

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Ozarks Technical Community College
Springfield, MO**

February 7-9, 2011

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The purpose of the visit to Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation.

B. Organizational Context

OTC is an urban/suburban/rural compressive community college serving both a tax levy service district and a broader region not in the taxed service area but located within the reach of the College's centers.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

OTC is unique in the fact that is has grown from a beginning of small number of students and programs in 1991 to over 12,000 and six locations. This unparallel growth has enabled to College to increase its service to the region tenfold. This growth has also provided the College with both challenges and resources to address its mission. The physical challenges have been aggressively addressed via the building of not only the Springfield campus facilities but via the Richwood Valley Campus and three additional centers across the region.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

Richwood Valley Campus and Branson Education Center.

E. Distance Education Reviewed

OTC supports effective online instruction by ensuring that online faculty has the skills needed to create and teach successful online courses. OTC Online oversees the entire online program for the college including a new unit with OTC Online called eLearning Outreach that also incorporates workforce development, displaced workers, military, and government. The requirement of OTL: 101: Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning of all new faculty certifies that faculty are prepared to teach in the online environment. The quality improvement initiative begun in Spring 2010 promotes a culture of continuous improvement in online courses with review and evaluation of online course development and delivery. OTC uses Blackboard as its learning management platform and the faculty underscores their satisfaction with the technical and academic support for the offerings. Resources have been invested in online course development, quality assurance and student satisfaction as evidenced by the required training of online faculty, the commitment to course and program review by faculty and staff and the rubrics used to evaluate each course.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

Academic Services

Asst. Dean Disability Support, Testing Services
 Director of Institutional Effectiveness
 Interim Director of TLC Tutoring
 Assistant Dean of Academic Services
 Dean – Learning Resources
 Dean of Academic Services

Student Services

Assistant Registrar and Director of International Programs
 Coordinator of Testing and Student Services Support
 Asst Director, Advising and Online Student Services
 Coordinator of Advisor Training and Development

Director, Counseling and Advising, Chair, Behavioral Intervention Team
 College Director of Financial Aid
 Asst Coordinator of Financial Aid
 Asst Director of Financial Aid
 Admissions Representative
 Lead Student Services Representative

Dean's Council

Dean of Instruction, Richwood Valley; Dean of Business Accounting and Economics
 Dean of General Ed
 Dean of Tech. Ed
 Dean, Extended Campuses and College Outreach
 Administrative Dean, Richwood Valley
 Dean of Allied Health
 Dean of Academic Services
 College Director of OTC Online

Online Education

Director – Branson Education Center
 Director – Lebanon Education Center
 Coordinator of Online Instructional Development OTC Online

Department Chairs/Program Directors

ASN Program Director
 PN Program – Reeds Spring Director
 Health Sciences Program Director
 Dental Hygiene Program Director
 Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Director
 Dental Assisting Program Director
 Program Coordinator AAT
 Dept. Chair Communication and Foreign Language
 Dept. Chair Teacher Ed/Psychology/Criminal Justice
 Dept. Chair Biological Sciences
 Dept. Chair – Arts and Humanities
 Dept. Chair Social Science
 Program Director – Physical Therapy Assistant Program
 Program Director Medical Lab Tech Program
 Program Director – Respiratory Therapy
 Dept. Chair Transportation
 Dept. Chair Early Childhood
 Dept. Chair Culinary/Hospitality
 Dept. Chair – EMP, CIS, NET
 Dept. Chair – CST, HRA, FST, GDT, ELC
 Dept. Chair – Mathematics
 Dept. Chair – English
 Dept. Chair – Physical Science

Institutional Advancement

Coordinator of Public Information
 Coordinator of Publications
 Director of Web Services
 College Director of Research and Strategic Planning
 Coordinator of Web Services
 Coordinator of Marketing
 Director of Development
 Secretary
 Graphic Design
 Secretary for Institutional Advancement

Director of Grants Development
 Research Assistant
 Director of Development
 Assistant to the VP for IA
 Coordinator of Videography and Video Editing
 College Director of Communications and Marketing
 Vice President for Advancement

