



November 28, 2006

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road
Suite 201
Bedford, MA 01730-1433

Dear Commissioners:

During September 24-26, 2006, a focused visit to the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) was conducted to review progress on five areas raised during the College's 2004 accreditation visit and reported in a letter from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education dated October 4, 2004. As directed, CCRI submitted a progress report to the Commission on August 8, 2006.

Our focused visit and this report address three questions with regard to each of the five issues:

1. Does the Progress Report adequately respond to Commission Questions/Issues?
2. Does the Progress Report accurately represent the College's progress and activities?
3. Do the College's actions represent reasonable progress to Commission's Standards of Accreditation (effective January 1, 2006).

In addition, the Commission requested the team to evaluate CCRI's new campus in Newport, RI under the *Guidelines for the Review of Off-Campus and Distance Education Programming during a Comprehensive Evaluation*.

During our brief visit to the Community College of Rhode Island campuses in Warwick and Newport, the team was warmly welcomed and supported. We found the campus community open and willing to discuss the college's challenges and opportunities, particularly in light of its efforts to emerge from a difficult and challenging period of leadership transition.

This report will first address each of the five areas on which this visit focused; then on opening and integration of the Newport campus. The report will close with some observations that traverse the five of areas of focus.

On behalf of the visiting team, I respectfully submit this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Donovan", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Timothy J. Donovan
Evaluation Team Chair
President, Community College of Vermont

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page

Date form completed: October 26, 2006

Name of Institution: Community College of Rhode Island

1. History Year chartered or authorized 1964 Year first degrees awarded 1966

2. Type of control: State City Other; specify: _____
 Private, not-for-profit Religious Group; specify: _____
 Proprietary Other; specify: _____

3. Degree level:
 Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate

4. Enrollment in Degree Programs (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate	6,127	10,246	10,114	57%	10.4;21.6;32	1,219
Baccalaureate						
Graduate						

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year
(b1)transfer rate; (b2)completion rate

5. Number of current faculty: Full time 333* Part-time 2+ FTE: 334
*37 are temporary (visiting lecturers): +417 part-time adjuncts are not included

6. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: 2006)
(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues

Tuition	22.437
Gov't Appropriations	48.020
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	13.211
Auxiliary Enterprises	6.210
Other	3.540
Total	\$0.000

TOTAL 93.418

Expenditures

Instruction	41.232
Research	
General	44.237
Auxiliary Enterprises	5.894
Other	2.516
Total	\$0.000

TOTAL 93.879

7. Number of off-campus locations: (4 CAMPUSES PLUS 2 SITES--ALL IN-STATE)
In-state _____ Other U.S. _____ International _____ Total _____

8. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:
Programs offered entirely on-line 0 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

9. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?
 No Yes; specify program(s): some "Training & Development" Courses

10. Accreditation history:

Candidacy: February 1965 Initial accreditation: December 1969 Last comprehensive evaluation: Spring 2004
Last Commission action: CCRI continued in accreditation Date: September 23, 2004

11. Other characteristics:

1. The College ensures that its mission statement reflects the institution's current focus and vision for the future.

The College's Progress Report describes a mission initiative that began shortly after receipt of the Commission's letter in late 2004. It is apparent that this process floundered until it was reconvened in April 2006 by then interim president, Ray DiPasquale. With renewed interest and participation by the faculty, a new mission statement was proposed and adopted by the College:

The Community College of Rhode Island is the state's only public comprehensive associate degree-granting institution. We provide affordable open access to higher education at locations throughout the state. Our primary mission is to offer recent high school graduates and returning adults the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional, and personal growth through an array of academic, career, and lifelong learning programs. We meet the wide-ranging educational needs of our diverse student population, building on our rich tradition of excellence in teaching and our dedication to all students with the ability and motivation to succeed. We set high academic standards necessary for transfer and career success, champion diversity, respond to community needs, and contribute to our state's economic development and the region's workforce.

On August 4, 2006, committee co-chairs presented the mission statement to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Office of Higher Education, where it was then approved unanimously. In a final step, the statement will be presented to the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education for their approval on August 21, 2006. A copy of that resolution as attached to this report.

Summary Recommendation

We believe this requirement of the Commission's October 12, 2004 letter to CCRI has been met and we commend the College for that. We recommend that the mission statement be reviewed on a periodic basis, particularly as significant institutional changes take place.

