



Harford Community College

Process for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

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I. OVERVIEW

Harford Community College conducts both internal and external assessments of institutional effectiveness on annual and rotating schedules.

Internally, HCC completes Student Learning Outcomes Assessments and operational (Administrative/Service Unit) outcomes assessments regularly. HCC's assessment processes are managed by Vice Presidents for their units, and most unit-, program-, and institution-level data for administrative and service units are maintained in the College's assessment management database. Documentation for course, program, and general education assessment are maintained within the academic divisions. (A companion assessment management system was implemented by Academic Affairs in 2016.) The documentation provides evidence of institutional effectiveness relating to how well HCC is fulfilling its mission, achieving its goals, and using the assessment results to improve teaching and learning, improve services and programs, and inform planning and resource allocation as part of the College's overall Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan. The College also assesses fulfillment of its Strategic Plan through review of assessment activities, College accomplishments, and key metrics, most notably those found in the annual Performance Accountability Report (PAR).

Externally, HCC participates in Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) Accountability Reporting which includes the following:

- Institutional Performance Accountability Report (annually);
- Cultural Diversity Report (formerly Minority Achievement Report) every three years (2008, 2011, 2014, etc.) or as directed by MHEC; and
- Mission Review—every three to four years or as directed by MHEC.

Additionally, as part of HCC's overall institutional assessment activities, a nationally normed campus climate survey is administered on a rotating basis to help the College assess its current situation and identify what further action may be helpful in continuing its work to support and strengthen teaching, learning, and overall effectiveness. PACE – Personal Assessment of the College Environment Survey results are studied by campus constituencies, units, and leadership and strategies are implemented that align with areas identified as opportunities for improvement. This survey is completed every three years.

The College also participates in and receives data from two national data collection and benchmarking projects:

- IPEDS
- Voluntary Framework for Accountability

Finally, the College uses a visual model, the *HCC Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Improvement Model* as a visual depiction of the institution's planning, budgeting, assessing, improving processes.

II. INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

HCC Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan includes goals, strategies, and metrics designed to improve student success and completion. In accordance with both the Plan, faculty engage in student learning outcomes assessment for courses, programs, and general education. While faculty use a variety of direct and indirect formative and summative assessment techniques for course-level assessment, those assessments are linked to common program and general education goals thus supporting higher level assessment and the goals of the AA Strategic Plan. Student learning outcomes assessment is coordinated through the deans of each academic division with assistance from the campus-wide Learning Assessment and General Education Committees.

General Education assessment is dispersed to several academic divisions. The faculty, in consultation with the dean, map course- and program-level goals to appropriate general education goals. Assessment results are captured and aggregated using the assessment management software. Assessment of the eight general education goals is reviewed by the General Education committee, a faculty-led committee, on a rotating four year cycle.

Program goals also are aggregated using assessment management software. The Learning Assessment Committee, a faculty-led committee, has responsibility for review of program-level assessment. This review occurs annually; assessment occurs on a four year cycle.

Additionally, student learning outcomes assessment is addressed in summary format within the Program Review report. Academic programs engage in this in-depth assessment every five years. As part of this assessment, program-level student learning outcomes are addressed along with changes and improvements made based on these assessments.

Operational (Administrative/Service Unit) Outcomes Assessment

In addition to assessing student learning and instructional learning effectiveness, HCC assesses its institutional effectiveness through linking the College Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan to administrative/service unit-level actions and strategies and documenting the results and improvements. Annually, administrative and service units assess their work using a seven-step assessment model:

1. Link the unit's work to the Harford Community College Mission, Vision, Values, or Strategic Plan.
2. Identify the unit outcome goal to be assessed and identify the HCC Strategic Plan Goal and Strategy or the element of the College Mission which it supports.
3. Specify the actions taken or strategies used to support accomplishment of stated outcomes.
4. Identify the assessment criteria and procedures.
5. Evaluate the results once the strategy/action is completed; identify the findings.
6. Follow-up using the findings to take future action, develop plans, and make improvements where possible.
7. Link to and identify budgetary needs and implications; apply findings to budgetary allocations.

Annually, the administrative and service units submit their annual assessment plans by completing the first four steps in the seven-step assessment cycle and entering these plans into the assessment management database. Training, support, and direction are provided for the staff and administrators involved in the process by the Director for Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness, the Coordinator for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, and the VP for Student Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness. These plans are reviewed and revised as needed by the unit's VP. Throughout the year, each unit completes its assessment as planned or modified. By the end of the year, the unit completes the remaining three steps in the assessment process and enters the documentation into the database. Again, the unit's VP reviews and revises the documentation as needed. The unit implements the follow-up and improvements as soon as is feasible, including considering the budgetary implications in its subsequent planning, and then plans for the next year's assessment. The time table for some assessment cycles may vary depending on the unit and the action/strategy being assessed.

Units may choose to re-assess the same actions and strategies in the subsequent year. They may also choose to measure and analyze the results differently in the new year. When the results show that the outcomes are achieved as desired, the follow-up action to be taken may be to continue the process/action/strategy as it is currently structured with no improvements indicated. This is still a successful assessment cycle, but it is not expected to occur for multiple years in a row.

Units in Student Affairs engage periodically in meta-assessment, an intensive review of unit-level assessment activities resulting in strategies designed to improve collection of data and use of assessment results.

Assessment of the Strategic Plan

Assessment of the College Strategic Plan is disaggregated throughout the campus. As described above, administrative and service units link assessment activities to the Strategic Plan where appropriate. Unit leaders and VPs review these assessments and make determinations regarding the achievement of Plan goals and strategies.

The Student Engagement, Retention, and Completion committee has identified metrics (based on the PAR indicators) that support Strategic Plan Goal 1 and its strategies. Responsibility for achieving this goal is widely shared through the Academic Affairs division and all other units on campus but is aggregated and tracked at the institutional level.

III. EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Accountability Reporting

▪ The Annual Institutional Performance Accountability Report (PAR)

Maryland established the current accountability process for public colleges in 1996. Each community college annually completes and submits the PAR. The report consists of collecting and analyzing data for 34 key indicators of institutional performance which fall within five broad categories that align with Maryland Ready: Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education:

- Accessibility and Affordability
- Quality and Effectiveness – Student Satisfaction, Progress, and Achievement
- Diversity
- Innovation
- Economic Growth and Vitality
- Community Outreach and Impact

The institution sets a benchmark, or a desired outcome, for each of the 34 indicators. The benchmark is to be achieved within a four-year time period. Benchmarks must be achievable, indicative of progress, based on the performance of similar institutions where possible, and reflective of funding. The annual PAR documents the college's progress on the performance indicators, how well it is serving its community, and a complete set of trend data and benchmarks for each indicator. Data collection and reporting is standardized for community colleges through a clear set of operational definitions, ensuring that each college is collecting and submitting comparable data. The Board of Trustees must review and approve the report each year before it is submitted to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

The data in the PAR provide HCC with important indicators of HCC's level of institutional effectiveness. Areas of concern and areas of success are documented in the report. The executive staff, deans, and unit supervisors review the information and apply it to their areas of responsibility in the form of improvements, continuation of successful work, and/or future budgeting and planning as appropriate. The PAR report and accompanying data are available to the public via the College's website.

The Maryland Annual Collection (MAC2) is a comprehensive annual collection of data about enrollment, completions, finances, and human resources that the State uses to inform funding, policy, and legislation regarding higher education.

- **Cultural Diversity Report (formerly Minority Achievement Report)**

As part of the Maryland State performance accountability reporting, Maryland Community Colleges report on their progress in the recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty, and professional staff every three years. The reports contain strategies for improving performance as well as notable successes to be sustained. Community Colleges use a standard set of performance measures including:

- Minority student enrollment as a percent of service area population
- Percent minorities of full-time executive/managerial staff
- Percent minorities of full-time faculty
- Four-year transfer/graduation rate of full-time minority students
- Six-year transfer graduation rate of all minority students

The information in the Cultural Diversity Report provides HCC with important indicators of HCC's level of institutional effectiveness in the area of minority enrollment, employment and achievement. Areas of concern and areas of success are documented in the report. The executive staff and deans use the information to make improvements, to continue successful interventions, programs, and services and/or future budgeting and planning as appropriate. The Cultural Diversity Report is available to the public via the College's website.

- **Campus Climate Survey**

Implemented initially in 2015, the biennial Campus Climate Survey assesses student perception of safety, education about sexual violence, reporting procedures, and communication about sexual assault on campus. Results are reported to MHEC and are used by the College to improve its programming and services in this important area.

- **Mission Review**

The College, along with all Maryland Community Colleges, periodically submits to MHEC a Mission Review report that includes review of the College's mission statement, institutional identity, institutional capabilities including quality, effectiveness and affordability, and institutional outcomes and objectives. This report is prepared by senior staff and approved by the Board of Trustees. This report is available to the public on MHEC's website at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/publications/index.asp>. Select Academic Studies, 2012 Mission Review

- **Other Surveys**

In conjunction with all other Maryland public colleges and at the behest of MHEC, HCC conducts regular surveys of graduates and of non-returning students to assess levels of

satisfaction with students' goal attainment, educational quality, and services. These results inform decision-making and planning for a variety of campus units.

Surveys and Data Reporting

- **PACE**—Personal Assessment of the College Environment Survey. The PACE survey is designed to assess employees' satisfaction with the college climate by identifying the areas of greatest satisfaction and priorities for change. The PACE survey is a proven tool for accountability and benchmarking of institutional effectiveness. PACE was first administered to employees in spring 2005, re-administered in spring 2008, 2011, and 2014, and will continue to be used every 3-4 years.
- **IPEDS**—IPEDS is the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. It is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. These data are made available to students and parents through the College Navigator college search Web site and to researchers and others through the IPEDS Data Center.
- **Voluntary Framework for Accountability (VFA)**—The College was a charter participant in the American Association of Community Colleges' Voluntary Framework. Metrics designed by community colleges for community colleges allow member institutions to benchmark against like institutions in areas such as completion, credit-level attainment, transfer, and developmental course completion. These metrics are publicly available on the VFA website.
- **Student Services Surveys**—Student service units such as Advising, Career, and Transfer Services, Financial Aid, and Student Success conduct on-going, point-of-service surveys to assess level of student satisfaction with the recently visited service. Results are used to inform decision-making and planning for those units.
- **Economic Impact**—In coordination with the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, the College periodically participates in a regional economic impact study. These results inform institutional planning and budgeting processes.

HCC Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Improvement Model

In 2007, the President's Staff created and approved a visual depiction of the institution's planning, budgeting, assessing, improving processes – the *HCC Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Improvement Model*. The model, since revised to include various assessment leadership groups (such as the Learning Assessment Committee) and the Academic Affairs

Strategic Plan, represents how the HCC Mission, Vision, and Values serve as the foundation from which the HCC Strategic Plan was developed. These overarching documents are used in developing unit, department, budget, program, course, learning goals, and plans. As goals and plans are developed, budgetary implications must be considered and appropriate budgets allocated. Data is generated and analyzed. The outcomes of the goals and plans are assessed and evaluated, and again, the findings are applied to budget decisions and allocations. Results from the assessments are applied in future planning to make improvements in teaching, instruction, programs, services, departments, etc. The results of all assessment inform the Mission, Vision, Values, and the Strategic Plan.