Individual Administrative Staff

President
 Vice President of Administrative Services
 Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs
 Vice President of Finance
 Vice President of Institutional Advancement
 Vice President of Information Technology
 Executive Director, Center for Workforce Development
 College Director Financial Aid
 Dean of Students
 College Director of Human Resources
 College Director of Finance
 Director of Facilities and Grounds
 Dean of Learning Resources
 Dean of Academic Services
 Assistant Dean of Disability Support and Testing Services
 Director of Tutoring and Learning Center
 Director of Institutional Effectiveness
 College Director of OTC Online
 Education Center Directors (2)
 Director of Career Employment Services
 Associate Vice President of Student Affairs

Assessment Committee – 10 members attended

Administrative Staff General Meeting – 71 members attended

Community Participants Luncheon – 17 attended

HLC Steering Committee – 19 attended

Faculty Meeting – 90 faculty members attended

Staff Meeting – 128 staff members attended

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

Academic Affairs Council Minutes
 Assessment Committee Minutes
 Board of Trustees Minutes
 Cabinet Minutes
 Curriculum Committee Minutes
 Finance Council Minutes
 Institutional Advancement Council Minutes
 Insurance Committee Minutes
 OTC Foundation Committee Minutes
 Self-Study Steering Committee Minutes
 180-day Follow-Up Report 2004
 180-day Follow-Up Report 2009
 2007-2008 Assessment Plan
 2009 Assessment Report
 2009 Assessment Report

2009-2010 Assessment Plan
 2009-2010 Professional Development
 2010 Assessment Report
 2010 Assessment Report
 2010-2011 Assessment Plan
 Assessment – Historical Timelines
 Employer Survey 2009
 Strategic Plan 2004-05
 Strategic Plan 2006-07
 Strategic Plan 2020
 Strategic Plan 2020 Revised 2010
 Strategic Plan 2020 Revised 2010
 Student Satisfaction Survey -- SP10
 Student Satisfaction Surveys
 Articulation Agreements with four-year institutions
 Career Center Student Handbook 2010-2011
 Computer Use Agreement
 Curriculum Handbook 2008-2009
 Curriculum Handbook 2011-2012
 Employee Handbook 2010-2011
 Faculty Handbook 2009-2010
 Faculty Handbook 2010-2011
 OTC Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures Manual – Policy 2.14
 OTC Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures Manual – Policy 4.01(b)
 Student Handbook 2010-2011
 Audit Report -- FY08
 Audit Report -- FY09
 Audit Report – FY10
 OTC Fiscal Budget 2009-2010
 OTC Fiscal Budget 2010-2011
 OTC Foundation Annual Report 2009
 OTC Foundation Annual Report 2010
 Minutes – Board of Trustees
 Missouri Community College Association
 OTC Catalog 2010-2011
 OTC Profile – Spring 2010
 OTC Profile – Spring 2011
 OTC Profile – Summer/Fall 2010
 Physical Facilities Master Plan
 Third Party Comments
 Trend Data Report
 Program Advisory Committee Guidelines
 General Orientation
 Financial Aid Orientation
 Student Advising and Registration (STAR)
 National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP)
 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

OTC organized its comprehensive self-study in alignment with the Higher Learning Commission's five criteria for accreditation. The self-study addressed all of the core components under each criterion, provided descriptions of evidence in support of the fulfillment of each component. In the self-study, OTC examined processes and functions for the College and

provided sufficient information and references to source data to enable the team to adequately prepare strategic inquiries in advance of the visit.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

In organizing the administrators, faculty, and staff for the self-study experience, OTC sought the widest possible involvement. A large number of the members of each employee group served on committees, collected data, wrote drafts of sections, and responded to the requests for review and comments as the drafts were edited into a final document. During the visit, interviews conducted by the team confirmed that the self-study document represents fairly the work of the committees, and speaks collectively for the College. The self-study is inclusive of assessment and evaluation, as well as in-depth analysis. More evidence could have been presented of what the College is doing to respond to the challenges presented in the self-study.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team reviewed all the evidence and materials provided by the College in regards to the challenges identified in 2001, as well as, interviewed the current College administration, faculty, and staff. The College has given considerable attention to the issues identified by the 2001 visit team. The one area identified in 2001 that still needs attention is centered on the assessment of student learning as reported in Criterion III.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Notification of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs.

B. Student Complaints

The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and is systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.

C. Transfer Policies

The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.

D. Verification of Student Identity

The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the Identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education.

E. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities

The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program. The team has reviewed these materials and has found no cause for concern regarding the institution's administration or oversight of its Title IV responsibilities.

- a) **General Program Requirements:** The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.
- b) **Financial Responsibility Requirements:** The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.
- c) **Default Rates, Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies:** The institution has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.

F. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities

The institution has presented evidence on the required Contractual Relationships: The institution has presented evidence of its contracts with non-accredited third party providers of 25-50% of the academic content of any degree or certificate programs.

G. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials

The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.

H. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards

The institution has documented that it discloses its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a) OTC has one clear mission statement that is prominently contained in the College Catalog, displayed on campus, presented in various other College publications and the website. Their mission statement is consistent with the purview of the College and the charge given by the Community and State for the institution.
- b) The President has provided gifted leadership and vision to the College since assuming the position in 2006 as evidenced by interviews with all constituents.
- c) The College's mission statement clearly addresses student's diverse academic needs and varied learning goals, as well as the educational needs of external constituencies at large. Meetings with community representatives documented the value of the

College's mission and the role of the graduates in their enterprises.

- d) Conversations with community representatives documented that OTC's dealings with its community partners are conducted in an honest and collaborative manner, which supports both the learning on the part of the students and the outcomes to the community.
- e) The College's Board of Trustees provided substantial evidence that the College is highly engaged in the communities of the College's service district and the greater region and that the overall mission of community engagement is exemplified by OTC.
- f) The College's administration has demonstrated integrity of the highest level in its dealings with all of the institution's constituencies as evidenced by the many interviews conducted by the team with individuals from the region.
- g) All financial dealings of the College are managed in standard, well developed processes and audits reveal that all financial dealings are of high integrity.
- h) The college's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes, which enable the organization to fulfill its mission. A discussion with the President, review of the College's organizational chart and discussion with faculty and staff verify that appropriate administrative structures are in place to advance the organization.
- i) The members of the Board of Trustees clearly understand their collective role as a policy-making body. A review of board minutes and discussion with trustees supports the self-study's finding that the Board engages in appropriate activities, which support leadership and shared governance processes for institutional decision-making.
- j) The trustees indicate support for and knowledge of the HLC processes engaged in by OTC, including support for the concepts of self-study and peer review.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- a) The introduction and implementation of the governance councils as a method to engage the college community in all aspects of the college has been a noble effort. The team found that additional improvements in governance have the potential of carrying this initiative to even greater success. While the governance councils have brought a sense of connection among levels of employee groups, the system needs to mature and grow based on feedback loops. This claim is made based on interviews with faculty and staff who explained a positive experience at OTC and recognize an improving sense of connection compared to past, but they express a need for more connections in the process. While the objectives for each of the councils are

evolving, there is no evaluation plan to determine the effectiveness of the councils as they pertain to communication and shared governance.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; No Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. The College's growth has been matched only by its ability to grow facilities to serve the increasing numbers. The Springfield campus boasts of a physical plant that is state of the art for both career and transfer offerings. The two older buildings have been recently completely remodeled and now serve as both excellent educational settings and examples of the effective reuse of resources.
- b. The College's maintenance and repair of the physical plant are exceptional and the learning environment is fully supported, clean and comfortable.
- c. Program review, conducted every 5 years, provides data points about health of programs. Included in that data are enrollment trends, employer surveys, an environmental scan, faculty availability, cost/benefit analysis, placement rates of certificate and degree completers, and currency of curricular objectives. Student satisfaction of the program as well as Key Quality Indicators (KQI's) are also a part of the data collected. Advisory boards contribute by articulating the need from program content. The reviews require the completion of a review document linking the program viability to OTC's mission and the needs of the community. The vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and lead faculty analyze the document and make recommendations about the future direction of the programs.
- d. Funds were secured to build ten new classrooms at the main campus to help alleviate overcrowding. In order to accommodate enrollment growth, the Springfield City council voted to expand the Master Plan and purchase land north of the Springfield campus. This will allow the campus to eventually provide more classroom space and improve parking conditions. In addition, plans are underway to build a new education center in Hollister, MO to replace the nearby Branson Educational center and allow

for continued enrollment growth in the southern portion of the service area. The education center in Lebanon is also slated for expansion. The college recognizes the need for additional facilities and is responding to those needs.

