifies specific strategies and tactics that document alignment with student learning outcomes (i.e., enhance embedded tutoring and supplement instruction program; redesign developmental Math Center curriculum, etc.), but these are not fully fleshed out in the two provided examples.

Curricular alignment with industry and academic standards is primarily documented in PUR and, in some instances, industry licensure directly shapes curriculum and assessment. The lack of assessment of program level outcomes suggests a gap between established program outcomes and program course curriculum. The need for transferability of philosophy courses to a major transfer institution informed curriculum modification in the Core Humanities, Humanities, and Philosophy as documented in the PUR. If these examples are truly representative, the Committee suggests this alignment be more consistently documented and reported.

Because the alignment with student learning outcomes is relatively hidden, this criterion is seen as “emerging.” To achieve the category of “highly developed,” PUR and GE assessment would include clear, direct, and intentional alignment between curriculum, support services, and outcomes for each of the relevant measures.

Valid Results

Validity refers to how well an assessment measures what it purports to measure. During our on-site visit, our Committee attempted to understand how TMCC conceptualized what is considered valid and reliable data. This is often a challenging construct. At the SMP level, the Committee had concerns about the validity of input indicators to measure student outcomes. For example, holding workshops and SGA activities (Core Theme 1, Objective 3, Indicator 1.3.1) does not measure the student outcome of building inter- and intra-personal, and practical skills. It does validly measure institutional inputs. As TMCC moves to student outcome language, they will need to review the validity of their indicators.

In TMCC’s PUR example, validity is addressed--moving away from descriptive demographic and enrollment data to analysis. While this is an important shift, it should happen in the context of student learning outcomes and not only program outcomes. In the GE example, starting with

the VALUE rubrics provided a measure of validity. Efforts to modify those rubrics, while appropriate to better fit TMCC, would need to be aware of the effect on validity. A next step could be to establish reliability and validity of their own assessment measures.

Therefore, the concept of validity in the data was deemed "emerging." A "highly developed" category would show multiple years of measures with established validity.

Reliable Results

Reliability in the data is a concept generally used to describe consistency of results on a measure. In the case of student learning assessment, it is often reference when discussing consistency between evaluators, sometimes referred to as inter-rater reliability. In the college setting, this most often refers to faculty, who are the subject matter experts concerning evaluation of student learning but it can also be an issue of consistent implementation of process.

The PUR process has the opportunity for external stakeholder or evaluator participation. The process of review by deans, faculty senate, and vice president of learning as well as the annual report provides a level of review for consistency.

TMCC does recognized the need for continued improved reliability of GE assessment in its report and plans multiple professional development opportunities for improved assessment. It is laudable that this is a joint faculty and administration effort, and the Committee recognizes it is an iterative effort.

Because of the quantity of data required by the SMP, the committee was originally concerned regarding institutional research capacity but through the visit, the committee was impressed by the IR capacity to provide reliable data to report on institutional indicators.

This category was also seen as "emerging" but if TMCC is able to accomplish its training goals, the Committee anticipates a "highly developed" level by the year seven visit. A "highly developed" rating in this category would include multiple years of data with established consistency between evaluators of student learning.

Annual Feedback on Assessment Efforts

Course level assessment requires strong support within the faculty for continuous improvement. It is clear that TMCC has established regular review protocols for program evaluation. It is also clear to the Committee the role and support of various offices, committees, councils, and administrators in reviewing data associated with the SMP.

TMCC's PUR example documents the structure and expectations for faculty and administrative review and recommendations of the PUR reports at the end of a five-year cycle. The additional annual review is only a requirement for programs that are given recommendations through the assessment review process. TMCC may want to document how emerging concerns are addressed within the five year cycle if it is beyond a given year's recommendation. From the examples

reviewed, annual review of assessment efforts are more likely to be at the course level, which may in turn feed a longer process that takes place over several years.

The GE example reports more consistent feedback and review. This may be necessary at the early stage of process implementation. The GE Task Force seems effective in providing annual feedback on assessment through the GEAR process. In addition, department level discussions are held. Given the early stage of implementation of the general education process, it will be important that GEAR and other stakeholders consider the results of student learning assessment, the effectiveness of processes developed for general education assessment, and plan for continuous improvement resulting from the results.

Despite evidence of inconsistency in the application of some annual review processes, TMCC is seen at the "developed" stage for this construct. For TMCC to reach the "highly developed" stage, the college would include a consistent annual feedback process for all program areas.

Results are Used

This category represents a concept that is often referred to as "closing the feedback loop." In the two examples provided, there is clear evidence that a process is in place for results to inform improvement. In the four PUR examples reviewed, there is clear documented evidence of developing recommendations based on results and acting upon those recommendations. The mid-cycle report was less informative in this area. But as noted in the Assessment Planning section, most of the PUR data is not assessment of student learning outcomes, so there is sometimes a lack of recommendations and actions based on SLOs. It may be a case where there is better work taking place than is documented. The need to modify the GE process, build additional professional development opportunities, and include student development outcomes are all examples of utilizing the GE results.