Rhode Island Board of Governors
for Higher Education
301 Promenade Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908-5748

Telephone 401 222-6560
Facsimile 401 222-2545
TDD 401 222-1350

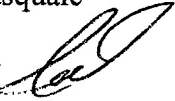
AUG 25 2006



August 23, 2006

Commissioner
Jack R. Warner

TO: President Di Pasquale

FROM: Jack R. Warner 

SUBJECT: Approval of a Revised Mission Statement for the Community College of Rhode Island

This correspondence will confirm the action taken by the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education on the above referenced item at their meeting on August 21, 2006.

VOTED: THAT the Board of Governors for Higher Education accept the revised mission statement for the Community College of Rhode Island

- c. President Carothers
- President Nazarian
- Nancy Carriuolo
- Dan King
- Lela Morgan
- Bev Swan

2. The College ensure that each academic program provides students with an appropriate program in general education.

CCRI has embarked on a multi-step plan to create a flexible, common general education core that is integrated into all of the College's degree programs, including the Associate in Arts, Associate in Fine Arts, Associate in Science, and Associate in Applied Science. This project began in Spring 2005 when the General Education Committee initiated a process to define the general education skills and competencies of a CCRI graduate. With input of focus groups and an online survey/ discussion board, the committee drew up a preliminary list of core skills and competencies.

Subsequently, the committee refined the list via a combination of a course inventory, departmental discussions, and consideration of other institutions' general education programs. This work culminated in a definition of an educated person as one who possesses six critical abilities. These abilities resulted in a proposed general education core, which is listed in the NEASC Institutional Progress Report, dated August 8, 2006, on page 7. Since the report was published, the General Education Committee has completed a degree inventory to identify the impact of the proposed core upon each degree program. Based on its findings, the committee has revised the proposed core. Members of the General Education Committee are once again meeting with departments to determine the effect of the revised proposal on the various degree programs. Of special concern to the committee are those technical programs with a high credit count and many requirements. Preliminary indications are positive regarding this second revision of the proposed core.

The committee has worked with the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs to set an ambitious timeline for approval of the General Education Core that includes review by the department chairs, the College community, the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Office of Higher Education, and, eventually, approval by the Rhode Island Board of Governors.

In concert with the work of the General Education Committee, three additional steps have been taken. A faculty member has been named Assessment Coordinator; a Learning Evidence Committee has been formed; and a consultant has been hired to work with faculty on the design of learning outcomes.

All of these actions are positive steps toward "ensuring that each academic program provides students with an appropriate program in general education" as called for in the Commission's letter to CCRI's President, and they respond to the Commission's concern about general education and its connection to an institutional definition of an educated person.

The information contained within the College's Institutional Progress Report is accurate with the changes indicated above due to the Committee's continuing progress. It should also be noted that the CCRI definition of an educated person using the six critical abilities appears to be replacing the CCRI Graduate Student Outcomes Statement as the primary source from which the general education core will be derived.

The actions taken by the General Education Committee over the last 18 months represent marked progress toward the ultimate goal of a common general education core that is intimately linked to

an institutionally-generated definition of an educated person. Much significant work remains to be completed to ensure that the core is widely accepted and supported. Preliminary steps are being taken to create a “culture of assessment” that is an essential part of a robust general education core.

However, many activities beyond the actions taken by the General Education Committee remain. These include the development of learning outcomes that are consistent and universal for both courses and programs across all four campus. decisions about learning outcomes, methods and measures of assessment, methods of dissemination, and the role of general education assessment in the planning and budgeting processes. The General Education Committee has identified the “Communication” critical ability as the first one it will likely attempt to assess. This exercise will allow the College to create a process for the identification, collection, and analysis of outcomes related to the effectiveness of its general education core. It is recommended that assessment of all six “critical abilities” be designed by the Spring 2009 5th year report and fully implemented in time for the self-study done for the 2014 accreditation visit.

Summary Recommendation

The actions taken by the General Education Committee over the last 18 months represent marked progress toward the ultimate goal of a common general education core that is intimately linked to an institutionally-generated definition of an educated person. Much significant work remains to be completed to ensure that the core is widely accepted and supported. Preliminary steps are being taken to create a “culture of assessment” that is an essential part of a robust general education core.

However, many activities beyond the actions taken by the General Education Committee remain. These include:

- **the development of measurable learning outcomes that are consistent and universal for both courses and programs across all four campus;**
- **consistent methods and measures of assessment;**
- **predictable methods of dissemination; and**
- **the role of general education assessment in the planning and budgeting processes.**

It is recommended that assessment of all six “critical abilities” be designed by the Spring 2009 5th year report and fully implemented in time for the self-study done for 2014.