- e. With the recent tragic events that have occurred on several schools and colleges across the country, OTC has responded by providing more secure campuses. Drills for active shooter have taken place at both the main campus and Richwood Valley campus. In addition to its own security personnel, negotiations with the Springfield police department to provide off-duty police officers during peak hours to facilitate the response to security issues. A color-coded alert system has been established .
- f. Technology within the classrooms and throughout all branches of the college is sufficient to meet the demand of the institution. Internet services and networks are built to anticipate future demand. Each classroom visited had an instructor's station and a projector mounted on the ceiling and new classrooms are designed to allow for network services. Discussions with the Vice President for Information Technology indicate a well established plan for purchasing and distributing new computers for students, faculty and staff. OTC has a clear pathway to provide the technology services for the foreseeable future.
- g. OTC's history of maintaining financial resources demonstrates its ability to serve its constituency. Annual financial reports from the past two years indicate a net increase in assets and a show positive cash flow. While the College receives funding from the state and local property taxes, it relies heavily on tuition and student fees for funding. A steady growth in enrollment at campuses and educational centers has increased this revenue source. OTC is also able to generate auxiliary revenue from a variety of sources such as its bookstore and food service. In FY 2010, approximately 64% of operating expenses were allocated to instruction, academic support and student services, indicating the Colleges commitment to maintaining the quality of the educational services it provides. In addition, OTCs capital campaign "Imagine. Invest. Inspire. Major Gifts Campaign." has steadily increased which allowed the college to award more scholarships.
- h. Over ninety academic programs and departments have a well defined process to promote continuous improvement. Each department participates in a five year review process consisting of a review document to assess the effectiveness of each department. Key Quality Indicators provide measurable outcomes that are specific to each department. The review documents are evaluated by independent review panels that provide feedback, list strengths and challenges and make recommendations for improvement. The review process helps ensure that each department's mission supports the mission of the College and to serves integrate assessment, planning and resource allocation.
- i. OTC's efforts in advancement are very positive as the college has secured strong external private funding that will assist the college's efforts to expand facilities and services. Multiple recent gifts to the college have allowed it to improve facilities for its child care program and services. This initiative is very successful for such a young college that had very little fundraising in its first 10 years of existence. Interviews with the Institutional Advancement office suggest an assertive approach to

making future connections and securing additional gifts.

- j. While the current economic conditions throughout the country limit an increase in full-time faculty and staff, OTC has demonstrated a clear commitment to maintaining high quality employees at all levels within the institution. The number of full-time faculty, adjunct faculty and full-time staff has consistently increased over the past several years. OTC has opened health and wellness center, staffed with an area physician, to provide services to all employees. And even with decreased state funding due to the poor economic climate, faculty and staff have still received salary increases. This demonstrates that OTC values its employees and strives to maintain its intellectual capital, thus positioning itself for future long term growth.
- k. To gauge the success of current programs and anticipate the need for new programs, OTC uses a variety of data sources. The Trend Data Report tracks the enrollment and graduation rates for OTC programs. The National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSE), and graduate follow-up reports help guide the college in determining the effectiveness of their programs and project the future needs of the community.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.

- a. While the organization has a strategic plan that recently has been revised, a pattern of evidence suggests that more work needs to be done, an admission by the college in its self-study document as well as interviews with administration. The 2001 HLC team also suggested that the plan was “well organized” but “should be strengthened to communicate the full implementation and integration of the plan to all levels of faculty and staff. Some faculty and staff reported feeling detached from the college planning process.” Interviews with relevant administration indicate that recent organizational shifts in planning have resulted in a process and a product that the college plans to improve. This aligns with the team’s current recommendation. There is a solid foundation upon which to build a revised process and product:
 - Strong relations with stakeholders in the community (community interviews, employer survey, 180-day Follow-Up Report; Institutional Advancement interviews and gifts accumulation record);
 - External and internal environmental data (new census data, advisory committee feedback, assessment results, student satisfaction surveys);
 - Governance processes (governance councils, advisory groups).

A legitimate external challenge the team recognizes is the recent financial challenges in all of higher education which makes long-term strategic planning difficult. Compounding this challenge for OTC is the explosive growth in enrollment. In this respect, the team believes OTC should carefully assess its current growth goal of over 20,000 students by the year 2020 with expected state revenue reductions. Capacity should be carefully planned in accordance with master facilities planning. Finally, the team believes that OTC should complete its promise to refine the strategic planning process that embraces an effective institutional effectiveness cycle that includes sound feedback loops and clearly links mission, goals, assessment

