Standard One: Mission and Purposes

Description

One of the key recommendations of the NEASC Visiting Team that conducted CCRI’s site visit in connection with its 10-year accreditation review in 2004 was that the college develop a formal Mission Statement that accurately described the college’s goals and purposes. In addition, the Visiting Team recommended that CCRI create a mechanism for reviewing the relevance and accuracy of the newly created Mission Statement on a five-year cycle. The team’s recommendation charged the college with developing a “Mission Statement that was understandable, concise enough to remember, and reflective of the needs and services provided by a twenty-first century community college.”

In response to the NEASC recommendation, then-President Thomas D. Sepe established the Mission Initiative Committee. Work on the Mission Statement was completed two years later under current President Ray Di Pasquale, who was formally appointed to the position in July 2006. The newly drafted Mission Statement was accepted by the college community, and approved by the Rhode Island Board of Governors of Higher Education (RIGBHE) prior to the end of 2006. This Mission Statement was amended by an action in the state legislature during the January session 2010 to include the final statement referencing the “region’s workforce.” The change took effect April 29, 2010 as outlined in a letter from the General Assembly dated the same date. The purpose for the wording change was to continue to maintain the Community College of Rhode Island “as a junior college and a workforce development center.” The change in wording was necessary in order for the college to be eligible for funds earmarked for workforce development.

During CCRI’s preparation of its Fifth-Year Interim Report, the college set forth the following projected goals with respect to its mission:

- Re-enforce the use of the mission in decision-making activities.
- Develop strategies for determining the level of understanding of the mission and the extent to which the mission guides decision-making throughout the college.
- Create an ongoing process for examining the currency of the Mission Statement particularly in light of the college’s then newly adopted strategic plan.

In the process of preparing the Fifth-Year Interim Report, one of the surprising discoveries was that many of the college’s publications either did not include the Mission Statement and/or the Mission Statement was buried within the document. Steps have been taken since this discovery to include the Mission Statement in all college publications – including electronic versions – and to place it in a prominent position within each document. Mission Statement bookmarks have been printed and are available at a variety of locations on each campus.
**Appraisal**

As a part of the self-study process, the Standard One NEASC Committee reviewed CCRI’s Mission Statement using the NEASC guidelines as a benchmark. According to subheading 1.1, “the mission statement should define the character of the institution, identify its students, and reflect on its traditions and future visions.” During the review process of CCRI’s Mission Statement, the committee compared CCRI’s statement with other community colleges’ statements throughout the country. The committee also compared CCRI’s Mission Statement with the statements of Rhode Island’s two other public institutions of higher education: University of Rhode Island (URI) and Rhode Island College (RIC).

The various mission statements were compared to assess content, language and brevity. The committee members concluded that the current Mission Statement was too long and difficult to remember. The committee drafted several versions of a more concise Mission Statement and forwarded them to the President’s Council for consideration. However, once the word got out that a committee had proposed a shorter Mission Statement, some opposition arose. It appeared that a small group of faculty believed that a proposed revision to the Mission Statement was synonymous with changing the college’s mission. Given the many priorities that were surfacing through the appraisal process, the college – in consultation with NEASC personnel – made the decision to postpone modifying language in the Mission Statement. NEASC staff confirmed that the current Mission Statement was within the acceptable length limits.

CCRI is in a unique position as it serves as Rhode Island’s only public associate degree-granting institution. Standard 1.1 expresses that the mission and practices of the school must reflect the students it strives to educate and speak to societal needs. The college uses an open access process for enrollment and is a more affordable institution for higher education than other schools in the area. Multiple resources are offered to better support its diverse student population, such as developmental education courses, college success courses, programs designed to support the diverse population such as Access, New Student Orientation, community service projects, cultural events, etc.

CCRI claims to evaluate the needs of the workforce and respond by modifying or adding appropriate programs. The college has a defined process for completing program reviews. Chapter Four contains a description and appraisal of the effectiveness of the current Academic Program Review Process (APR). The Curriculum Review Committee meets twice per semester, and its purpose is to “consider courses of study and programs, and approve or reject individual courses to be offered for degree credit. The committee also assesses modification to existing courses, including changes in catalog descriptions.”

For example, in 2003, CCRI was asked to consider offering a Health Care Interpreter program to help minimize language barriers between doctor and patient. Through an advisory board consisting of stakeholders, a certificate program was designed and offered. However, changes in the health care community required the suspension of the program while it was re-examined and modified to meet new needs. The Health Care Interpreter program was recently revamped in 2012 based upon changes occurring within the health care industry relative to use of technological resources in the delivery of these services. Expectations of The Joint Commission, the national agency that accredits and certifies more than 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, helped to guide the course revisions. In Fall 2012, CCRI began
offering the revised credit certificate program to students who are bilingual in English and Spanish.

The college is constantly seeking grant funding to develop programs to address the needs of the region’s workforce while preparing students to succeed. Two recent examples of these efforts include: Connect to College and the Pathways To Advance Career Education (PACE) Program. Connect to College is a student support service program for first- and second-semester students designed to provide a link between learners and CCRI resources. The ultimate goal of the program is to increase the probability of graduation for this population.