3. The College develops a governance system that supports regularized College communication and operation.

CCRI has a newly reconstituted sixteen person committee charged with developing a governance system. A model has yet to go forward to the president but the committee has an ambitious goal of developing one by November 2006. Two previous models developed by a committee appointed by the previous administration were rejected by this new committee.

The existing structure for setting policies and procedures consists of committees mandated through collective bargaining, such as the curriculum, sabbatical review, and student grievance committees, and a range of standing and ad hoc committees developed over time with often conflicting responsibilities. This structure lacks coherence, clear articulation of responsibilities and roles, and inclusive involvement in decision making across constituencies and campuses. does not differentiate governance and college policy from managerial, administrative, or contractual processes and procedures, such as the athletics, chairs, advising & counseling committees.

There is much concern voiced within the college community that the recommendations of the policy committees were often lost, that there was no accountability or clear communication of policy decisions.

This existing structure DOES NOT constitute governance, let alone any variation of shared governance. Yet, it is this structure that is proposed as the foundation for the emerging *schema* for a governance model. Rather than an inclusive committee structure that would give all major constituencies a voice in the policy and decision making processes of the college, the proposed committee membership would continue the current structure of constituency based membership. By-laws would be committee specific as would responsibility for consulting and communicating with any constituency perceived to have a legitimate interest in the work of the committee. Inclusion of the other three campuses would be the responsibility of each committee. Communication of committee recommendations would be through archiving of committee minutes and posting on the WEB site.

The role and importance of a coherent governance system that gives voice to all major constituencies based on a written document or constitution that spells out the responsibilities, composition and appointment, methods of operation seems to be not understood by the committee. The importance placed on a non-hierarchical, horizontal system appears to have the consequence of preserving the role and prerogatives of the constituencies of each of the existing policy committees.

The visiting team strongly recommends adoption of a shared governance model that benefits from outside expertise and community college best practices. CCRI should look beyond its own organizational culture and history as it creates a responsive and responsible governance model.

The new committee is highly engaged and committed to a new governance model. Its vision is of a model that will enhance communication and increase participation. The committee needs to begin from a clean slate and needs guidance from an external expert to overcome the baggage and barriers of the past.

Summary Recommendation

There is much concern voiced within the college community that the recommendations of the policy committees were often lost, that there was no accountability or clear communication of policy decisions.

CCRI has an existing structure of many committees. This existing structure DOES NOT constitute governance, let alone any variation of shared governance. Yet, it is this structure that is proposed as the foundation for the emerging *schema* for a governance model.

That a coherent governance system gives voice to all major constituencies seems to be not understood by the committee. The importance currently placed on a non-hierarchical, horizontal system appears to have the consequence of preserving the role and prerogatives of the constituencies of each of the existing policy committees at the expense of real governance.

The visiting team strongly recommends adoption of a shared governance model that benefits from outside expertise and community college best practices. CCRI should look beyond its own organizational biases and history as it creates a responsive and responsible governance model.

4. The College ensures a planning process that systematically ensures that strategic priorities are pursued through actions steps, designated responsibilities, and links with the institution's budgeting systems.

CCRI has a high commitment to students, has a wide range of learning opportunities and co-curricular activities, has an outstanding community presence, and has a skilled faculty and staff who possess a strong dedication to their work.

The college has had a recent leadership change with the appointment of a new president in the spring 2006. The institution has not yet undertaken a planning and evaluation process, yet CCRI's new president has made NEASC recommendations a campus priority. Accordingly, strategic planning questions are outlined for the members of the president's cabinet who make up the strategic plan team. In due course, the strategic plan should be comprehensive, and the planning process open and inclusive. As the college identifies goals, they should then be routinely communicated, discussed, and ultimately attained.

Currently there are a large number of assorted committees that are focused on similar issues but often working at cross-purpose. These committees can add value to the plan based on their ongoing work. However, these and other committees will need to align their work within a connected and rational configuration as they become a part of an institutional effectiveness structure. In short, no committee should exist without clear purpose and a clear and non-redundant role within the governance structure.

To begin its work on assessment, the college has appointed an Assessment Coordinator. While the planning process is being formulated, this person will educate the campus on assessment practices. Additionally, the college has hired several new people in its business office area and is in the process of filling the VP position. Once these positions are filled, the allocation of resources for its planning and evaluation efforts will be solidified. The college understands that institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, must be consistent with planning priorities.