There is less clarity in regards to utilizing results in TMCC's strategic plan. As noted in the "assessable outcomes" section, the college has identified multiple input and output data versus student learning outcomes. There seems to be a lack of integration of these macro/input/output institutional measures and the micro/outcomes program measures. The number of indicators assessed by TMCC may make it challenging to effectively use all results of assessment work. Identifying a smaller, more meaningful set may help the institution better use the results of assessment.

This category was seen as "developed" based on additional information learned through the Committee's visit. TMCC appears to be an increasingly data informed campus, but the utilization of results need to be systemic.

A "highly developed" institutional stage would include an established process of integration for data collection, discussion and response for the purpose of improvement for all indicators.

Planning and Budgeting

TMCC's mid-cycle report and appendices document the amount of effort that has gone into strategic planning and institutional effectiveness. In the report, TMCC acknowledges the current weak relationship between the PUR and budgeting processes and outlines current efforts to address the gap.

The Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services and Resource and the Budget Committee have a clear vision of a more comprehensive assessment and alignment of the division to the SMP. They have identified the integration of budgeting and resource allocation into the PUR process as a needed step.

In recognition of the current efforts and plans, this category was seen as "developed." A "highly developed" level would include a planning, assessment, and resource allocation process that is fully, systematically, and intentionally aligned.

FORMATIVE COMMENTS (PART III)

The Committee acknowledges the following as promising practices:

- Developed and operationalized strategic plan with strategies and tactics aligned with core themes.
- Clear evidence of utilization of feedback in examples and visit conversations.
- Commitment to developing a holistic process to demonstrate alignment of budget allocations to planning, assessment process, and/or core theme objectives.
- Robust assessment/evaluation processes of student services and diversity. Communicated campus-wide with opportunity for reflection and interaction.
- General education assessment strategy still formative but substantial and meaningful work has been done. Efforts are continuing and suggest TMCC will have clear evidence of student learning at the college level at the completion of the seven-year accreditation cycle.
- Three primary divisions create their own strategic plan in alignment to the college SMP, accommodating divisional distinctions while unifying overall college strategic planning.
- Utilization of technology (eLumen) to systematize tracking and organizing planning, assessment, etc. efforts.
- Assessment planning and institutional research leadership increases the college's capacity for high quality planning and assessment efforts through extensive individual work and support.
- Resource allocation requests incorporates outcomes and assessment. Outcomes assessment is reviewed in the following fiscal year.

In preparation for the "Year Seven Review," the Committee encourages TMCC to focus on the following items:

- Reduction of the number of measures for college level reporting. Identify those which are strategic at the college level and potentially incorporate others into divisional plans.
- Modify core theme language to place greater emphasis on measures of student learning outcomes over college inputs and outputs.
- Where college input and outputs are appropriate, provide rationale.
- More clearly define mission fulfillment based on the range of met or unmet indicators.
- Continue efforts on alignment of budget allocations to planning, assessment process, and/or core theme objectives.
- Continue the development and refinement of the program level outcomes and assessment processes.
- The full extent of the work being done should be reflected more in the report.
- Review integration of all the various planning processes and timing cycles.

Appendix: NWCCU Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress

Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress

Criterion	Initial	Emerging	Developed	Highly Developed
Assessment Planning	No formal assessment plan	Relies on intermittent planning	Clear regular plan	Clear multi-year plan with several years of implementation
Assessable Outcomes	Non-specific outcomes. Do not state student learning outcomes	Most outcomes indicate how students demonstrate learning	Each outcome describes student demonstration of learning	Outcomes describe demonstration of student learning. Outcomes used for improvement.
Assessment Implementation	Not clear that assessment data is collected	Evidence collected Faculty have discussed relevant criteria for reviewing	Evidence is collected and faculty use relevant criteria	Evidence collected, criteria determined and faculty discuss multiple sets of data. Data is used.
Alignment	No clear relationship between outcomes and curriculum	Some alignment between curriculum and outcomes	Clear alignment between curriculum and outcomes	Curriculum, grading and support services are aligned with outcomes
Valid Results	Little to no evidence that measures are valid	Majority of measures are valid	Valid measures in regular use	Multi-year use of valid measures
Reliable Results	No process to check for inter-rater reliability	Faculty preparing inter-rater reliability	Faculty check for inter-rater reliability	Multi-year use of process and evidence of good inter-rater reliability
Annual Feedback on Assessment Efforts	No person or committee provides feedback to departments on quality of their assessment plan	Occasional feedback by person or committee	Annual feedback by person or committee. Departments use feedback.	Annual feedback, departmental use and institutional support
Results are Used	Results for outcomes are collected but not discussed	Results collected, discussed but not used	Results collected, discussed and used.	Results collected, discussed, used and evidence to confirm that changes lead to improved learning
Planning and Budgeting	Outcomes not integrated into planning and budget	Attempts at aligning outcomes and planning and budget	Alignment of outcomes and planning and budget occurs informally	Alignment of outcomes and planning is systematic and intentional