The PACE Program focuses on training in the health care and information technologies fields, and is funded by a successful grant submitted under the TAACCCT funding guidelines. This initiative, conducted under the leadership of the Center for Workforce and Community Education (CWCE), involved gathering extensive input and guidance from agencies served and from other organizations working with adults interested in pursuing new career pathways. The targeted populations include the unemployed and those employed in health related careers and information technology fields (including veterans). The goal is to prepare students representing these specific groups to assume entry-level positions within the fields where there is projected high growth and availability of quality jobs. Through the efforts of CWCE, the college effectively demonstrates its commitment to meet the needs of the workforce in training and provides vehicles to earn a GED®. Through this division of the college, students may participate in courses in areas of adult and workplace literacy, community education, and career and technical credit and noncredit courses.

In addition to discussing the wording of the Mission Statement, the committee researched the documents where the statement appears in its entirety and ways to make it more visible. The Mission Statement appears in such publications as the viewbook, college catalog, the websites linked from the president’s and vice president for Academic Affairs’ Web pages and is printed on college bookmarks. Committee research identified some areas where CCRI’s Mission Statement is not included. Two examples of the exclusions discovered include the Commencement booklet and some of the Web pages for individual departments.

A discussion about the need for a vision statement was prompted by wording in NEASC standards. After much research, it was discovered that CCRI has no formally accepted vision statement. While there are two draft versions found on CCRI’s website dated 2005, no statement has been formerly completed and adopted. Following consideration of the definition of a vision statement, a study of vision statements from other community colleges and much discussion, wording for two suggested vision statements was submitted to President Ray Di Pasquale for further review in 2012-13. A vision statement was approved in the fall of 2013- “Changing lives in a changing world”.

The committee reviewing this Standard discussed CCRI’s purposes and whether or not the college is seeking to improve the lives of those it seeks to serve. NEASC language uses terms like “scholarship, research, and public service.” The Standard One Committee determined that in addition to distance learning offerings the college provides accessibility through the four main campuses and two satellite locations throughout the state, demonstrating CCRI’s effort to make higher education classes more accessible to those living in various communities. In addition, research also reveals that many students graduating from CCRI transfer to various colleges and
universities throughout the state and country. The Joint Admission Agreement (JAA) RIC, URI and CCRI allows qualified students to easily transfer into four-year degree programs at RIC and URI. The Center for Workforce and Community Education provides continuing opportunities for the general public to improve themselves both on campus and through worksite training.

Community service is part of the annual All-College Week planning (www.ccri.edu/acw/csd/). Faculty, staff and students work side by side at various locations in Rhode Island communities to demonstrate CCRI’s commitment to reach out in service to the state. Some faculty are integrating community service learning projects within the curricula.

NEASC guidelines reference the need for a college’s mission and purposes to be understood and accepted by all within its community. In an effort to collect information from a wider cross-section of the college community, a NEASC-related survey was developed and completed in October 2012. A total of 96 percent of the 173 respondents answered in the affirmative to indicate that they were familiar with the college’s Mission Statement. Further, 86 percent of the 173 respondents said that CCRI’s mission has an influence on their daily performance and understanding of job requirements.

As part of the appraisal process, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs surveyed how many of the academic programs posted a mission statement on their Web pages. (See Data First forms). Programs are expected to reference their mission statement as part of the Academic Program Review Process. A recent review of academic departments’ Web pages found that there were 15 programs with mission statements posted and five departments with department mission statements posted. Discussion related to the use of the mission in providing direction to curricula and the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed can be found in Standard Four.

The Office of Enrollment Services (OES) provides an example of how one division of the college developed its own specific objectives to reflect the college’s overall mission and purposes. The OES web page lists not only CCRI’s Mission Statement, but also a second testimonial in the form of a message from the associate vice president for Student Services that identified the specific mission and responsibility of that department. “These services are designed to help students meet the challenges and opportunities of college life. All our services and activities are designed to empower students to reach their full leadership potential while achieving academic and career success.”

The president has stated that with the college’s new strategic plan for 2013-2016, (www.ccri.edu/stratplan/pdfs/StrategicPlan2013.pdf), the college will undertake a formal review of its Mission Statement.

Projections

- Establish a formal mission review procedure/committee to revisit CCRI’s Mission Statement. Two important purposes should be considered: first, to examine the language in an effort to make it more concise and memorable, and second, to address its role in workforce development.
• A method for reviewing and re-evaluating the content and pertinence of CCRI’s Mission Statement must be established. The Mission Statement must also be assessed to determine how useful the elements of the statement are in providing overall direction to the college. Once the Strategic Planning Committee sets forth a long-range plan to guide the college, this committee can evaluate the accuracy of the current Mission Statement to determine its alignment with future planning.

• To increase visibility and understanding of the Mission Statement, the following steps are needed: display Mission Statement banners prominently on each campus, provide a direct link to the Mission Statement from CCRI’s website’s home page and display copies of the Mission Statement in all administration offices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1- Plan of Action Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional effectiveness**

The college reviews the relevance of its mission and vision through a series of activities linked to strategic planning. To ensure continued relevance of the mission and vision statements, the college has committed to the establishment of a formal committee that will re-assess the mission and vision annually to ensure relevance and responsiveness to the citizens of Rhode Island. The college’s strategic planning process is intricately linked with the mission and vision of the college. Plans to assess progress on the stated goals within the strategic plan include revisiting the mission and vision of the college to ensure that the strategic goals and the mission and vision are appropriately aligned.