results, other planning needs (e.g., facilities, maintenance, technology), and budget to strategic initiatives.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; No Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. According to the self-study, interviews with staff, and from team members' visiting the site, the library is well-suited to support the educational program at OTC. It is a very inviting space, enhanced by the architectural value of the structure and the artwork within it.
- b. The Center for Workforce Development responds to the needs of the region's business and industry via many partnerships resulting in increased service to these businesses in the form of training, testing, and consulting which in turn enables them to be more effective and productive.
- c. The Communications and Public Relations unit does an excellent job of overseeing and producing publications and press releases to highlight events at OTC with particular attention to the many exciting activities and successes of students.
- d. Technical and allied health programs utilize both external licensures as well as regional and national competitions such as Skills USA to constantly monitor program currency. OTC routinely revises curriculum in these programs by examining which skill sets were not mastered or which areas of the licensing exams had the lowest scores. The immediacy and agility with which these curricular changes are made reflects OTC's commitment to state-of-the-art technical education.
- e. A sophomore seminar course, which provides a vehicle for successful transition to upper level college work, has been developed and offered focusing on critical thinking, intellectual creativity and academic rigor. This capstone experience is highly regarded by students and faculty and fosters a learning environment that

values student achievement, ability to use inter-disciplinary knowledge and rich interpersonal dialog.

- f. The career and technical program areas effectively utilize advisory committees to assist and guide instruction, courses, and student outcomes.
- g. The College provides ongoing enrichment activities for the students and the public, including creative and performing arts, concerts and speakers.
- h. OTC offers an Honors option for students that was developed with the input from the local public and private universities and now attracts many talented students who can attend OTC and matriculate on to the university with honors credit.
- i. After reviewing human resource files for approximately twenty faculty members, it was found that updated transcripts were on file for both adjunct and full-time faculty. Faculty in general education had a master's degree and at least eighteen graduate credit hours in the subject area being taught. Faculty teaching technical disciplines had appropriate degrees with related work experience. In discussions with faculty groups, it was made clear that faculty enjoy what they teach and are dedicated to the success of their students.
- j. After visiting classrooms and lab facilities, it is clear that instructors have adequate support for the equipment and facilities appropriate for effective instruction. Science labs were well stocked with a variety of models, microscopes, measuring devices and other such devices required to effectively teach science courses. Students were actively engaged in lab exercises and faculty enthusiastically encouraged student to investigate their surroundings using scientific data. OTC clearly supports enriched classroom environments.
- k. To help new students navigate the OTC system and optimize, a variety of resources are provided. A general orientation to the college, financial aid orientation, and Student Advising and Registration (STAR) seminars are available. Students learn about placement scores, college resources and receive academic advising. The college also provides early career counseling and help undecided students select a major. Such services are helpful to students and promote student success.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up

The last HLC visit identified challenges in assessment of student learning. The 2001 team found that the plan was not widely understood or uniformly implemented. The current team found that while the college has made strides in assessment, there is a disconnect between faculty and administration understanding of how learning can be proven especially as defined

by the institution. There is conflicting evidence concerning the understanding, definition and support of the current plan and in particular of how to measure general education. There appears to be a lack of direct linkages among goals and outcomes among levels of educational layers including general education goals, department goals, program goals, and course learning objectives. Interviews among employee groups demonstrated a genuine disconnect of process and use of results. The most current assessment report, for example, is extensive but relies heavily on external standardized testing that is not directly linked to the institution's own goals and objectives for student learning.

There is conflicting evidence concerning the understanding, definition and support of the general education core at OTC. A thorough review of the general education core is timely as the college has expanded its degree offerings over the last ten years. The College has not fully developed a culture of assessment that underpins all academic offerings; course, program, and degree levels. While this process is one of continuous effort and attention, of even greater significance is the total commitment required by all levels of the academic enterprise.

The budget for all of assessment is small (\$7,000) especially in light of the importance of the assessment effort at the college. This budget includes updates for WEAVE online, printing of the assessment documents and some workshops and training. Given the critical need to elevate assessment activities to an appropriate level, college resources must be committed to the effort.

While a systematic process of course assessment began in 2008, department/division data and information sharing has been uneven across the college. While data provided from those course assessments are shared with department chairs, faculty need to be engaged in the potential curricular revision discussion. There should be an opportunity for the college to systematically communicate course assessment results and curricular improvement efforts.

All evidence concerning assessment of student learning and the centrality of general education taken together, lead to the recommendation that the College needs to address these critical areas and follow up with the Commission on the results (3a). The team's recommending that a Progress Report be submitted to the Commission by May 2013.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criteria met; HLC follow-up recommended.

