

CRITERION ONE: *The Community College of Aurora has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.*

Chapter 3

MISSION AND PURPOSES

Strengths

The Community College of Aurora (CCA/College) has the following strengths in the areas discussed in this chapter:

- Up-to-date mission statement, values and goals developed through collegewide discussion.
- Commitment to freedom of inquiry and satisfaction with the results of that commitment as confirmed by faculty and staff responses to institutional surveys.
- Commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, as confirmed by student satisfaction with instruction as expressed on institutional surveys.

Challenge

The self-study and the work of the self-study committees assigned this criterion also found a challenge for the future. CCA is challenged to:

- Continue to inform all members of the CCA community about the College's mission, purposes, goals and decision-making.

Issue for the Future

The self-study and the work of the self-study committees assigned this criterion identified an issue for the future. This issue is the following:

- Strengthening excellence in teaching through faculty workshops and external professional development opportunities.

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the College's mission and purposes, values and goals, communication with constituencies, freedom of inquiry, and excellence in teaching and learning. Three self-study committees gathered and analyzed information for this chapter: Mission, Purposes and Decision-Making; Strategic Planning Process; and Freedom of Inquiry and Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Mission

Before developing its own mission statement, CCA used the mission of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). The College developed its new statement through discussion with many stakeholders over a number of months in 2001. Advisory boards, students and College employees provided ideas and suggestions. CCA's mission aligns with the legislated mission of the Colorado Community College System (See GIR 1) and reads as follows:

The Community College of Aurora provides lifelong educational opportunities, prepares the current and future workforce, and promotes excellence in teaching, learning and service to our diverse community.

Purposes

Five purposes, derived from the System's legislated mission (See GIR 1), guide the College in the fulfillment of this mission:

- Provide the first two years of college and university education for students who wish to transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.
- Provide occupational education for students who are seeking job preparation, career mobility, and/or job retraining along with just-in-time workforce development and on-site customized training for business and industry.
- Provide education that strengthens the academic backgrounds of the students and prepares them to pursue their educational and career goals.
- Offer diverse educational experiences that are responsive to the needs and interests of persons in the community who desire to enhance their occupational, intellectual, cultural, social or personal development.
- Assist students in selecting, entering, continuing and completing their course of study by providing effective academic advising and student support services.



CCA continues to use these legislated purposes to categorize its activities but is increasingly emphasizing the College's own strategic goals.

Values

As part of its 1993 self-study, the College formally adopted a set of values (respectful, exemplary, collaborative, empowering and responsive) that focused primarily on interpersonal relations. In 2001, the College's Cabinet Advisory Council considered these original values. After discussing what these values did and did not include, the Council developed new values and distributed them to the CCA community for comment and suggestion. The Council used the responses to develop values that relate to a broader range of College goals and activities. The new values are as follows:

- Respect
- Quality
- Access
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Collaboration

Goals

CCA develops the College goals through the strategic planning process described in Chapter 6. The strategic plan for 2002 to 2005 includes the following goals, consistent with the College mission:

- Goal 1. Continue to ensure high-quality instruction that is relevant and responsive to the needs of our community.
- Goal 2. Continue to ensure student satisfaction and success.
- Goal 3. Continually improve educational access and service throughout the College service area.
- Goal 4. Increase retention and completion rates of students who seek degrees and certificates.
- Goal 5. Increase the percentage of college-age residents in CCA's service area who enroll in the College, placing particular emphasis on underserved populations and on the changing demographics.

The College adopted the following values in 2001:

- *Respect*
- *Quality*
- *Access*
- *Diversity*
- *Inclusion*
- *Collaboration*

- Goal 6. Improve the financial stability of the College.
- Goal 7. Increase partnerships with P-12 (pre-school to grade 12) educational agencies, business and industry, higher education and community organizations.
- Goal 8. Further develop our human resources to increase diversity and enhance support, recognition and professional development.
- Goal 9. Develop a systematic, integrated planning process that is data-based and outcomes-oriented.
- Goal 10. Further integrate the use of information and technology into decision-making processes.

The self-study Committee on Mission, Purposes and Decision-Making examined these goals. The committee observed that faculty and staff use the goals to develop their unit plans and performance reviews, thereby ensuring the goals' influence in the decision-making process. The committee also found the College goals to be clear, thoughtful and the culmination of a process that began at the state system level and included widespread discussion at CCA. (*Resource Room document 3.1*)

However, the committee also concluded that the College must develop and implement a system to evaluate and report how well it meets these goals each year. Currently, the College does not have a process in place to systematically measure goal attainment. Likewise, there is no annual written report that analyzes how well the College has, or has not, met its goals during the preceding year. The development of such a process and report could include creating measurable objectives for each goal and determining what data and methods of analysis to use to assess outcomes for each objective.

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Communication and Constituencies

The process of publicly stating the College's mission, goals and purposes includes messages to both internal and external publics. This information goes to groups that include the following:

Students

The *CCA Catalog* contains the legislated purposes. The *2003-04 Catalog* will include the College's goals. The *2002-03 CCA Student Handbook* contains general information on the College, including limited information on mission and goals as related to student government and activities. The director of student life meets regularly with the Student Government Association and other student groups to share information, which can include the College's mission, goals and purposes. Several students are also members of the Cabinet Advisory Council.