It is evident that evaluation is not yet an integral component of the college's operations since planning is in progress. As comprehensive data collection and assessment measures are put in place for use in a continuous improvement cycle, they should be used to evaluate the success of planning and budget decisions. The college leadership realizes its shortcomings with respect to its evaluation practices. Once the college establishes feasible priorities, it will need to systematically collect and use data to support its planning efforts. It must enhance institutional effectiveness with a pragmatic action plan with timelines, benchmarks, and measurable outcomes to achieve identified objectives.

Most importantly, the college has the commitment and the capacity to assess, verify, and enhance the fulfillment of its mission and purposes, while maintaining the attainment of its educational objectives as a primary focus.

CCRI will need to determine the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. To do that, the specific recommendations are delineated in the summary recommendations that follow.

There is no doubt that CCRI has the capacity and the interest to begin to systematically apply information obtained through evaluation activities to inform institutional planning, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness as it relates to student success. With the college community's start on creating a culture of planning and assessment and using NEASC recommendations as a guide, CCRI will be able to boast great success in their next report.

Summary Recommendations

Currently there are a large number of assorted committees that are focused on similar issues but often working at cross-purpose. These and other committees will need to align their work within a connected and rational configuration as they become a part of an institutional effectiveness structure. In short, no committee should exist without clear purpose and a clear and non-redundant role within the governance structure.

CCRI will need to determine the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. To do that, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Prepare a new and a comprehensive strategic plan based on college-wide input.**
- **Develop a consistent program review process for academic programs that is a systematic, introspective and designed to ensure a curricular area's continuous improvement.**
- **Develop a comprehensive academic plan that addresses an institutional effectiveness.**
- **Develop efficient and effective governance and task committee structures that are clearly mapped for the entire college community by 2009 five year report/visit.**
- **Collect and organize comparative institutional data to bear on the institution's assessment of its academic, budgetary, and student success priorities.**
- **Ensure that strategic planning goals and budget drive policy choices and decisions, large and small.**
- **Describe who will use assessment results and for what purposes, and establish feedback pathways to key stakeholder groups.**
- **Implement a program of institutional effectiveness training on the principles of focused planning and assessment in accordance with guidelines established by NEASC. Articulate assessment concepts to all college members regularly.**

5. The College continues to develop the faculty by implementing a recruitment and hiring process that improves the institution's ability to meet its own goals for diversity and ensuring that full-time and adjunct faculty members are evaluated using consistent processes throughout the institution.

CCRI has set a goal to increase diversity. It has not developed a recruitment and hiring process to reach that goal that could be shared with the team. There is a suggestion that adjuncts have priority in the hiring process over other candidates, which if true, would make meeting goals for diversity difficult.

Develop the faculty by ensuring that full-time and adjunct faculty members are evaluated using consistent processes throughout the institution.

Faculty at CCRI are evaluated every year for the first six years, and every three years thereafter, using a departmentally determined set of evaluation tools which may include a student/course evaluation, a peer evaluation, a chair evaluation, and an additional tool such as a self assessment. In the existing process, each department develops and submits their departmental evaluation process and tools to the Faculty Evaluation Review Committee for approval. Evaluation processes and tools vary across the departments, with some departments conducting comprehensive and consistent evaluation of all faculty and some having none. Adjunct evaluation is not mandated as they are not part of the bargaining unit, and if adjuncts are evaluated, it is at the discretion of the department.

In 2004, CCRI charged the Faculty Evaluation Review Committee, a contractually mandated committee, with developing a consistent evaluation process and common tools. The Committee, comprised of three administrators appointed by the president and three faculty elected by their peers, developed a new student/course evaluation tool that was piloted in the 2005-2006 academic year by four departments. Assessment of the tool revealed a one factor, one dimensional review, i.e. students tended to rate the faculty the same on all elements of the tool, so the Committee utilizing the expertise of the chair of one of the piloting departments, revised the questions. The student/course evaluation tool will be piloted again this year.

A draft Peer Evaluation tool was developed but has not been piloted and appears to have engendered strong opposition from the faculty association and inconsistent support among the faculty. One issue is the form that peer evaluation should take. Departmental peer evaluation practice varies. While many departments require two peer evaluators, the responsibility of the peer varies from class observation of the faculty to review of course materials and an interview of the faculty on practice to a testimonial.

Department chairs play a key role in the evaluation process as they distribute and collect materials. The chairs are also responsible for providing faculty with feedback. There is no standard formative or summative process for analysis and feedback, though a draft process has been developed by the Committee.