Progress Report, May 1, 2013 on Assessment of Student Learning and General Education

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a. OTC has gone through a shift from its early beginnings as a mostly technical college to a comprehensive one. As such, general education has grown to be a much more vital component for the college and its students. The general education curriculum seems consistent with accepted expectations in typical content areas. Curriculum guides demonstrate integration of general education into degree programs.
- b. The student graduate follow-up survey queried the graduates as to the contribution OTC made to their overall learning of the college competencies. The highest rated abilities were employability and professionalism and the lowest rated were culture and global awareness and information management.
- c. For technical programs, the use of the ACT product WORKKEYS provides the college faculty and administration with valuable feedback about the soft skills needed to enter the workforce. Appropriate attention is paid to subtle and dramatic trends and the faculty and the career center staff respond with content and workshops that move to right inadequacies.
- d. OTC values learning in a positive atmosphere as evidenced by academic freedom, academic personal freedom, and academic integrity. OTC demonstrates that it values a culture of lifelong learning among various constituency groups. This claim is evidenced by reviews of documentation of student scholarships, recognition of student achievement, commitment to an honors program, tuition waiver programs for employees, sabbatical policy, professional development opportunities, the Leadership OTC program, and Center for Workforce Development training.
- e. The self study document and accompanying relevant materials reveal multiple scholarship opportunities for students to support learning opportunities. Interviews with employees, such as the Director of Career and Employment Services, demonstrated a commitment by the institution to provide new scholarships to first generation college students. Other scholarships available to students include GED scholarships, continuing student scholarships, reentry scholarships, ambassador scholarships, among a variety of other scholarships to assist students with learning. The college devotes about a half-million dollars each year to scholarships. Additionally, OTC's work with its neighbor Missouri State on an honors program and the State of Missouri's A+ program helps serve different populations from the traditional career track populations for OTC. Students are also recognized for academic achievements via President's and Dean's Lists.
- f. Employees are provided with extensive and useful professional development opportunities ranging from campus safety procedures, technology skill training, and enrichment events. Additionally, policy exists for a tuition reimbursement plan for full-time employees and evidence exists that this policy is used. Thirty-three employees divided \$50,000 in tuition reimbursements as reported in the self study. In addition, OTC has a sabbatical (educational leave) policy. Evidence indicates this policy is used by employees.
- g. A useful and successful initiative for succession planning is the Leadership OTC program. This program is useful for succession planning and team development.

This is an encouraging sign of rapport-building in addition to other venues of recognition through e-mail announcements and newsletters.

- h. Multiple educational opportunities exist for community retraining and enrichment events. For example, the Center for Workforce Development training offers tailored training for the area. Of particular interest is the VIP program for seniors who can have a reduced tuition rate for courses. This could be an area of additional growth as interviews dictate that the area has a growing retirement population.
- i. The college has made strides from the previous HLC visit in terms of articulation agreements with four-year institutions including out-of-state colleges in online learning.
- j. Co-curricular activities include mostly academic activities including Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), Student government, and various clubs. Interviews with students demonstrated value of these organizations and their satisfaction with sponsors and support. These academic organizations, as national affiliated groups, have standards and measures that provide external validation of their success because of continued participation and activity in these activities.

Recommendation of the Team

1. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; No Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- a) OTC's connections with the business community are strong and vibrant, as evidenced by comments made by a host of community leaders. Programs have been designed to support corporate training, basic adult education, dislocated worker programming, special training for youth, and general community education. These programs are

integrated into the core work of the College. The greater community sees OTC as a strong part of economic development, lifelong learning, and incumbent worker training.

- b) The external community values OTC as the best educational value in the region. Community members and employees alike proclaim heartfelt thanks to the College's leaders for the College's leadership within the community and for its positive impact upon the lives of the College's students, employees, and the greater region.
- c) The College's work with the area public schools to provide career technical education to hundreds of students while also providing them college credit and job ready skills is evidence that the institution is highly valued and engaged in significant service to the region.
- d) The College has reached out to serve the greater region by creating five centers and campuses in less than ten years and the most recent decision to locate a campus in Hollister School District in response to their request and approval to enter the College's tax district shows continued engagement and commitment to serve the region to the greatest extent.
- e) The College has engaged in the Missouri A+ program by fully embracing these students and for example, served 1,771 students who received nearly \$3.1 million in A+ funds to assist with tuition and fees in 2008-09 alone.
- f) The collaborations with area four-year institutions to provide for pathways for transfer students have resulted in a dramatic increase in opportunities for students to begin their education with low cost-student centered OTC and matriculate on to one of the several public and private universities in the region and beyond.
- g) A discussion with the Executive Director of the Center for Workforce Development demonstrated OTC's commitment to serve the training needs for industry and businesses. Board members were impressed by the institutions ability to quickly adapt to the training needs of local businesses and the Springfield Business Journal voted OTC as the 2nd most significant change in the area. OTC provides the region necessary training to enhance the economic development of the community.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and