Faculty and Staff

The College informs faculty and staff about its mission and goals through both written and verbal communication. The College's Communication Division uses a printed and electronic publication, *Intercom*, to inform the internal College community about goals, mission and strategic initiatives. (*Resource Room document 3.2*)

The president sends frequent e-mail communication to those employees who are on the College's electronic distribution list and written communication to adjunct faculty. These communications give notice of events affecting the College, offer congratulations for activities or performance, describe current events, or request input on the College's strategic plans, mission and goals. Each unit of the College uses staff meetings to disseminate information on strategic goals and mission accomplishment. The president also conducts well-publicized, all-college meetings and convocations to communicate with faculty, staff and students.

The results from the College's Faculty and Staff Surveys show that in 2002 CCA employees had a clearer understanding of the College's mission and goals than they did three years earlier. In 2002, College faculty members (full- and part-time) responded with a mean rating of 3.16 (where 3 indicates agreement and 4 indicates strong agreement) to the statement, "CCA's mission and goals are clear to me." In 1999, their mean rating for that item was 2.91.

The results from the College's Faculty and Staff Surveys also show that in 2002 CCA employees were more accepting of the College's mission and goals than they were three years earlier. In 2002, College faculty members (full- and part-time) responded with a mean rating of 3.30 (where 3 indicates agreement and 4 indicates strong agreement) to the statement, "I accept CCA's mission and goals." In 1999, their average rating for that item was 2.97. (*Resource Room document 3.3*)

The College's Faculty and Staff Surveys show that in 2002 CCA employees had a clearer understanding of the College's mission and goals than they did three years earlier.

Public

The College informs the public through two main sources: the *CCA Schedule of Classes* and the CCA Web site. The schedule, which the College regularly mails to its service area residents, contains CCA's mission. The College's Web site contains information on mission and goals. In addition, members of both the College Advisory Council and the CCA Foundation regularly meet with other community members to inform them about the College and its mission and goals. The president annually hosts "Latte with Linda" for professional and business leaders in the community. Other events on campus provide the opportunity for the president or other College leaders to present the College to the public. These include Chamber of Commerce events, meetings of community groups and the annual convocation.

Campus officials play an integral role in communicating CCA's mission and goals. The Foundation Board and College Advisory Council host state legislators. The president meets regularly with external groups. Many faculty and staff also disseminate information about the College while sharing their expertise and serving area community, civic and educational groups and service clubs.

The self-study committee on Strategic Planning Process found that CCA keeps its various internal and external constituencies well informed about the College's purposes, mission, goals and values. The College, however, must regularly review current and future communication vehicles to ensure that it continues to inform all groups. *(The committee report is in the bookcase in the Resource Room document 3.4)*

Freedom of Inquiry

The College strongly supports freedom of inquiry for both faculty and students as outlined in State Board Policy BP 3-20 ("Due Process for Faculty") and the AAUP "1940 State of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments." The faculty handbook refers readers to division deans and to the vice president for instruction for copies of these documents. The student handbook explains students' rights in the classroom, including their right to "inquire about, discuss, or express any view, provided they do not infringe on the rights of others." The handbook also affirms students' rights to express their views, to assemble to discuss issues and to distribute written materials on campus. *(Resource Room documents 3.5 and 3.6)*

Faculty and staff generally believe that they are free to express their views at the College. In the 2002 Faculty Survey, College faculty members (full- and part-time) responded with a mean rating of 3.18 (where 3 indicates agreement and 4 indicates strong agreement) to the statement, "I feel free to express my views on department operations." That response showed a marked increase in faculty confidence in freedom of inquiry from 1999, when the faculty responded to that question with a mean rating of 2.46.

Many faculty and staff also disseminate information about the College while sharing their expertise and serving area community, civic and educational groups and service clubs.

Confidence in the freedom of inquiry goes beyond faculty. On the 2002 Staff Survey, staff members responded to the question about expressing their views on departmental operations with a mean rating of 3.3 (where 3 indicates agreement and 4 indicates strong agreement), up from 3.11 in 1999. (*Resource Room document 3.3*)

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

CCA's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning reflects one of the College's values: quality. To support this commitment, the College has programs and policies that contribute to high-quality teaching and learning. These include the College's lifelong skills, a teaching paradigm, departmental guidelines and standards, sound institutional process for selecting new faculty members, student evaluation of teaching and workshops for new faculty. (*Resource Room document 3.7*)

The College faces challenges in maintaining that excellence. For example, a recent reorganization has affected services that support excellence in teaching and learning. In the spring of 2001, the College eliminated the Faculty, Staff and Organizational Development unit, in part because of concerns the unit was not meeting the needs of regular faculty. Another challenge is the limited budget for faculty members to attend professional conferences and for continuing education.

Current faculty development efforts focus on workshops and mentoring for new faculty, calendars of development opportunities, and the establishment of a Professional Development Advisory Committee. Faculty members now have development opportunities that include tuition scholarships for use at CCA, no-cost courses (on a space-available basis) in the College's Workplace Solutions Center, and computer-related workshops that the System offers at the Lowry campus. (*Resource Room document 3.8*)

Student opinion surveys confirm that the College fosters excellence in teaching and learning. In the spring of 2001, the College surveyed all graduates attending graduation practice about CCA's services and facilities. The survey asked students to rate their satisfaction with services on a scale from 1 ("not at all satisfied") to 4 ("very satisfied."). The graduates' mean response for quality of instruction was 3.40. The College's Survey of Currently Enrolled Students has found similar satisfaction with the quality of instruction. On a scale where students ranked the quality of services from 1 ("low") to 4 ("high"), their mean rating for overall quality of instruction was 3.39 in 1996 and 3.44 in 2001. (*Resource Room document 3.9*)

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