To further complicate matters, the college has a performance-based bonus structure that uses criteria different from that included in the evaluation process and because it is done annually conflicts with an already complex evaluation structure. There are a lot of faculty to be evaluated

at CCRI. A coherent system is a necessity if a consistent and real process is to be institutionalized.

The Committee has made much progress in developing a common, consistent evaluation process and tools and in moving evaluation from a contractual obligation to a process for improving and developing teaching. It is essential to the development of the faculty that meaningful evaluation using consistent and effective tools be implemented. We recommend that the Committee continue its work to develop, pilot, and institutionalize common evaluation tools with some flexibility to accommodate differences in pedagogy and practice across disciplines while maintaining consistent standards; that adjunct faculty be consistently evaluated; that a realistic process for evaluation, compiling and analyzing the data, and providing timely feedback to faculty be developed so that the practice of evaluation can be institutionalized; that the criteria for performance-based bonuses complement and support the evaluation process.

Summary Recommendation

In theory, faculty at CCRI are evaluated every year for the first six years, and every three years; in practice evaluation is often not done, is consistent neither in its methodology nor purpose. Further, there appears to be no connection between faculty evaluation and a “performance-based” bonus mechanism. Adjunct evaluation is not mandated by any contract and is done at the discretion of the department – and largely not done.

The Committee has made much progress in developing a common, consistent evaluation process and tools and in moving evaluation from a contractual obligation to a process for improving and developing teaching. It is essential to the development of the faculty that meaningful evaluation using consistent and effective tools be implemented. We recommend that the Committee continue its work to develop, pilot, and institutionalize common evaluation tools with some flexibility to accommodate differences in pedagogy and practice across disciplines while maintaining consistent standards; that adjunct faculty be consistently evaluated; that a realistic process for evaluation, compiling and analyzing the data, and providing timely feedback to faculty be developed so that the practice of evaluation can be institutionalized; that the criteria for performance-based bonuses complement and support the evaluation process.

On an additional point, CCRI has set a goal to increase diversity. It has not developed a recruitment and hiring process to reach that goal that could be shared with the team. There is a suggestion that adjuncts have priority in the hiring process over other candidates, which if true, would make meeting goals for diversity difficult.

6. New Campus

In addition to its focused visit to CCRI in response to its 2004 accreditation, the team was asked to review the addition of a fourth campus location that opened in early 2005 in Newport, RI.

The new 75,000 square foot facility is on a site formerly owned by the U.S. Navy and is in close proximity to an extensive development of low income duplex housing and the future headquarters of the Bank of Newport.

The facility is striking in both appearance and design and represents a valuable addition to the CCRI's presence in the state. The facility currently offers a variety of allied health programs including nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and therapeutic massage therapy. In addition, CCRI business and liberal arts programs are offered at this location. The campus is clearly an asset to the community as well as to the college and provides significant opportunities for collaboration with both civic and business partners.

Summary Recommendations

The visiting team is satisfied that the CCRI Newport campus fulfills the Standards of Accreditation, including:

- **Programs that are consistent with those offered on other CCRI campuses and consistent with the mission and objectives of the college;**
- **The campus is as fully incorporated in operations, planning, and resourcing as the other units of CCRI;**
- **Students and faculty are provided with full and adequate access to library, information resources, laboratories, equipment, and student services.**

It is the recommendation of this team that the commission approve inclusion of the Newport Campus in CCRI's accreditation.

General Observations

The visiting team have the following observations that relate to more than one item of the focused visit.

- CCRI has made and experienced significant change in the past 18 months. It is not over, it will never be over. Change will be a constant – the challenge for the college is to make it purposeful.
- Effective governance, planning, and assessment are all beneficial to the quality of a CCRI education, the fulfillment of its mission, and the long term viability of the college. If CCRI does this work merely because “NEASC is making us” or the “Board of Governors.....” or the “Spelling Commission.....” the energy directed at the effort will be wasted instead of garnered for improving the college.
- Governance, planning, and budgeting are three legs of the same stool. Each should complement and strengthen the other. Creating them in isolation only ensures that CCRI, as an institution, will falter.
- Universally, we heard that the CCRI community has just emerged from a dark and dysfunctional organizational environment. Clearly, the college is reveling in having their voices heard once again. With that comes a responsibility and an opportunity. If the college fails to take advantage of the changed environment by clinging to old roles and habits, we fear that it will find itself reliving history. The opportunity to create a viable CCRI for the future can't be squandered.

CCRI has made an impressive start in the past 18 months. It will take the full eight years ahead of collective effort to meet the goals set out for its next full accreditation review.