require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; No Commission follow-up recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No Change

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No Change

2. Degrees awarded

No Change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change

2. Approval of degree sites

No Change

3. Approval of distance education degree

No Change

4. Reports required

Progress Report

The team is recommending that the College submit a Progress Report by May 1, 2013, to address issues regarding general education and student learning assessment. This report will include:

1. A consistent general education core and outcomes crafted by the College faculty that are expected of all graduates of the College as well as a process for evaluating the attainment of these outcomes.
2. A set of expected learning outcomes for each program (graduate competencies)

- and the associated methods and tools identified to evaluate these.
3. A College-wide protocol of the assessment practices that indicate specific timelines, documentation processes, links to planning and improvement processes in the College and persons responsible for each activity.
 4. The leadership responsibilities related to the assessment activities identified and the needed resource commitment.

Monitoring Report

None

Contingency Report

None

5. Other visits scheduled

None

6. Organization change request

None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

E. Summary of Commission Review

Next Comprehensive visit recommended for academic year 2020-2021

Rationale for recommendation:

This recommendation is based on the team's judgment after the comprehensive visit to the College where dozens of interviews and on-site reviews provided the evidence that OTC meets the five criteria set forth for accreditation and continues to exceed the Minimum Expectations of Accreditation. The Self-Study, as well, provided strong evidence that OTC meets the criteria.

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Ozarks Technical Community College
Springfield, MO**

February 7-9, 2011

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

OTC is a comprehensive community college serving a large region of south-central MO with two campuses and other additional outreach sites. It has been one of the fastest growing institutions in the country since its founding in 1991 with more than twelve-thousand credit students today.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

Assessment

It is clear from the reporting documents and interviews with faculty, administrators and staff that OTC is committed to a comprehensive program of student outcomes assessment. However, the conflicting evidence concerning the understanding, definition and support of the assessment program at the college suggests that core work on assessment is needed in order to move the college to a more mature assessment process. Outlined here are consultations on assessment that might be valuable to the success of the assessment program.

Assessment can, and often does, encompass many activities. At OTC, the Assessment Committee is comprised of a 12-member group and six subcommittees. The subcommittees represent both the academic areas of the college and the support areas. The subcommittees representing academic areas are composed mainly of faculty. The 12-member group, however, is made up primarily of administrators. While OTC's Institutional Assessment Plan says responsibility for assessment is shared, this structure does not suggest a faculty-driven assessment process.

OTC might wish to consult with its HLC liaison to identify other commission institutions that have developed exemplary approaches to assessment. Discussions with colleagues from other institutions can demonstrate options OTC might wish to explore. There are models in the country that might be worth examining especially as they are comparable to OTC. One resource to examine models is the National Benchmarking Project. Through this effort, OTC would be matched/compared to "like" institutions and would find other college assessment programs that might have applicability. More information can be found at <http://www.nccbp.org>.

Institutions support their faculty assessment activities in multiple ways. OTC might want to consider implementing the following:

- Faculty must be the drivers and at the core of the assessment process. Faculty leadership, defined by reassigned or release time, would signal to the college community the commitment the college invests in faculty driven assessment of student learning. Award released time for faculty chair to chair the assessment subcommittees. These positions can be defined for a set length of time and rotate among faculty, thus increasing the participation in assessment activities.

- Incorporate discussion of assessment results into annual department planning activities.
 - Create an assessment boot camp. Some colleges have created this approach to provide faculty a concentrated time to work on assessment activities. Teams of faculty from departments can define an activity to be completed during the camp, which is scheduled for days outside the faculty's contract, and apply to attend. Members of the assessment committee review applications and recommend teams for participation. Individuals on teams that are selected receive a stipend for their participation.
 - Provide recognition for assessment work. Some institutions have created assessment awards. Awards can acknowledge the accomplishment of an individual faculty member or a department and can be presented at an all-faculty event.
- It may be helpful for the college to take a step back and gather a group of faculty and staff to examine the assessment effort in light of continuous quality improvement. This is particularly true of the examination of general education assessment where a review of the general education core is timely especially as the college has expanded its degree offerings over the last ten years. A retreat on these topics where faculty and staff focus on the assessment work would go a long way in having the in-depth discussion that is needed.

A realistic budget for assessment should be established as a line item in the budget. This should include efforts for professional development, assessment tools, a consultant on assessment (should that prove useful) and release time for faculty. Without adequate financial resources, the assessment effort is not fully incorporated in the college's intent for continuous quality improvement.

A developed communication plan about assessment should be outlined and executed in order that the entire college community to be knowledgeable about the assessment and results at OTC. This communication plan could include things like an online web page for assessment only, periodic electronic newsletters highlighting best practices and new lessons learned, face-to-face meetings with departments focused solely on assessment and opportunity for review and comment by the faculty on the assessment.

Strategic Planning

- a) OTC's efforts to revise strategic planning are obvious. The previous team in 2001 noted a need for revision of the process as well. While some effort has been made, there could be additional improvements to consider as the process and product are revised as planned and noted by senior administration.
- b) Suggestions:
 - a. Process
 - i. Seek campus empowerment for strengthened buy in of the process and product. This can be a laborious process but can be fruitful for the organization. Faculty and staff will help carry out objectives better if they have been involved in the process.

- ii. Engage outside stakeholders (advisory committees) in the planning process. Given the quality work OTC has accomplished in its relationships with external stakeholders, this step should be easy to accomplish.
 - iii. Integrate sound environmental scanning of internal data and external data including but not limited to: program review, assessment results, benchmarking data, evaluation results, demographic statistics, etc.
- b. Once comprehensive objectives are generated from the environmental scan, specific initiatives could be determined for each objective. These initiatives could be formed within the strategic plan or as departmental/divisional initiatives thus serving as operational plans that feed into the strategic plan.
- i. Define several metrics for measuring the progression of each objective.
 - ii. Set benchmarks by comparing with national data (where appropriate).
 - iii. Determine initiatives to achieve each objective.
 - iv. Tie the budgeting process to the strategic goals.
 - v. Link Institution Challenges action reports to Strategic Plan.
- c. These suggestions are in no way exhaustive, but they do provide a general idea for the college to consider in order to address the previous team’s observations and the current team’s observations of the maturing process of strategic planning.

GOVERNANCE

- a) The efforts to improve governance are commendable and the institution is moving in the right direction. The most significant addition to the process would be to be more inclusive of faculty in the process. While they do have representation on the governance committees, the number could be increased and have a detailed slate of alternates in case of absences for each member. Input on scheduling of meetings could be improved in order to be more inclusive and foster participation.
- b) An assessment process on governance would also be of great benefit. This would provide valuable feedback regarding the effectiveness of how integrated of a system has been developed. Such an addition would support the goal of continuous quality improvement.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

FUNDRAISING/ADVANCEMENT

The college has made great strides to seek external support in a variety of capacities. This work is exceptional for such a young institution and should be continued. Goals and benchmarks for

the cause should be included in the strategic plan.

REBRANDING

OTC has undergone a significant rebranding effort advancing a strong student focus. This work is commendable and should be continued.

FINANCE

The college has sound financial processes and practices in place. A watchful progressive eye complements the conservative approach practiced by the college. This combination of strategies is a challenge to make successful, but OTC has done this as evidenced by its strong audits, fund balances, and reserves. Given that the tax levy is the lowest in the state, the financial management is very strong.

*Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

INSTITUTION and STATE: Ozarks Technical Community College, MO

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):

DATES OF REVIEW: 2/7/11 - 2/9/11

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: A

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS: The Commission's Streamlined Review Process is only available for additional sites within the service area.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: New Commission policy on institutional change became effective July 1, 2010. Some aspects of the change processes affecting distance delivered courses and programs are still being finalized. This entry will be updated in early 2011 to reflect current policy. In the meantime, see the Commission's Web site for information on seeking approval of distance education courses and programs.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Progress Report, May 1, 2013 on Assessment of Student Learning and General Education

OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: None

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2010 - 2011

YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2020 - 2021

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2020 - 2021